

CHAPTER NINE

An Essay on the Sources for the History of Wu 170-230

Introductory summary

Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi

Historians of the South

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Introductory summary:

Sanguo zhi, the official history which deals with the period of the Three Kingdoms, contains both a main text by Chen Shou of the third century and, equally important, a commentary compiled by Pei Songzhi of the early fifth century.

The work of Pei Songzhi collects material from sources available at his time and, unusually for a Chinese historian, Pei Songzhi identifies the source and the author from which that material is taken. As a result, we have a remarkably broad and detailed picture of the type of historical writing in the third and fourth centuries.

On the history of Wu, there were some general works, such as *Wu shu*, compiled by an official committee under the government of that state, the private compilations *Wu li* and *Wu lu*, likewise based upon archival material, and *Jiangbiao zhuan*, based upon local material gathered soon after the conquest of Wu by Jin. There are also, however, a quantity of local histories, biographies and collections of works, and numerous clan records.

Many of these works contain largely fictional anecdotes and accounts of the supernatural, and it is often difficult to judge whether an item of information should be accepted as fact, fiction, fantasy or allegory. The situation is further confused by the later development of story cycles about leading figures of the time, and by the vast popularity of the novel *Sanguo yanyi*, "Romance of the Three Kingdoms," which reached its developed form more than a thousand years after the events it celebrates, and which presents a strongly favourable view of Liu Bei, Zhuge Liang and the state of Shu-Han. One purpose of the present work has been to restore the balance, and to recount the history of Wu on the basis of fact, rather than the bias of romance.

Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi:

Sanguo zhi, the history of the Three Kingdoms, presents a special case in the historiography of China. Chen Shou, a former subject of Shu-Han, compiled the initial

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work some time after the conquest of that state,¹ but it was at first only one general history among several. It was the imperial command that Pei Songzhi should compile a commentary which established Chen Shou's writing in the canon of Chinese tradition.

Pei Songzhi was born in Hedong in present-day Shanxi in 372.² He held office under Liu Yu, a general originally in the service of the Eastern Jin who seized the imperial title in 420 and established his own dynasty of [Liu] Song. Pei Songzhi held rank as an administrator under the new regime, and he was recognised for his scholarship. In 428 he received an imperial order to compile a commentary to the existing *Sanguo zhi* by Chen Shou, and the completed work, with its accompanying memorial, was presented to the throne in the following year. It seems certain that the project was already in train some time before the official commission.³

In his memorial of 429, Pei Songzhi gave keen but qualified praise to the basic text: The argument and design of Chen Shou's work are admirable, and in most things it is well judged. Indeed it is a garden of knowledge and the finest historical work of recent times.

It is, however, rather too short, and there are a number of omissions.

I have received the imperial decree to search into detail and to devote my efforts to discover every source. I have looked into old traditions from the past, and at the same time I have recovered records which have been neglected.

The remarkable thing about the new compilation, which supplements Chen Shou's work and just about doubles the length of the whole, is that Pei Songzhi not only collected the sources, but identified them in his commentary. He was, moreover, not at all concerned to smooth variant accounts and discrepancies into an orderly, coherent narrative. On the contrary, some of the texts which he quotes completely contradict the main text, and there are a number of occasions where Pei Songzhi himself will quote a series of different stories about the same incident.

In his memorial of presentation, Pei Songzhi set out his policy:

If there is something that Chen Shou failed to mention, and if it is something that should be remembered, then I have collected other records to fill in the gap. Sometimes there are two accounts of the same incident, though there may be errors or irrelevancies in the text. Sometimes an event is described in two quite different ways and I do not feel that I can decide between them. In all such cases I have put in the variant versions to show the different traditions. If one account is clearly wrong, and what it says is not logically sound, then I note which is right in order to correct the mistake. On occasion, I argue with Chen Shou in his judgement of events or on minor points of fact.

So Pei Songzhi presents the raw material of his research. Where possible, he provides the name of the author and the title of the work from which he has drawn his information, and

¹ There are biographies of Chen Shou in *Huayang guo zhi* 11, 9a-10a and in *JS* 82, 2137-38. Both texts are reproduced at the end of the Beijing edition of *Sanguo zhi*, pages 1475-76 and 1477-78.

On the historiography of *Sanguo zhi*, see also the introduction to the Beijing edition, and the preface by William Hung to Harvard-Yenching Index No. 33. For a modern interpretation of Chen Shou as the historian of "fear," forever concerned about the political dangers of his work, see the article by Honda [1962].

² The biography of Pei Songzhi is in *Song shu* 64, 1698-1701. The text is reproduced at the end of the Beijing edition of *Sanguo zhi*, pages 1479-81.

³ Pei Songzhi's memorial of presentation is reproduced at the end of the Beijing edition of *Sanguo zhi*, pages 1471-72.

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he shows no apparent concern that the record should reflect well upon one particular party or another, nor even that it should impress the reader with a moral message.

Here is a considerable contrast with the tradition of history-writing at this level in China before that time, and an equally great difference to that which came later. At the time Pei Songzhi was writing, the two great models were the *Shi ji* of Sima Qian and the *Han shu* of Ban Gu. Both were compiled as private works, but their authors held position in the official history offices of their day, and to a very high degree they are concerned to present a coherent narrative of events, with background messages on good conduct and on the right way of government.⁴

It is well enough agreed among modern scholars that the tradition of China was deeply and sincerely concerned with the past and with the records of proper action. It was the duty of the historian to tell the truth and to offer moral judgement, just as Confucius was assumed to have done when he compiled the *Spring and Autumn Annals* for the state of Lu. The choice of events to be recorded, however, and the praise or blame implicit in that choice, was inevitably the result of the historian's judgement, and there is automatic, unconscious, bias towards the interests and attitudes of the landed class which produced scholars and officials, dominant members of the community.⁵

Furthermore, the very fact that Sima Qian, Ban Gu and their followers were members of the official history offices meant they were not only assisted by the established historical tradition, but were also dependent upon it. The hierarchy of information based upon the imperial court, from the Diaries of Activity and Repose to the annals compiled at intervals through the dynasty, added to again by edicts, memorials and other documents in the archives, provided a massive body of sources and a bureaucratic technique for handling it. The work of the historian was to weave this material into a story which might serve as guidance and even as a warning for future rulers.

Shi ji and *Han shu* were the greatest, but by no means the only, early works in this tradition. *Dongguan Hanji*, compiled by the history office of Later Han throughout that dynasty, was all but complete;⁶ and the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao, compiled one hundred years later, described the doom of Later Han with a strongly didactic inspiration.⁷ At the end of the second century Xun Yue, in his *Han ji*, sought to account for the problems of the present by lessons from Former Han,⁸ and in the middle fourth century Yuan Hong compiled the matching *Hou Han ji*, in chronicle form with occasional comments.⁹ There

⁴ On the compilation of *Shi ji*, *Han shu* and the *Hou Han shu* of Fan Ye, see, for example, Chavannes, *Mémoires historiques* I, vi-lxi; Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Grand Historian of China*; Hulsewé, "Notes on the Historiography of the Han period;" and Bielenstein, "Prolegomena," in *RHD* I, 9-81. Loewe, "Introduction" to *Cambridge Han*, 2-6, contains a general essay on written sources for the history of Han.

⁵ See, for example, Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, and Gardiner, "Standard Histories."

⁶ On the history of the work finally entitled *Dongguan Hanji*, "Han Records of the Eastern Lodge," see Bielenstein, *RHD* I, 10-11, and *Lo-yang*, 29-30, also Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 471-473.

⁷ See Mansvelt Beck, *Treatises of Later Han*.

⁸ On Xun Yue (148-209; biography in *HHS* 62/52, 2058-63), see the works by Ch'en Ch'i-yun. On *Han ji*, see particularly Ch'en Ch'i-yün, *Hsün Yüeh: Life and Reflections*, 84-126.

⁹ Yuan Hong (328-376) was a celebrated scholar and writer of Eastern Jin. His biography is in *JS* 92, 2391-99, and he is the subject of several anecdotes in *Shishuo xinyu*: Mather, *Tales of the World*, 610 *et saepe*. Yuan Hong composed a number of pieces on the Three Kingdoms, but *Hou Han ji* was his major work of history.

Both the *Han ji* of Xun Yue and the *Hou Han ji* of Yuan Hong have survived largely intact. Naturally, much of the early history of the Three Kingdoms is covered by Yuan Hong's work, which concludes with the abdication of Emperor Xian in favour of Cao Pi and with Liu Bei's claim to the throne in 221.

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were several other works on the Han dynasty in the two centuries which followed the end of the empire,¹⁰ and at the very time Pei Songzhi was working on his commentary, his younger contemporary Fan Ye was beginning the annals and biographies which comprise his *Hou Han shu*, the canonical History of Later Han.¹¹

Fan Ye's compilation fits the mould established by *Shi ji* and *Han shu*. The chapters of annals, based so far as possible on the archival records then remaining, present a chronological account of the imperial court and government, while the great majority of biographies tell us of the lives of men of political significance and of their official acts. The work is done with design and skill, which may be appreciated by close reading, and it presents an elegant and coherent argument. It is, however, in the bureaucratic tradition of official history: it pays chief attention to those matters which affected the prosperity and destruction of the dynasty and government of Han, and it seeks to distinguish romantic fiction from official fact.¹²

The work of Pei Songzhi, on the other hand, has preserved a medley of disparate texts which reflect the literary and historiographical activity of their time far better than the standard dynastic histories. Pei Songzhi has noted not only the official histories of the rival states, he cites unofficial histories and local records, clan registers and individual biographies, folk-tales and stories of the supernatural. And he also records the writings of pure propaganda and the comments of later essayists and critics, while just occasionally he inserts a judgement or comment of his own.¹³

The effect is remarkable, for we are presented with a broad sample of the material which had been compiled during two hundred and fifty years, from the latter part of the second century to the beginning of the fifth. There is no comparable collection for any earlier period. It is possible and indeed likely that similar works existed during the centuries of Han, but the materials on which they were written were flimsy, copies were few, and the main stream of tradition represented by *Shi ji*, *Han shu* and the official

Unfortunately, however, and particularly for a chronicle history, some items appear misplaced. For the most part, *Hou Han ji* has been overtaken by the *Hou Han shu* of Fan Ye, compiled half a century later, though there are occasions where Yuan Hong's account of an incident is better than that of the standard history.

¹⁰ Bielenstein, *RHD* I, 12-13, discusses these early works on the history of Later Han.

¹¹ There are biographies of Fan Ye in *Song shu* 69, 1819-31, and in *Nan shi* 33, 848-56. Born in 398, a generation younger than Pei Songzhi, he died in 446.

¹² *Hou Han shu* does include some items which are better regarded as tales of ghosts and magic than as sober history. One may consider, for example, the Chapter on Diviners and Magicians, *HHS* 82/72A-B, translated by Ngo and by DeWoskin, and the story of Wang Chun in the Chapter on Men of Unusual Conduct, who was miraculously rewarded for his kindness to a dying student, and later solved a murder by interviewing the ghost of a female victim in a haunted post-house: *HHS* 81/71, 2680-81; de Crespigny, "The Ghosts that Were."

Shi ji and *Han shu*, which I have similarly classed in the bureaucratic tradition, likewise contain chapters which are essentially non-factual: the Biography of Lord Meng Chang, in *SJ* 75, is treated by Bauer and Franke, *The Golden Casket*, as fiction.

For the most part, however, the traditional, bureaucratic, historians distinguished the material they were dealing with, and their readers understood which sections were intended as descriptions of fact and which were exemplary fiction. As Franke remarks, in his Introduction to the English-language edition of *The Golden Casket*, at 6, "historical novellas...are embedded in compilations such as [*Shi ji*]..., from which they can easily be extracted." Fan Ye generally maintains the separation, and he seldom inserts grossly exaggerated or obviously fictitious anecdotes into his biographies of notable political figures. This is quite different to the open style of Pei Songzhi's compilation.

¹³ A list of the works and authors cited by Pei Songzhi, based upon the compilation of Shen Jiaben, is provided in de Crespigny, *The Records of the Three Kingdoms*.

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histories so dominated the field that few rival accounts were popular enough to survive. Many of the works cited by Pei Songzhi survive only in the fragments which he quoted, and in later encyclopaedic compilations of the Tang period. Very few have maintained an independent existence.

In some respects, indeed, Pei Songzhi was rather an encyclopaedist than a historian, and it is those later encyclopaedias which have maintained his style of compilation, while the histories of the dynasties which followed the Three Kingdoms, from *Jin shu* to *Sui shu*, represent a confirmation of the official style, compiled for the most part by committees of scholars working under imperial patronage. It was a great achievement of Tang to re-establish the official tradition of historiography: new histories were compiled and commentaries were added to *Shi ji*, *Han shu* and *Hou Han shu*. The result, however, perhaps not unintentional, was that the initiative represented by Pei Songzhi was abandoned, and the writing of history returned to its earlier mould, in which source differences were ironed out to produce a flowing narrative.¹⁴

In their review of *Sanguo zhi*, the eighteenth century editors of *Siku quanshu* complained that Pei Songzhi was inconsistent and erratic, that he often included irrelevant items, and that his arrangement was haphazard.¹⁵ The criticism is justified, and there are many cases where a modern historian will find himself either confused by the selection, or doubtful of the reliability of the information. And yet this very eclecticism makes the work of Pei Songzhi a repository of so much information on what may well be described as the Matter of the Three Kingdoms.¹⁶

Quite exceptionally, moreover, for the Chinese tradition, the material which has been preserved is clearly identifiable. When Pei Songzhi first quotes from a work he indicates the title and the author, and very often we are able to discover, from either this information or some other source, further details on the scholar concerned and the provenance of his work. Thanks to Pei Songzhi, we have a collection of the material which dealt with the period from the end of the second century to the latter part of the third century, and which was compiled between that time and his own.

By contrast, the regular Chinese history incorporates its information, as a matter of course, into a single narrative. We know, for example, that a great part of the information in *Shi ji* has been taken directly from *Zuo zhuan*, from *Intrigues of the Warring States* or from similar works of the Zhou period. The earlier source of this material can often be identified by comparisons, but it is not so identified by Sima Qian.¹⁷ And the same principle may be observed in the *Zizhi tongjian* of Sima Guang, more than a thousand years later: the historian chose his material from earlier works, he sometimes lightly redrafted the passages, and he arranged the information with elegance and skill, but he

¹⁴ On the history offices and the historical work of Tang, see, for example, Lien-sheng Yang, "The Organization of Chinese Official Historiography," and Wang Gungwu, "Later Standard Histories."

¹⁵ The comments of the *Siku quanshu congmu tiyao* are reproduced at the end of the Beijing edition of *SGZ*, 1473-74.

¹⁶ Here and below, I have been greatly influenced by the discussion and analysis of Johnson, "Epic and History in Early China," who considers the story of the pre-Qin hero Wu Zixu as it may originally have appeared in a legendary cycle of stories, and as it was later transmitted, in blander style, by Sima Qian (*SJ* 75).

¹⁷ In *Mémoires historiques*, for example, Chavannes supplies marginal notes to his translation, indicating the earlier sources from which Sima Qian appears to have taken material.

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did not provide any regular system to account for the original source which he used.¹⁸ Still more to the point, a historian in such a tradition feels no prime obligation to discuss alternative stories: once a particular item has been chosen, other versions are neglected and often lost. In some respects, when reading such a work as *Shi ji*, one should not only contemplate the records that Sima Qian has preserved for us, but should also mourn those many tales which were available at the time, which failed to be identified and preserved, and which are now gone for ever.

From this point of view, the main text of *Sanguo zhi*, compiled by Chen Shou, is well inside the bureaucratic tradition. We are told that Chen Shou had access to the records of the three rival states. Born in 233, he held clerical office at the court of Shu-Han and then, after the conquest, rose to official position in Jin through the patronage of the great minister Zhang Hua. Chen Shou was a little over thirty at the time of the fall of Shu-Han, something under fifty when the empire of Wu surrendered in 280, and he died about 300. He composed a number of other scholarly works, and there is every reason to believe that he had adequate opportunity for consultation of the contemporary government sources.¹⁹

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A number of other general, or at least broadly concerned, histories were written during the third century. Each of the three courts had its own official history project, and the *Wei shu*, *Shu shu* and *Wu shu* were evidently designed to follow the pattern of *Dongguan Hanji* which had been compiled through generations of Later Han.²⁰ There were

¹⁸ In his *Kaoyi* commentary, Sima Guang does compare and discuss some variant items of information in his sources. This, however, is done on a case-by-case basis, where specific texts are in disagreement. There is no consistent attempt to identify sources in general.

In his translation of *ZZTJ* chapters 60-78, Fang, *Chronicle*, has analysed and compared the text of *ZZTJ* with those of the earlier works from which Sima Guang took his material for the history of the period 220-265. In *Huan and Ling and Establish Peace I* have likewise sought to identify the original texts, but without Fang's detailed comparisons.

¹⁹ The two biographies of Chen Shou differ on the date of his death. According to *JS* 82, he spent a long time under the Jin without position, then held some minor posts in the capital and the provinces. About 297 he was appointed as Palace Cadet of the Heir-Apparent, but died before he could take up the post. According to *Huayang guo zhi* 11, Chen Shou held the position of Palace Cadet, and then became Cavalry Regular Attendant, a position of high rank, but was dismissed after the fall and execution of Zhang Hua in 300, and died soon afterwards.

²⁰ On *Wei shu*, see Hou Kang, *Bu Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3174/3-3175/1, Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3220/3-3221/1, and *SGZJJ* 1, 3a-b. The biography of the author, Wang Shen, is in *JS* 39, 1143-46.

On *Shu shu*, see Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3221/1-2. No work of that title is quoted by Pei Songzhi, but *Huayang guo zhi* 11, 8b-9a, refers to a certain Wang Chong, who held the office of Gentleman at the Eastern Lodge, and who took part in the compilation of a *Shu shu*. There is also a passing reference to a *Shu shu* in *SGZ* 45/Shu 15, 1079 (*SGZJJ* 12b), where Chen Shou says that in 240 the scholar Yang Xi compiled the *Ji-Han fuchen zan* "Eulogies of the Ministers who Assisted Junior Han," and that many items from that collection had been incorporated into the *Shu shu*. It seems probable that much of the *Shu shu* was absorbed into *Sanguo zhi*.

There is a curious controversy, however, about the actual "history office" of the state of Shu. In his *Criticism (Ping)*, at the end of the biography/annals of Liu Shan, "Later Sovereign" of Shu, Chen Shou says that the state of Shu did not employ historians, that there was no office responsible for collecting essential material, and that as a result many items of information, notably accounts of portents, are missing. Chen Shou suggested that the military urgencies of the time prevented Zhuge Liang from paying proper attention to that responsibility: *SGZ* 33/Shu 3, 902-03.

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semi-official compilations by historians who either worked for the government or had access to the archives: Liu Ai, who held position under Dong Zhuo in the 190s and was at the imperial court under Cao Cao in 216, compiled annals of the reign of Emperor Ling, the *Lingdi ji*, and continued with annals of the reign of Emperor Xian.²¹ Yu Huan, who is described as a subject of Wei, wrote a *Dian lue*, "Authoritative Account" and a *Wei lue*, "Authoritative History of Wei," dealing in turn with the last years of Han and with the history of the successor state.²²

We know of these, and of a multitude of other works, primarily because of the extracts preserved in the commentary of Pei Songzhi. One must recognise, however, that great quantities of the material which they contained have been incorporated, without trace, into the compilation of Chen Shou. Like his fore-runners in the bureaucratic tradition, Chen Shou seldom acknowledged his sources, and Pei Songzhi, when putting together his commentary, was seeking only to supplement, not duplicate, the text of Chen Shou. So much of the text of Chen Shou has taken over material which had originally been presented in the official histories of the states or in other major works; and, curiously

As we have seen, however, there is evidence that the state of Shu, like its rivals, had a history office, or at least that it had such institutions as an Eastern Lodge, presumably parallel to that of Han, and a body of scholars who recorded events and compiled works of history. The biography of Chen Shou in *Huayang guo zhi* says that he held appointment as Gentleman of the Private Library in the Eastern Lodge of Shu, and that office would surely have collected and preserved some documents.

There has been considerable debate on the statement by Chen Shou, and the opinions of various scholars are summarised in the commentary of Lu Bi to *SGZJJ* 33, 21a-b. The best explanation appears to be that Chen Shou was saying the state of Shu did not establish a regular archive: various items of information were recorded, but there was no system for collecting and keeping data day-by-day in the manner which the Han had developed, and so he could not find all the details that he wanted. The men appointed to the history office had not paid attention to their responsibilities, and although individuals were able to compile works of history, no such project was formally and properly maintained by the state.

We have seen above, discussing the administrative structure of Wu in Chapter 8, that there were a number of administrative posts which were formally filled but whose incumbents had other priorities. In Wu, however, the compilation of the official history was regarded as a matter of some importance, and this may also have extended to the maintenance of regular records. See also below at note 27.

²¹ On Liu Ai, see Chapter 2 at note 35. *Lingdi ji* and *Xiandi ji* are quoted by Pei Songzhi: e.g. *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1094; and *SGZ* 1/Wei 1, 13 (*JJ* 34b).

Sui shu 33, 960, lists a *Han Ling-Xian erdi ji*, "Annals of the Two Emperors Ling and Xian of Han," by Liu Fang, while *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 1991, and *Xin Tang shu* 58, 1459, have a work of the same title ascribed to Liu Ai. It seems that the personal name Fang in *Sui shu* has been miswritten for Ai. The Tang encyclopaedia *Chuxue ji* 30, 737, quotes a *Handi zhuan*, "Account of the Emperor[s] of Han" by Liu Ai, and refers to the year 194, which was in the reign of Emperor Xian. By definition, the phrase *Xiandi* could not have been included in the title of any book before 234, when the abdicated Emperor died and received his posthumous title, but it appears that Liu Ai, or perhaps some later collaborator, continued his chronicle under the more general name, that the specification *Xiandi* was added later, and the whole work was variously known in one or two books, sometimes described as *ji* and sometimes as *zhuan*. See also Yao Zhenzong, *Hou Han yiwen zhi*, 2352/1-2. Only fragments of the books now remain.

²² *Sui shu* 33,961, has a *Dian lue* by Yu Huan, a Gentleman of the Palace of Wei, in 89 chapters; *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 1994 and 1989, has *Dian lue* in 50 chapters and *Wei lue* in 38 chapters listed in the Miscellaneous Histories (*za shi*) and Standard Histories (*zheng shi*) categories respectively; *Xin Tang shu* 58, 1464, has only *Wei lue* in 50 chapters listed in the Miscellaneous Histories category, indicating that the title may have been miswritten for *Dian lue*. It seems possible that the *Dian lue* listed by *Sui shu* represents a combined work, being 50 chapters of the original *Dian lue*, covering the last years of Han, together with 38 chapters of a continuation *Wei lue*, and one further chapter of introduction. See Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwen zhi*, 3224/1-2.

Though there is some blurring between *Dian lue* and *Wei lue*, it is clear from quotations that *Wei lue* covered the period at least to 254 AD: *SGZ* 4, 130 PC note 2; Fang, *Chronicle* II, 165-167 and 184-187.

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enough, when a passage was adopted by Chen Shou, that very fact disqualified it from being quoted and identified in the commentary of Pei Songzhi.

For the most part, this is not a matter of major concern. Pei Songzhi's collection is sufficiently wide-ranging that we may assume most historical sources of importance in the third century are at least represented in his commentary, and one needs only to be aware that the range of quotations preserved will not necessarily represent the original scope of the work.²³ In some cases, however, it seems likely that Chen Shou has taken information from some important but lesser source so comprehensively that Pei Songzhi had no reason to quote the original work, and its very identity has been lost thereafter.

As an example, we may consider the biographies of Sun Jian and his son Sun Ce, described in the first chapter of the section in *Sanguo zhi* on the state of Wu. The main text of *Sanguo zhi* presents a detailed anecdotal account of the life of Sun Jian to his death in 192/193, and then picks up the story of the career of Sun Ce, with his first major action being the attendance upon Yuan Shu about 193-194. Pei Songzhi supplements Chen Shou's biography of Sun Jian with some anecdotes of his early life and career, including the portents observed by his mother at the time of her pregnancy, but the bulk of material in the commentary relates to the general history of the empire, with items such as the biography of Sun Jian's early patron Zhu Jun and comments about him by Dong Zhuo, chosen to present his career in a broader context. And indeed, as I have discussed in the study of Sun Jian's life, there are a number of occasions, such as the account of his involvement with the campaigns in Liang province and the story of his discovery of the Great Seal of State, when Chen Shou's information appears erratic and unsatisfactory as compared with facts well established from other sources.

These comments apply less strongly to the biography of Sun Ce. Chen Shou's text there is supplemented by extracts from *Jiangbiao zhuan* and *Wu lu*, with items of the latter work quoting from memorials, letters and other documents composed by Sun Ce or on his behalf. For this period, particularly between the time of Sun Ce's establishment as an independent warlord about 195 and his death in 200, we have a fairly integrated account of his career both from Chen Shou and from Pei Songzhi; and this is supported by other sources, notably the biographies of men and women associated with Sun Ce in the foundation of the state of Wu.

The two biographies reflect the different careers of the father and of the son. Sun Jian was a player, albeit with a minor part, upon the wide imperial stage, but Sun Ce was a man of primarily local importance, and the details of his life do not generally lend themselves to checking against great events elsewhere. There is less room for contradiction between the sources; but we may also observe that there was a quantity of additional material which was not used by Chen Shou but was later preserved by Pei Songzhi.

One text, however, which is known to have existed, but which is not cited by Pei Songzhi, is the Record and Eulogy of Sun Jian and Sun Ce, compiled by Zhang Hong and

²³ There were, of course, a great number of works not quoted by Pei Songzhi. Fragments of some of them have been preserved in later collections, such as the great Tang encyclopaedias, while others can be known only by their titles, often through the Treatises of Bibliography of *Sui shu*, *Jiu Tang shu* and *Xin Tang shu*. The compilations of Hou Kang and Yao Zhenzong, already cited, represent a reconstruction of the list of works written during the Three Kingdoms period, and similar lists have been compiled for the Jin period by Ding Guojun, Wen Tingshi, Qin Rongguang, Wu Shijian and Huang Fengyuan, *qqv*. Bibliography *sub voce*.

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presented to Sun Quan soon after his succession to power in 200. *Wu shu*, quoted by Pei Songzhi, tells us that

Zhang Hong considered the merits of [Sun Jian the General Who] Smashes the Caitiffs, defeating Dong Zhuo and putting him to flight, and supporting the house of Han, and how [Sun Ce the General Who] Attacks the Rebels pacified and settled the lands outside the Yangzi and established the state, and he believed that these affairs should be recorded and commemorated, to manifest their achievements.

When the work was completed, he presented it to Sun Quan, who studied it carefully and was touched by grief. He said to Zhang Hong, "You are indeed aware of the traditions of my family."²⁴

There is every reason to believe that this work of Zhang Hong was taken into the archives of Sun Quan's government, that it was preserved until the end of the state of Wu, and that it was available to Chen Shou when he compiled the main text of *Sanguo zhi*. Indeed, I suggest that the text of the chapter containing the biographies of Sun Jian and Sun Ce is a very close copy, made by Chen Shou, of the information originally collected and presented by Zhang Zhao. The earlier work has thus been overwhelmed by, but yet survives in, the later.

Nevertheless, while it is encouraging to believe that the present history of the careers of Sun Jian and Sun Ce can be traced back within a few years of their time, one must bear in mind that the circumstances of the embryonic warlord state of Wu could not guarantee mature reflection and well-balanced history. The very description of Zhang Hong's work implies an element of hagiography, and it cannot have been easy for him to reconstruct the career of Sun Jian, which took place for the most part in territories other than south-eastern China, and which had ended ten years earlier.²⁵ For the most part, he must have dealt with a broad outline of generally accepted facts, and filled in the work with anecdotes from local tradition and the recollections of former associates. This is the pattern we would expect to find, and this is the form which the history takes. With such a distant view, and erratic sources of information, the biography of Sun Jian must be read with great care.

The story of Sun Ce is more securely based. If we accept that the basic history was compiled soon after his death, then it is probable that many documents were still extant, and certain that many former comrades were ready and eager to tell of the heroic days just past. Difficulty would come rather from the wealth of material, and a natural tendency to exaggeration.

Despite this, something is lacking in the accounts of that period. Outside the biography of Sun Ce himself, and the documents preserved by Pei Songzhi, there is little information about those years. The biographies of his leading generals and counsellors frequently say only that the man accompanied Sun Ce on a particular campaign, or that he was stationed at a particular place. There are anecdotes, some of doubtful reliability, but not until the time of Sun Quan does one have the sense of a broadly-based historical tradition.

This cannot be really surprising. Sun Ce held independent power for only five years, and the tension and excitement of the time would not encourage the maintenance of

²⁴ SGZ 53/Wu 8, 1244 PC note 2. See also Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwenzhi*, 3223/3, and Chapter 4 at note 20.

²⁵ One must observe that Zhang Hong, writing after 200, was separated by almost half a century from the time of Sun Jian's birth and young manhood.

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regular archives and chronicles. Historical work on the period was eventually carried out by the government of Sun Quan, and although they had taken place such a short time before, and had been of such vital importance for the establishment of the state, the local triumphs of Sun Ce in the lands south of the Yangzi paled almost to insignificance when compared to the stirring and desperate years which followed, with war on open fronts to the north and the west, and the great crisis of the Red Cliffs. Sun Ce was worthy of legend, but Sun Quan created a greater drama after him.

Wu shu, the official "History of the State of Wu," was first commissioned by Sun Quan, probably about 250. Our authority for the matter is a memorial of Hua He submitted to Sun Quan's grandson and last successor, Sun Hao, about 273.²⁶ Hua He says that towards the end of his reign Sun Quan ordered the Prefect Grand Historian Ding Fu and the Palace Gentleman Xiang Jun to compile the *Wu shu*. According to Hua He, however, neither Ding Fu nor Xiang Jun were competent historians, and a few years later, in the time of Sun Quan's youngest son and first successor Sun Liang, probably about 252, another committee was established to take over the work. The leading scholars involved were Wei Zhao, Zhou Zhao, Xie Ying, Liang Guang and Hua He himself.

The biography of Wei Zhao, leader of this group, tells us something of his career and the difficulties that the historical bureau was faced with.²⁷ Born about 200, Wei Zhao was a man from Wu commandery who acquired a high reputation for scholarship. He was appointed Prefect Grand Historian about 252, presumably in succession to Ding Fu, by Sun Liang acting on the recommendation of the powerful minister Zhuge Ke. Zhuge Ke was destroyed at the end of 253, but Wei Zhao and his colleagues continued their work, and Wei Zhao was also placed in charge of the collation of books for the Palace Library, first as a Gentleman and later with title as Supervisor of Academicians; his responsibilities were said to be comparable to those of the celebrated Liu Xiang, editor of the Confucian classics during the last years of the Former Han dynasty.²⁸

²⁶ The memorial is quoted in *SGZ* 53/Wu 8, 1256, the biography of Xie Ying, on whom see below. The biography of Hua He is in *SGZ* 65/Wu 30, 1464-69.

²⁷ The biography of Wei Zhao is in *SGZ* 65/Wu 30, 1460-64. His personal name frequently appears as Yao. The change was made to avoid the tabu on the character of the personal name of Sima Zhao, father of the founding Emperor Wu of Jin, who was later given the posthumous title of Emperor Wen of Jin: *JS* 2, 32 and 44.

²⁸ On Liu Xiang, celebrated scholar and expert on the Guliang Commentary to the Spring and Autumn Annals during the first century BC, see Tjan Tjoe Som, *White Tiger Discussions* I, 91-93, and Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict*, 240-243 and 300-303.

On the comparison of Wei Zhao with Liu Xiang, see *SGZ* 65/Wu 20, 1462. We should note here that there is some potential confusion in the names of the libraries and similar offices established by the various states of the Three Kingdoms; in my description below I follow the discussion of Hong Yisun, *Sanguo zhiguan biao*, 2775-2777.

In the state of Wei, it appears that Cao Cao had a Private Library (*mishu* or *bishu*) with two responsibilities, one being the collecting and collation of works which had been lost from the imperial libraries of Han in the time of the disturbances which accompanied Dong Zhuo's seizure of power, and the other, significantly more political, being the checking of material which was handled by the regular imperial secretariat, the Masters of Writing. This roughly matched the system of Han, but early in the reign of Cao Pi the office was divided, with the supervisory section was named as the office of Palace Writers (*zhongshu*) and the Private Library maintained as a scholarly enterprise.

It is possible that there was a comparable arrangement in Shu-Han, though there is only passing reference to the office of Palace Writers. We have discussed in note 20 above the likelihood that the Private Library in the Eastern Lodge, where Chen Shou held appointment, may have contained and collected literary and archival material.

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During the reign of Sun Xiu, elder brother and successor to Sun Liang, who took a particular interest in scholarship, Wei Zhao was invited regularly to the palace, until protests by the powerful Zhang Bu persuaded Sun Xiu to desist. Wei Zhao was known for his ideals of honesty, and Zhang Bu was said to have been concerned lest he inform the ruler of his minister's failings - Sun Xiu felt obliged to accede to Zhang Bu's objections, but he was not pleased.

Sun Xiu died in 264 and Zhang Bu remained in a position of influence and power, but Wei Zhao continued to serve the new government of Sun Hao. His work in the library appears to have been completed, for we are told that the post was abolished and he was reappointed as a Palace Attendant, with the additional title of State Historian on the Left and continuing responsibility for the official history. His colleague Hua He was State Historian on the Right.²⁹

During the twenty years since the establishment of this second committee for the official history, Zhou Zhao and Liang Guang had died. We are told nothing more about Liang Guang, but at the end of the biography of Bu Zhi, who had been Inspector of Jiao province, became Chancellor of the empire of Wu in 246, and died in 248, there is a long and favourable discussion of Bu Zhi and of the Prefect of the Masters of Writing Yan Jun, which text is attributed to Zhou Zhao. A supplementary note from Chen Shou says that Zhou Zhao was an émigré from Yingchuan, that he was associated with Wei Zhao, Xie Ying and Hua He in work upon *Wu shu*, and that he also became a Gentleman of the Palace Library. Later, during the time of Sun Xiu, he was sent to prison for some crime, and although Hua He memorialised on his behalf, he received no relief.³⁰

The misfortune of Zhou Zhao presumably took place some time after 260, and the unsuccessful appeal in his favour by Hua He was only the first of a series. About 272 Sun Hao asked Wei Zhao to prepare a chapter of "annals" for his father Sun He. Sun He, third son of Sun Quan, was named for a time as Heir-Apparent but had been dismissed before the death of his father. When Sun Hao came to the throne he gave his father a posthumous imperial title, but such a proclamation, however appropriate in terms of filial piety, could not alter the fact that Sun He had never been the ruler of the state. Wei Zhao, therefore, observed that Sun He should be allocated only a biography, not a chapter of annals. Sun Hao was not pleased, he was very likely similarly dissatisfied when Wei Zhao poured scorn on a rush of favourable omens which had been reported by people seeking advancement from the new ruler, and he was angry and suspicious when Wei Zhao, who had sought to retire from court on the grounds of old age, refused a ceremonial toast at a banquet, claiming medical reasons for not drinking wine. On this last offence, Wei Zhao was sent to prison. Hua He pleaded for him, citing in particular the importance of Wei Zhao to the success of the history project, the significance of that work for the reputation

There is no record of an office called the Private Library in the state of Wu. Wei Zhao, however, is described as a *zhongshu lang*, and the description of his responsibilities seems to indicate scholarly and not censorial concerns. I suggest, therefore, that the *zhongshu* of Wu was comparable rather to the Private Libraries of Wei and Shu than to the office of the Palace Writers in those two states; so in this context I render the term as Palace Library.

²⁹ SGZ 65/Wu 30, 1462 and 1467. Hua He at this time held the formal position of Prefect of the Eastern Lodge, an appointment which is also recorded as being held by the scholars Zhu Yu (SGZ 57/Wu 12, 1326 PC quoting *Kuaiji dianlu*, and SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1394 PC quoting *Kuaiji dianlu*) and Zhou Ju (SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1392). Apart from the special commission of Wei Zhao and his colleagues, it seems likely that the Wu state maintained an Eastern Lodge, in the same manner as the Han had done, as a repository of literary and archival material. See also note 20 above on the existence of a similar institution in Shu.

³⁰ SGZ 52/Wu 7, 1240-42.

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of the dynasty, and comparing the whole enterprise to the *Shi ji* of Sima Quan and the *Han shu* of Ban Gu. Once again, however, his appeal had no success, and Wei Zhao was executed, at the age of more than seventy. His family was sent into exile in Lingling commandery.³¹

Xie Ying, last of Hua He's colleagues, had led a military and political as well as a scholarly life.³² At one time he held command in the garrison at Wuchang, but about 273, soon after the disgrace of Wei Zhao, Xie Ying was punished for his involvement in a mistaken strategy, and was punished with exile in the far south. At some stage, however, Xie Ying found time to compile a major history of Later Han in one hundred chapters,³³ and in the memorial referred to above Hua He argued that Xie Ying was one of the few men who could assist his work. On this occasion his words received a hearing: Xie Ying was recalled to the capital and appointed State Historian on the Left, evidently in succession to Wei Zhao.

The project, however, did not advance much further. In 275 Hua He himself was dismissed for some minor offence, and he died at home a year later. Xie Ying, in the mean time, had been involved in unlucky intrigue and was once more exiled to the south. He was again recalled, and appointed to a ministerial position, but his chief service to the declining state of Wu was to compose the document of surrender Sun Hao sent to his victorious rival, Sima Yan the Emperor of Jin. Xie Ying travelled to Luoyang, and he may well have met Chen Shou there, but he died soon after the surrender, in 282.

So the history office of Wu during the later period of that state was an area of some sensitivity, and it is likely that the change of committee after the death of Sun Quan reflects a contest of factions. Though Hua He claimed that Ding Fu and his associate Xiang Jun were incompetent, we know Ding Fu was enough of a scholar to have compiled studies of the rituals and the official selection systems of Han,³⁴ and there is reference to the work of those two men which provides evidence of political controversy.

In the Annals of the reign of Sun Quan we are told of the death in 225 of Sun Shao, not a member of the imperial clan but a man originally from Beihai, who had been appointed first Chancellor when Sun Quan became King of Wu in 221.³⁵ There had been debate over his appointment, first because Sun Shao was given the post instead of the veteran minister Zhang Zhao, whom many considered to have a far better claim,³⁶ and later, during his term of office, because Sun Shao was fiercely criticised by the reformer Zhang Wen and his outspoken protege Ji Yan. Ji Yan later suffered comparable accusations

³¹ Not drinking at an imperial banquet in Wu was obviously a health hazard. Compare the difficulties experienced by Yu Fan under Sun Quan: Chapter 8 at note 113.

³² The biography of Xie Ying is in *SGZ* 53/Wu 8, 1254-57, following that of his father Xie Zong. Xie Zong had married a daughter of Sun Quan, so Xie Ying was connected to the imperial family.

³³ Sources vary on the question of whether Xie Ying's work was entitled *Hou Han shu* or *Hou Han ji*. Fragments comprising one chapter, described as *Hou Han shu*, are preserved in the collection *Qijia Hou Han shu*. See also Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3219/3.

³⁴ See Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3228/1, discussing the *Hanguan yishe xuanyong* "Selection and Appointment in the Official System of Han," listed in *Xin Tang shu* 58, 1476 and Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhi*, 3230/3-3231/1, referring to the *Han yi* "Rituals of Han," by Ding Fu, cited in *Nan Qi shu* 9, 117.

³⁵ *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1131.

³⁶ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1221, and Chapter 8 at note 3.

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from his enemies and was compelled to commit suicide, while Zhang Wen was dismissed and disgraced.³⁷

The commentary of Pei Songzhi, attached to the record of the death of Sun Shao, contains an extract from the *Zhi lin*, "The Forest of Records," by the scholar and commentator Yu Xi of the Jin dynasty.³⁸ Yu Xi observes that he had been surprised a person so eminent as Sun Shao failed to obtain an individual biography in the history, and he asked the learned Liu Tingshu his opinion of the matter. Liu Tingshu believed that the original *Wu shu*, as compiled by Ding Fu and Xiang Jun, would indeed have contained such a text, but he noted that Sun Shao had been attacked by Zhang Wen. He suggested that Wei Zhao, a sympathiser of Zhang Wen, had echoed Zhang Wen's disapproval of Sun Shao and thus deprived him of a formal biography.

Such an explanation is plausible, and there are comparable *lacunae* in other histories. We are told that when Zhuge Ke came to power at the end of the reign of Sun Quan he sought to demonstrate liberal and reformist policies,³⁹ and it is possible that his change of the history committee was motivated as much by political as by scholarly consideration. In any event, the eclipse of Ding Fu and Xiang Jun was almost complete, and those portions of their work which were regarded as acceptable were surely taken over by their rivals and successors.

On the other hand, though the bibliography of *Sui shu* records a holding of the *Wu shu* of Wei Zhao and his colleagues in twenty-five chapters of an original fifty-five, and the two Tang bibliographies claim holdings of the full fifty-five chapters,⁴⁰ the work was later lost. No substantial, identified, portion now remains outside the quotations of Pei Songzhi - and the likely incorporation of great quantities of material, without attribution, by Chen Shou.

So the official history of Wu was evidently not completed. The death of Wei Zhao and Hua He removed the two chief organisers of the project, and it is doubtful whether Xie Ying, last survivor of the second committee, had the time, the inclination or the opportunity to finish the work before his death. *Wu shu* is quoted in biographies of Cao Cao and of Dong Zhuo, indicating that the period covered included the career of Sun Jian during the last years of Han rule,⁴¹ but there is not a great deal of information about men who played a role in the last years of the empire of Wu, and in all the annals of the three successors to Sun Quan Pei Songzhi's commentary has only one, rather irrelevant, quotation.⁴² One cannot be certain, of course, that this lack of citations occurs because the *Wu shu* had little information on the period, or because Chen Shou had taken over its material, but the situation seems to confirm the complaints of Hua He about the difficulty of maintaining the program.

³⁷ The biography of Zhang Wen is in SGZ 57/Wu 12, 1329-34, and the affair of Ji Yan is described at 1330-31; see also Fang, *Chronicle I*, 167-168 and 176-179, and Chapter 8 at note 131.

³⁸ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1132 PC note 1 quoting *Zhi lin*.

³⁹ e.g. SGZ 64/Wu 19, 1434; Fang *Chronicle II*, 105.

⁴⁰ *Sui shu* 33, 955, *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 1992, *Xin Tang shu* 58, 1455, Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwen zhi*, 3221/2-3222/1, and SGZJJ 1/Wei 1, 29b.

⁴¹ e.g. SGZ 1/Wei 1, 11 PC note 1, where *Wu shu* is quoted on the murder of Cao Cao's father Cao Song in Xu province in 194, and SGZ 6/Wei 6, 172 PC note 2 quoting *Wu shu* on the early career of Dong Zhuo in the northwest.

⁴² SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1167 PC note 1 *bis* quoting *Wu shu* on a prophetic dream of the minister Ding Gu of Sun Hao.

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Besides this work of the history office, based upon the official archives, there were three substantial private works on the history of the whole state of Wu: *Jiangbiao zhuan*, "Account of the Lands Beyond the Yangzi," by Yu Pu; *Wu lu*, "Record of Wu," by Zhang Bo, and *Wu li*, "Calendar of Wu," by Hu Zhong. All are quoted extensively and to good purpose by Pei Songzhi.

Yu Pu was a man from Gaoping, on the north China plain, who lived in the second half of the third century.⁴³ He was a scholar and commentator on the Confucian classics, and he also composed essays and poetry. After the conquest of Wu, he was appointed to the local government of the Poyang region in present-day Jiangxi, and there he compiled *Jiangbiao zhuan*, a history of the south written by a scholar from the north. Yu Pu died early in the fourth century, but *Jiangbiao zhuan* was presented by his son, Yu Bo, to the throne of Emperor Yuan of Eastern Jin, who gave orders that it should be placed in the imperial private library. By that time, the Jin government had been driven from the north by non-Chinese invaders, and the reconstructed empire was appropriately interested in the history of its predecessors of the south.

Jiangbiao zhuan is described by Pei Songzhi in his memorial as a thorough work, though uninspired in style. Evidently drawn from a different local tradition than that which formed the basis for *Wu shu*, it provided a rich source of material for the early history of the state, including the career of Sun Ce and the first years of Sun Quan. Some stories appear unduly anecdotal or exaggerated, and they can be contradicted by sources of greater reliability, but the general thrust of the history is consistent with information from other texts. The bibliography of *Sui shu* has no listing for the work, but the two Tang histories record it in thirty chapters.⁴⁴ It survives now only in fragments.

Zhang Bo, compiler of *Wu lu*, is said to have been the son of Zhang Yan, a man from Wu who became Grand Herald and died in 266 while returning from an embassy to Wei.⁴⁵ Zhang Yan himself compiled a work entitled *Mo ji* "Private Records." It is cited only twice by Pei Songzhi, but it provides the source for the celebrated "Second Memorial on the Occasion of Starting a Campaign" sent by Zhuge Liang to his master Liu Shan, Later Sovereign of Shu-Han about 228, and discussion of a letter from Zhuge Liang to his enemy Sima Yi of Wei.⁴⁶ Zhang Yan was evidently interested in such documents, perhaps in the form of a commonplace book, and he was evidently involved in negotiations with Shu-Han at an appropriate time.

Zhang Bo was probably born between 220 and 230, and he succeeded to his father's interests. We know nothing of his official career, but he must have had access to the archives of the state of Wu, for his *Wu lu* preserves a number of early documents, such as the letters and memorials of Sun Ce. Other items quoted by Pei Songzhi must be based on official records, and the work probably included a treatise of geography, or a history of the administrative units of the empire. Several pieces, however, not specifically documentary, are simply anecdotes or fragments of history. Zhang Bo lived into the

⁴³ The biography of Yu Pu is in *JS* 82, 2139-41.

⁴⁴ *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 1995, *Xin Tang shu*, 58, 1464.

⁴⁵ On Zhang Yan, see *SGZ* 48/Wu 3, 1165 and 1166 PC note 1 quoting *Wu lu*. On the relationship of Zhang Bo to Zhang Yan, see the *Suoyin* commentary of Sima Zhen of Tang to *SJ* 66, 2173 at note 3. On *Wu lu*, see *SGZJJ*, 37/Shu 7, 4a.

⁴⁶ For the Second Memorial, see *SGZ* 35/Shu 5, 923-24 PC note 3 quoting *Han-Jin chungiu* "Chronicle of Han and Jin" by Xi Zuochi, particularly at the end of the citation, where it is observed that this text did not appear in the *Collected Works* of Zhuge Liang, but was preserved in the *Mo ji* of Zhang Yan. On the letter to Sima Yan, see *SGZ* 35/Shu 5, 935-36 PC note 1.

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period after the Jin conquest, for an extract from *Wu lu* gives a date for the death of the last ruler, Sun Hao, in the winter at the beginning of 285.⁴⁷ The bibliography of *Sui shu* has no entry for *Wu lu*, but the two Tang histories record the work in thirty chapters. It survives now only in fragments.

The third private compilation on the history of the state is the *Wu li* of Hu Chong.

The biography of Hu Chong's father, Hu Zong, records that he was a man of notable scholarly and literary attainments who came to the south as a refugee from Runan commandery and joined Sun Ce when he conquered Kuaiji in 196.⁴⁸ He served at the court of Sun Quan, he was granted enfeoffment when Sun Quan became King of Wu in 221, and he died in 243. Hu Chong, who was probably born about 210, inherited his position, and survived to serve the conquering state of Jin; according to *Wu lu* he was a member of the imperial secretariat and ended as Grand Administrator of Wu commandery under the new regime.

During his service to the government of Wu, Hu Chong had been the Prefect of the Palace Writers, a senior clerical office, and in that capacity he had access to official material. His *Wu li* has information on the date of Sun Jian's death which is probably more reliable than some other sources;⁴⁹ and it provides the more rational account of the death of Sun Ce - in contrast to the eerie story in *Soushen ji* about the appearance of the ghost of Gan Ji.⁵⁰ From the quotations used by Pei Songzhi, the material in *Wu li* is closely connected with the court and the imperial family. There are occasions *Wu li* provides information on such matters as portents and embassies; and it is also *Wu li* which tells the story how Sun Shao was murdered and his wife took revenge on the assassins.⁵¹

There is no entry for *Wu li* in the bibliographical chapters of *Sui shu*, but the work is recorded in some six chapters in the two Tang histories.⁵² It survives now only in fragments.

Of these sources, therefore, *Jiangbiao zhuan* was compiled from local materials after the end of Wu, but the official *Wu shu*, and the private works *Wu lu* and *Wu li*, were all prepared by men who were subjects of the state and who had access to archival material. It is perhaps curious that Zhang Bo and Hu Chong are not recorded as official historians of Wu, but we can have confidence in their essential reliability, and although individual texts are sometimes contradictory or confusing, the historiographical tradition, thanks to the records maintained by Pei Songzhi, is very strong.

Historical writing in the third and fourth centuries:

Besides the records which depended on state archives and official sponsorship, the collection of Pei Songzhi reflects also the energy and activity of local and individual

⁴⁷ SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1178 PC note 3.

⁴⁸ The biography of Hu Zong is in SGZ 62/Wu 17, 1413-18; Hu Chong is referred to at 1418. Hu Chong was also the author of a work entitled *Dawen*, "Answers to Questions." SGZ 59/Wu 14, 1370 PC note 2.

⁴⁹ See note 1 to Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 3.

⁵¹ See Chapter 4.

⁵² *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 1996, *Xin Tang shu* 58, 1464.

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historians and biographers. Already in Later Han there was established a genre of *biezhuan* "Unofficial Biographies," giving details of the life of any significant person, and at the end of Later Han and the beginning of the Three Kingdoms period, there was a wide variety of similar compositions.⁵³ Among them were unofficial biographies of the eccentric scholar Ni Heng, and of the later Wang Bi and Ji Kang of Wei, of Chen Yun the soldier of Shu-Han, and of Yu Fan in Wu, of the dominant but short-lived minister Zhuge Ke, and of the sons Lu Ji and Lu Yun of the great Lu Xun. *Cao Man zhuan*, the marginal biography of Cao Cao written by a subject of Wu, though hostile to its subject, was a work in similar vein.⁵⁴

There were also collections of biographies, often arranged by categories such as the *Wenshi zhuan*, "Biographies of Literary Gentlemen," probably compiled by Zhang Zhi,⁵⁵ and the series by Huangfu Mi: *Gaoshi zhuan*, "Biographies of Eminent Gentlemen," *Yishi zhuan*, "Biographies of Gentlemen in Retirement," and a *Lienü zhuan*, "Biographies of Exemplary Women."⁵⁶ And the talented scholar Wang Can, who died in 217 at the age of forty, and who had personal contact with many of the men that he described, wrote *Hanmo yingxiong ji* "Records of the Heroes and Champions at the End of Han."⁵⁷

It was also common to publish the collected works of leading political and literary figures. The *Collected Works* of Zhuge Liang were edited by Chen Shou in twenty-four chapters, and presented to the court of Jin in 274.⁵⁸ There was naturally a collection of Cao Cao's writings, and the *Wei mingchen zou* was a general compilation of memorials by leading ministers of Wei. In more scholarly fields, there are collected works recorded for Kong Rong and Wang Lang, and a number of officials in Wu were similarly honoured.⁵⁹ Such collections are frequently of only minor importance for the history of the time, but it is not insignificant that these works were identifiable and available to Pei Songzhi more than a hundred years later.

Alongside the individual biographies and collections of writings, there was continuing interest in clan and family records, already attested from the Han period. Great families such as the Kong of Lu, who claimed descent from Confucius, and the Xun of Yingchuan, who produced the philosophers Xun Shuang and Xun Yue and the great assistants to Cao Cao Xun Yu and his cousin Xun You, compiled genealogies, records and eulogies of

⁵³ See, for example, *HHS* 103, 13, 3270, the Treatise on the Five Powers, commentary of Liu Zhao quoting the *Liang Ji biezhuan*, dealing with the leader of the clan of the imperial relatives by marriage, who dominated the government of Han for twenty years until his overthrow by Emperor Huan in 159; and for the popularity of this genre, whose compilers are often anonymous, see the list in Yao Zhenzong, *Hou Han yiwen zhi*, 2370/2-2374/1, and his *Sanguo yiwen zhi*, 3237/3-3241/2.

⁵⁴ See *SGZJJ* 1/Wei 1, 7b-8a: it was said that Cao Cao's childhood name was A-man: *SGZ* 1, 1 PC note 1.

⁵⁵ See *SGZJJ* 9/Wei 9, 23a, discussing the contradictory evidence on the personal name of the author of this work.

⁵⁶ See the biography of Huangfu Mi in *JS* 51, 1409-18 at 1418. Huangfu Mi also compiled a chronicle work *Diwang shiji*, "Annals by Generations of the Emperors and Kings."

⁵⁷ See *SGZJJ* 1/Wei 1, 18a. The work, commonly referred to by the shorter title of *Yingxiong ji*, is listed in *Sui shu* 33, 960, as the work of Wang Can. See also Yao Zhenzong, *Hou Han yiwen zhi*, 2354/1. The biography of Wang Can is in *SGZ* 21/Wei 21, 597-99.

⁵⁸ Chen Shou includes the list of chapters in his biography of Zhuge Liang, *SGZ* 35/Shu 5, 929. For his work as an editor, see *Huayang guo zhi* 11, 9b, and *JS* 82, 2137 [*SGZ* 1475 and 1477], also Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwen zhi*, 3283/2-3283/1.

⁵⁹ On the collected works of scholars and writers of Wu, see Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwen zhi*, 3284/3-3286/3.

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their ancestors and relatives; and their activity was matched by families of more provincial status such as the Lu of Wu commandery, the He of Lujiang and the Shao of Kuaiji, with many others.⁶⁰ The concept of family, always important in China, had developed to a very high level during the last years of Han, when kinship was first a means of seeking power and later a manner of searching for survival, and the tradition was only encouraged by the turmoil of the centuries which followed.⁶¹

Apart from family relationship, one may also note the style of local history which flourished in this period, works with titles including some such phrase as *qijiu zhuan* "accounts of venerable men and ancient affairs" or *xianxian zhuan* "accounts of worthy men of the past." According to one account, the genre was initiated by the scholar official Yuan Tang when he was Grand Administrator of Chenliu during the second century.⁶² Later, there were collections of biographies for such places as Runan commandery, the region of Chu, and Lingling in the further south,⁶³ while Chen Shou himself took part in the recension of the *Yibu qijiu zhuan*, the collection which related to the region of Yi

⁶⁰ For the *Kongshi pu*, "Register of the Kong Clan," see SGZ 16/Wei 16, 514 PC (JJ 36b). For the *Xunshi jiazhuan*, "Account of the Xun Family," see SGZ 10/Wei 10, 316 PC note 1 (JJ 17b); the author of that work, Xun Bozi, has biographies in *Song shu* 60, 1627-29, and *Nan shi* 33, 856-57. For the *Lushi shisong*, "Praises for the Generations of the Lu Clan," and the *Lushi zitang xiang zan*, "Eulogies for the Portraits in the Ancestral Temple of the Lu Clan," see SGZ 58/Wu 13, 1343 (JJ 1b-2a). For the *Lujiang Heshi jiazhuan*, "Account of the He Family of Lujiang," see SGZ 21/Wei 21, 622 PC note 5 (JJ 53b). For the *Kuaiji Shaoshi jiazhuan*, "Account of the Shao Family of Kuaiji," see SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1170 PC note 1 (JJ 35a).

⁶¹ On this development, see in particular Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*.

⁶² The *Hou Han ji* of Yuan Hong, 21, 8b, says that Yuan Tang became Grand Administrator of Chenliu commandery under Later Han in 153, and he commissioned the *Chenliu qijiu zhuan*. *Sui shu* 33, 974, lists two books of that title, one ascribed to Quan Cheng of Han and the other to Su Lin of Wei, and the Tang bibliographies are similar. It appears that the work inaugurated by Yuan Tang was continued by later scholars.

Another early work in this genre was *Sanfu jue lu*, "Evaluative Record of the Three Adjuncts," a collection of biographies of gentlemen from the three commanderies about the Former Han capital, Chang'an, compiled by Zhao Qi, who died in 201. The work is now lost, but it is quoted by Pei Songzhi and in notes to the *Hou Han shu* of Fan Ye compiled by Li Xian and his colleagues of Tang. See *Cambridge Han*, 645 [Ebrey, "Economic and Social History of Later Han"].

⁶³ On the *Runan xianxian zhuan*, ascribed to Zhou Fei of the third century, see SGZ 23/Wei 23, 658 (JJ 5a), and *Sui shu* 33, 974.

On the *Chuguo xianxian zhuan*, by Zhang Fang of the Jin period, see SGZ 4/Wei 4, 141 (JJ 50b), and *Sui shu* 33, 974. Under the Wei, from 232 to 252, Chu was the fief of Cao Biao, son of Cao Cao (see his biography in SGZ 20/Wei 20, 586-87); that territory was in the region of Later Han Huainan commandery, in present-day Anhui. The men described in extracts from *Chuguo xianxian zhuan* cited by Pei Songzhi, however, are associated with the commanderies of Nanyang and Xiangyang, about present-day Henan. It seems that the appellation Chu was used by Zhang Fang as a literary reference to that region, and possibly to Jing province in general, as the heartland of the pre-Qin state of Chu (cf. HS 28B, 1665-66, and note 9 to Chapter 1).

On the *Lingling xianxian zhuan*, see SGZ 6/Wei 6, 216 (JJ 90a). There is no good early evidence for the identity of the author, but some modern editions ascribe the work to the historian Sima Biao, author of *Xu Han shu*.

On the genre of local biographies, see the list in Yao Zhenzong, *Hou Han yiwenzhi*, 2369/1-2370/1, and in his *Sanguo yiwenzhi*, 3236/1-3237/3. We may note, however, that there were a number of works which included the phrase *qijiu zhuan* or *xianxian zhuan* as part of their title, but which were not associated with any particular region of the empire: thus Pei Songzhi quotes from works entitled *Xianxian xingzhuang*, "Conduct and Character of Worthy Men of the Past" (e.g. SGZJJ 1, 69b and note 75 to Chapter 3), while *Sui shu* 33, 974, and the Tang bibliographies list a *Hainei xianxian zhuan*, "Accounts of Worthy Men of the Past Within the Seas." Such works, of course, should be classified as general collections.

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province, heart-land of Shu-Han.⁶⁴ Two notable compilations were the *Kuaiji xianxian zhuan* of Xie Cheng, brother of Sun Quan's concubine the Lady Xie, who also wrote a *Hou Han shu* in 130 chapters, and the *Wu xianxian zhuan* of Lu Kai, a cousin of Lu Xun who became Chancellor on the Left during the reign of Sun Hao.⁶⁵

This tradition of local history was cautiously maintained after the unification by Jin in 280. There was no fourth century work on south China comparable in scope and style to the *Huayang guo zhi*, "Record of the Countries to the South of Mount Hua," in which Chang Qu traced the history of the independent states of the Sichuan region from the time before Qin to the empire of Shu-Han and into the fourth century. *Jiangbiao zhuan* however, was compiled by the northerner Yu Pu, and another Jin official, Wang Fan, who held office in the far south, compiled a *Jiao-Guang erzhou chunqiu*, "Chronicle of the Two Provinces Jiao and Guang," and presented it to the imperial court in 287.⁶⁶ Some time later, after the displacement of the Jin government to the south, Yu Yu, a man from Kuaiji, compiled his *Kuaiji dianlu*, "Authoritative Record of Kuaiji," in twenty chapters, as well as a history of the dynasty, *Jin shu*.⁶⁷

Amongst the scholarship of the Jin period, moreover, there was a considerable body of historical analysis and criticism, direct and explicit, and generally more hostile than the indirect Confucianist tradition of praise and blame through the selection of facts. Sun Sheng of the fourth century was the author of several books cited by Pei Songzhi, including *Weishi chunqiu* "Chronicle of the House of Wei," and *Jin yangqiu*, "Chronicle of Jin," and his *Zaji*, "Miscellany," presents a number of critical comments on character and conduct,⁶⁸ while Sun Sheng's direct contemporary Xi Zuochi, author of *Han-Jin*

⁶⁴ *Huayang guo zhi* 11, 10a, says that a certain Chen Shu and others wrote a *Ba-Shu qijiu zhuan*, relating to Ba and Shu commanderies, and that Chen Shou used this work as a basis for his own work dealing with the broader region of Yi province, *Yibu qijiu zhuan*. The biography of Chen Shou in *JS* 82 records him as the compiler of an *Yidu qijiu zhuan*. *Sui shu* 33, 974, lists an *Yibu qijiu zhuan* in 14 chapters by Chen Changshou, while *Jiu Tang shu* 58, 1479, and *Xin Tang shu* 46, 2001, both list a book with the same title and number of chapters by Chen Shou. It seems likely that the additional character *chang* in the *Sui shu* citation is a miswriting.

⁶⁵ Neither of these works are cited by Pei Songzhi, but they are attested by *Sui shu* 33, 975 and by the Tang bibliographies. See Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwenzhi*, 3236/1 and 3237/1.

On Xie Cheng, see *SGZ* 50/Wu 5, 1196-97. Fragments comprising eight chapters of his *Hou Han shu* are preserved in the collection *Qijia Hou Han shu*.

The biography of Lu Ji is in *SGZ* 61/Wu 16, 1399-1409.

⁶⁶ *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1110 PC (*JJ* 33a). *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1385 (*JJ* 13a), refers also to a *Jiao-Guang ji* "Records of Jiao and Guang [Provinces]" by Wang Yin. Wang Yin, whose biography is in *JS* 82, 2142-43, was the author of a number of works including a *Jin shu* "History of Jin" and a *Shu ji* "Records of Shu," both of which are quoted by Pei Songzhi. It seems likely, however, that the *Jiao-Guang ji* ascribed to him is actually a miswriting for the *Jiao-Guang erzhou chunqiu* of Wang Fan.

⁶⁷ See *SGZ* 21/Wei 21, 605 (*JJ* 23b-24a), and *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1100 (*JJ* 14b). The biography of Yu Yu is in *JS* 82, 1143-47. He was also the author of *Zhu Yu zhuan*, "An Account of All the Yu [Clan]."

⁶⁸ The biography of Sun Sheng is in *JS* 82, 2147-49. He had an active and eventful official career as well as a scholarly one, and he appears to have died about 375 at the age of seventy-two *sui*. We are told that his *Jin yangqiu* was particularly praised for its direct moral comments. [The character *yang* was substituted for the normal and expected *chun* to avoid tabu: the Lady Zheng Achun (d.326), posthumously honoured as an empress, was the favoured concubine of Emperor Yuan of Jin and the mother of Emperor Jianwen: *JS* 32, 979, and Mather, *Tales of the World*, 503. Other works also made the change, but most returned later to their original titles.]

Besides *Zaji*, Pei Songzhi also cites *Zayu*, "Miscellaneous Comments," *Yitong zayu*, "Comparisons and Comments," *Yitong ping*, "Comparisons and Criticisms," and sometimes simply *Ping*, "Criticisms," all of which he ascribes to Sun Sheng. It seems likely that these different citations in fact refer to the same

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chunqiu, "Chronicle of Han and Jin," and the local history *Xiangyang ji*, "Records of Xiangyang," made specific judgements in his historical writings.⁶⁹

So far we have been dealing with works which are primarily concerned to describe the real and practical history of their chosen time and place. There may be anecdotes which exaggerate or embellish reality, but they are generally based upon, and can be tested against, other critical sources. The collection of Pei Songzhi, however, gives ample evidence of a romantic and mystical streak in the writings of this time. In their review of the imperial edition of *Sanguo zhi*, the eighteenth-century editors of *Siku quanshu* complained that Pei Songzhi was sometimes inconsistent and erratic, and also that he was excessively fond of strange stories. And there is no question that several of the items in his commentary may better be regarded as fantastic fiction than as serious history. We have examined in some detail the account of the death of Sun Ce after his wounding by the clients of his late enemy Xu Gong, and one must conclude that the whole series of incidents involving the master Gan Ji, culminating in his ghostly appearance to Sun Ce as he lay upon his sick-bed, must be discounted from any description of reality.⁷⁰

That story comes from *Soushen ji*, "Records of Enquiry about the Spirits," compiled by Gan Bao of the early fourth century. Gan Bao was a recognised scholar, author of a *Jin ji*, "Annals of Jin," and of studies on *Zuo zhuan* and on the offices and rituals of the Zhou dynasty. He was also interested in the *Book of Changes*, and particularly in the interpretations of the mystical school of Jing Fang.⁷¹ Such a variety of scholarly interest was by no means unusual: from the period of Later Han, trends of thought had encouraged men to combine the supernal with the real, and during the third and fourth centuries one may find a variety of approaches which sought a synthesis of traditional Confucianism, popular and philosophical Taoism and the new imported faith of Buddhism.⁷²

One aspect of this development was an interest and concern with tales of the marvellous and the unusual. Among the works cited by Pei Songzhi is the *Lieyi zhuan*, "Accounts of Strange Things," which appears to have been first compiled by Cao Pi,

collection of essays. As examples of Sun Sheng's comments, which are frequently hostile to the men of Wu, one may cite his indignation at the surrender of Hua Xin to Sun Ce at the instigation of Yu Fan, in Chapter 3 at note 68, and also his discussion of the transfer of warlord power in Wu from Sun Ce to his brother Sun Quan, *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, 1113 PC note 1.

⁶⁹ The biography of Xi Zuochi is in *JS* 82, 2152-58. Much of the biography, 2154-58, consists of the text of a memorial arguing that the Shu-Han dynasty should be regarded as the legitimate successor, through blood relationship, to the Later Han, and thus the basis for the continuing chronology by reign title. He was the first scholar of the Jin state to do so, and his *Han-Jin chunqiu* was composed to cover the period from the time of Emperor Guangwu of Later Han to the reign of Emperor Xiao-Min, last ruler of Western Jin in the early fourth century, in order to emphasise the continuity from Later Han to the surrender of Shu-Han to Jin, rather than the succession by abdication through the Wei. See also note 74 to Chapter 7.

As an example of Xi Zuochi's commentary, see the remarks taken from his "Discussion" (*lun*) on the death of Zhuge Liang, *SGZ* 40/Shu 10, 1001 PC note 3, quoted again by Sima Guang, *ZZTJ* 72, 2300; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 440.

⁷⁰ See the end of Chapter 2.

⁷¹ The biography of Gan Bao is in *JS* 82, 2149-51. On the school of Jing Fang, which developed during the first century BC, see, for example, Tjan Tjoe Som, *White Tiger Discussions* I, Table I, and pages 94, 95, 146. The biography tells us that Gan Bao was particularly drawn to the study of the supernatural because of various incidents in his own family; notably the experience of a concubine of his father, who was shut into his tomb by the jealous former wife, but was found in a coma and then revived ten years later.

⁷² See, for example, the chapters "Confucian, Legalist and Taoist Thought in Later Han" by Ch'en, and "Philosophy and Religion from Han to Sui," by Demiéville, in *Cambridge Han*, 766-807 and 808-846.

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Emperor Wen of Wei, and completed by the minister of Jin, Zhang Hua, towards the end of the third century,⁷³ and similar collections were popular throughout the centuries of division. We have noted earlier the *Yiyuan*, "Garden of Marvels," compiled by the fifth century scholar Liu Jingshu, as a very doubtful source for the given name of the father of Sun Jian, included in a story on the supernatural origins of the fortunes of the family.⁷⁴

Pei Songzhi did not refer to that story of Sun Zhong and the melons, but he did include other items of magic or prophecy, such as the dreams which promised greatness to Sun Jian, Sun Ce and Sun Quan,⁷⁵ and besides Gan Bao he made particular use of the Taoist encyclopaedist Ge Hong of the fourth century, not only his basic work *Baopu zi*, "The Master Who Embraces Simplicity," but also his *Shenxian zhuan*, "Accounts of Spirits and Immortals."⁷⁶

So the commentary contains several anecdotes which fit ill with a rationalist taste, but Pei Songzhi well reflected the patterns of his time and the traditions of Chinese history. And such open eclecticism is quite appropriate, for the ultimate purpose of history in the Chinese tradition is not only to record the events of the past, but also to express moral judgement and, further, to display models of behaviour, good and bad. A historian should tell the truth, but real truth is more than a list of temporal facts.

Story cycles: exaggeration and allegory:

This brings us to contemplate a basic inspiration for all the recording and recounting of the events of the Three Kingdoms period which Pei Songzhi preserved for our attention. To men of that time, and of the years which followed, the fall of Han and the long-drawn civil war between north, south and west was not only a period of historical importance, but was also an age of romantic deeds and high moral conduct. There had been brave ministers and critics in the centuries of Han, and members of the Proscribed Party during the reigns of Huan and Ling suffered courageously for their sense of what was right. Nevertheless, the immediacy of civil war, with an empire in ruins, with everything to gain or to lose for those who took part in the contest, gave high profile to the individual's sense of personal conduct and honour, which found fewer opportunities for expression against the background of an established state.

⁷³ SGZ 13/Wei 13, 405 (*JJ* 22b-23a), and Yao Zhenzong, *Sanguo yiwén zhī*, 3266/1. *Sui shu* 33, 980, ascribes the compilation to Cao Pi, but *Jiu Tang shu* 46, 2005, and *Xin Tang shu* 59, 1539, both have Zhang Hua as the writer. Some passages in the surviving portions of the work describe events after the death of Cao Pi, so although the collection may have been begun by him, it was completed by a later hand.

Zhang Hua (232-300), statesman and scholar of Western Jin, was the author of another collection, *Bowu zhi*, "Records of Many Things." See Greatrex, *The Bowu Zhi*, particularly 25 and 169-170 note 111.

⁷⁴ See note 4 to Chapter 2.

⁷⁵ On the omens which accompanied the birth of Sun Jian, see Chapter 2 at note 5. SGZ 50/Wu 5, 1195 PC quoting *Soushen ji*, tells how when the Lady Wu, wife of Sun Jian, was pregnant with Sun Ce she had a dream that the moon entered her womb; when she was pregnant with Sun Quan she dreamt in similar fashion of the sun.

⁷⁶ On Ge Hong (283-343) and his work, see Sailey, *The Master Who Embraces Simplicity*. The biography of Ge Hong is in *JS* 72, 1911-13, and is translated by Sailey at 521-532.

SGZ 49/Wu 4, 1192 PC note 1 quotes a story from *Shenxian zhuan* which tells how Shi Xie was taken ill and died, but was revived three days later by the immortal Dong Feng of Houguan - the anecdote may be of some value as evidence for contact by sea along the south-eastern coast of China: see Chapter 1.

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Given the possibilities for exemplary exaggeration, therefore, and given the intensity and excitement of the period, it is hardly surprising that anecdotes and even whole cycles of stories should have added an air of romance to the already dramatic facts of history. Though the degree to which this embellishment took place is often impossible to assess, and one cannot always be sure which anecdote is based upon reality and which is splendid imagination, one can discern, among the many incidents recounted by Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi, a pattern of romantic historical fiction.

We have referred to the manner in which the story of the Taoist Gan Ji is interwoven with that of Sun Ce, and one may imagine how the activities of that young warlord must have attracted such tales. In similar fashion, the biography of He Qi, conqueror of the Yue people of the south on behalf of Sun Ce and Sun Quan, may also contain remnants of a popular cycle of stories. The main text of Chen Shou, among a series of incidents which demonstrate He Qi's courage, ruthlessness and determination, tells how he stormed a camp of his enemies on the top of a precipice, by ordering his soldiers to use their arrows as pitons in the cracks of the rock to gain foothold for the climb. Immediately afterwards, Pei Songzhi quotes a supplementary tale from *Baopu zi*, which relates the occasion He Qi was faced by a master of preventive magic who used his spells to blunt the swords and arrows of his men. He Qi solved the problem by ordering his troops to arm themselves with cudgels so they might beat the enemy rather than piercing them; the technique was fully successful and another victory was recorded.⁷⁷

It is not difficult to comprehend how a commander such as He Qi would have attracted such tales, and it is not surprising that similar tales gathered about other notable individuals of the time. Many incidents from such story-cycles can be found in the commentary of Pei Songzhi, and in some instances we can actually observe the process of accretion:⁷⁸

According to the biography of Cao Cao as written by Chen Shou, Cao Cao abandoned Dong Zhuo after his usurpation of power at Luoyang in 189, and sought to escape under a false name to join the rebel forces in the east. On the road, he was arrested on suspicion, but someone spoke for him and he was able to continue on his way. The commentary of Pei Songzhi to this passage quotes a series of texts with elaborations of the incident:

Firstly, *Wei shu*, the official history of the dynasty, tells how Cao Cao and a small escort called upon the house of an old friend, Lü Boshe, in Chenggao. Lü Boshe was not at home, but his son led a party of retainers to attack the apparent intruders, and seized some horses and goods. In the fighting, Cao Cao himself killed a number of men. This tale may be true, or it may represent an apologia against those which follow.

Second, there is *Wei-Jin shiyu*, "Tales of the Generations of Wei and Jin," by Guo Song of the latter part of the third century. A first extract tells how Cao Cao went to call upon Lü Boshe, and Lü Boshe with his five sons came out to welcome him with appropriate ceremony. Cao Cao, however, became suspicious that there might be a plan to take him, and during the night he fled away, killing eight people in the course of his escape.

A further extract from *Wei-Jin shiyu* tells how when Cao Cao later came to Zhongmou, a short distance east of Chenggao and thus further along his way of escape, he was arrested as a fugitive. A junior official of the county, however, who recognised

⁷⁷ SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1378-79 and PC note 1. The "Magic of Yue" is also discussed in Chapter 1.

⁷⁸ SGZ 1/Wei 1, 5 and PC notes 2 and 3.

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Cao Cao and admired him as a man of great potential in the troubled times to come, concealed Cao Cao's true identity and argued successfully for his release.

Thirdly, there is a note from the *Zaji*, "Miscellany," of Sun Sheng, who says that Cao Cao mistook the sounds of food being prepared as indication that he was about to be attacked, and it was for that reason he made his murderous escape. It is Sun Sheng who ascribes to him the devastating explanation, "I would rather betray others than have another man betray me!"

After all this, one can see the development which culminates in the incident in *Romance*; the story of how Cao Cao is rescued at Chenggao and joined by the honest Chen Gong, how the two men then visit the home of Lü Boshe, how they misinterpret the conversation overheard from the kitchen about slaughtering pigs, how Cao Cao consummates his treachery by slaying their host as he returns with wine for their banquet, and how Chen Gong leaves him in horror and disgust, later to become his bitter enemy.⁷⁹

This story of Cao Cao, with its critical delineation of his cruelty, craft and selfishness, is a notable example of the progressive development of a single incident, and also shows the degree to which *Romance* has adapted and extended the historical record for its own artistic purposes.

We shall consider *Romance* further below, but even without such later embellishments, it is obvious that some of the material extant quite close to the time of the historical events, and which has been accepted for preservation by Pei Songzhi, already represents the exaggeration of fact into fiction, or even a complete work of imagination, applied for one reason or another to a central figure or incident.⁸⁰

Cao Cao, of course, a dominant figure in his time, became the centre of a host of stories. Let us take another example, this time not recorded by Pei Songzhi, but preserved in the contemporary collection *Shishuo xinyu*. There we find a tale of Cao Cao and his later rival Yuan Shao at a time when they were both young men about the imperial Han capital of Luoyang. It is said that one evening they broke into a wedding party, kidnapped the bride, and Cao Cao raped her. Then they were pursued, and Yuan Shao became caught in a thorn hedge. Cao Cao called out, "Here is the villain!" Yuan Shao, in panic, forced his way out, and both men were able to escape.⁸¹

It is, of course, possible to regard this story as the account of a real incident, typical of the behaviour of young men of rank during the last years of Han. I suspect, however, that no serious credit should be given to the details of the incident. On the one hand, it is a good story about a celebrated historical figure; but at the same time it is an allegory for later political events. If we consider the situation in the years after 196, when Cao Cao had taken Emperor Xian into his protection and also his custody, then Cao Cao may be seen as a successful kidnapper. Yuan Shao would have been only too pleased to share in the spoils, but Cao Cao pre-empted him and later, in his propaganda at the time of the

⁷⁹ *Romance*, chapter 4. The incident is also the theme of a celebrated traditional drama, commonly called *Zhuofang Cao*, "Capture and Release of Cao Cao" (Arlington and Acton, *Famous Chinese Plays*, 132-151, *Peking Opera Texts*, 46, and *Jingju jumù chutan*, 69).

⁸⁰ Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 373, similarly refers to "such largely pseudo-historical sources" as *Yingxiong ji* and *Cao Man zhuan*. *Cao Man zhuan* is certainly a piece of hostile propaganda, and in many respects must be considered unreliable, but I would give Wang Can's *Yingxiong ji* more credit than a number of other works.

⁸¹ *Shishuo xinyu* C (27), 538; Mather, *Tales of the World* (Guile and Chicanery), 441. Mather interprets the character *jie* simply as "made off with," but in the context of the story the alternative, more vicious, reading, seems appropriate.

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campaign about Guandu in 200, accused Yuan Shao of seeking to seize the Emperor. So he cast blame upon his rival for what he had actually done himself.⁸²

If the story is interpreted in this way, there is no need to grant it any reality in fact: it is a purely allegorical fiction.

While this is an extreme case, and the truth of the story is hardly important, there are other anecdotes, recorded by Pei Songzhi, which are likewise based only in abstract form upon any historical reality. In discussing the drama about the death of Sun Ce and the magic of Gan Ji, I have questioned most seriously whether Sun Ce, in the situation of the year 200, had any plan to make an attack to the north against Cao Cao, let alone whether he actually embarked upon such a foolhardy venture.⁸³ Similarly, the *Xiandi chunqiu* of Yuan Ye, quoted by Pei Songzhi, has a detailed account of how, in the period after the Red Cliffs, Sun Quan sent his cousin Sun Yu to lead an invasion of Shu province in present-day Sichuan, but this plan was halted because of the objections and the military activity of Liu Bei. I have argued, however, that the plan may have been discussed, but no such expedition was ever actually launched. Once Liu Bei had made his opposition known, the project became impossible and dangerous - and the circumstantial description by Yuan Ye may better be regarded as the account of a war game than of a real campaign.⁸⁴

Dealing with this early history of the Three Kingdoms, therefore, we are faced with a wide range of material, ranging from reasonably well-established and reliable fact to accounts of incidents which have either been grossly exaggerated or are completely fictitious, even though they are based upon known historical individuals or situations.

In the Introduction to his admirable translation of *Shishuo xinyu*, Mather has observed that the vast majority of the characters appearing in that collection are known to history from other reliable sources, and the background information is likewise consistent with attested facts. As he observes, and we may agree, some embellishment, exaggeration, local colour and fictionalisation was more or less expected even in the standard histories. On the other hand, the fact that a historical novel in the West gives, for example, the correct date of the battle of Bosworth in 1485 does not mean that any other statement in the book, as for example the true fate of the princes in the Tower at the hands of their uncle Richard III, is necessarily correct.

Mather himself observes that "the writing of history does not seem to have been the intention of the author" of *Shishuo xinyu*.⁸⁵ And certainly in the Tang period, the compilers of the standard history *Jin shu* were criticised for using anecdotes from *Shishuo xinyu* in their own work of history.⁸⁶ Nienhauser has remarked that "The T'ang dynasty ... marks the era in which scholars first came to distinguish fiction from history,"⁸⁷ but the historical achievement of Tang was the culmination of development over several centuries. There are a number of occasions that commentators of the sixth

⁸² See, for example, de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 252, translating the passage in *Zizhi tongjian* 65, 2015, based upon *HHS* 74A/64A, 2390, recording a debate in Yuan Shao's council in 200.

⁸³ See Chapter 3 at note 95.

⁸⁴ See note 29 to Chapter 5, and on the fictional development of this theme, see below.

⁸⁵ *Tales of the World*, xiv.

⁸⁶ Liu Zhiji, *Shitong* 5, 2b-3a, cited and translated in Lee, "Historical Value," 121-122.

⁸⁷ Nienhauser, "Some Preliminary Remarks on Fiction," 1.4.

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century criticise *Shishuo xinyu* on matters of fact,⁸⁸ and the memorial of Pei Songzhi, writing in the early fifth century, taken with a number of items in his commentary, suggests that he was interested in the comparison of texts with a view to judging which was correct.

So I consider *Shishuo xinyu* and similar collections primarily as works of anecdotal fiction. It may be possible to view the incidents they recount as examples or reconstructions of the mores and customs of the time they describe, and they certainly echo the tales which were told about those men and their time, but they were not designed, nor do they serve, as history. It is not that all the stories are false, but for the most part it is simply not possible to determine which of them are true and to make meaningful use of them in terms of modern history-writing. And I believe that the Chinese distinguished quite early between stories of pure entertainment and those which sought seriously to provide factual information.⁸⁹

The problem becomes more difficult, however, when we consider the material preserved in the work of Chen Shou and of Pei Songzhi, not to mention the numerous works which were composed during the third and fourth centuries, which are not specifically cited in the text or commentary of *Sanguo zhi*, but which sometimes survive in whole or in part through other means. As we have seen, there are occasions when formal statements in these early histories must be discounted in the context of other material, or even by contrast with likely reality. And such judgement must often be uncertain, for we are seeking to apply modern standards of proof to a complex body of history, anecdote and fiction. In a very special way, we are dealing not with simple categories of truth and falsehood, but with an even-spread spectrum from one to the other.

Perhaps the most important point is that the commentary of Pei Songzhi, with the original text of Chen Shou, has preserved a great quantity of literature, compiled close to the time which it purports to describe, and reflecting the interests and emphases of that period and the years which immediately followed. As such, the whole of *Sanguo zhi* represents a remarkable literary compilation, with the authority of the standard history tradition on one side, and the vitality of the great collections on the other. This is an impressive achievement, and it is quite appropriate that Pei Songzhi, Fan Ye of *Hou Han shu*, and Liu Yiqing of *Shishuo xinyu* should have been such direct contemporaries.

The distortions of Romance:

Hitherto, I have paid small attention to the information provided by *Sanguo [zhi] yanyi*, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, for the compilation of that work is well separated in time from the events which it purports to recount, and the material which it contains has no independent authority. Disconcertingly, however, Chinese tradition for much of the last thousand years has viewed the history of the Three Kingdoms period through the distorting glass of *Romance*. In modern times, the novel has been too often described as

⁸⁸ See, for example, Mather, *Tales of the World* (10: Admonitions and Warnings), 286 and 287, recording a note from the *Wenzhang zhi* sponsored by Emperor Ming of the Liu Song dynasty in the later fifth century which casts doubt upon incident 18, and the Commentary of Liu Jun of the early sixth century, which remarks baldly of incident 21 that "This account...is badly mistaken."

⁸⁹ See also the discussion in note 12 above.

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"seven parts history, three parts fiction,"⁹⁰ and there is some suggestion that it has value as a means to interpret the history of that time. In fact, *Romance* must be regarded as a special piece of literary composition, strongly influenced by the period of its development and completion during the Song and Ming dynasties.

Curiously, in the light of their later popularity, there is minimal evidence for the existence or the content of tales about the Three Kingdoms among surviving literary material from the latter part of the first millennium. Though many items of fiction have been preserved from the Tang dynasty, none deal directly with any aspect of the Three Kingdoms period, and it is only through passing references that we can confirm the existence of some popular tradition associated with the heroes of the end of Han.⁹¹

By the latter part of the Northern Song dynasty however, the eleventh and early twelfth centuries AD, we have evidence of the popularity of tales about the Three Kingdoms, and the poet and writer Su Shi records that children were entertained by stories about Liu Bei and Cao Cao, and that they supported the former against the latter.⁹² So Liu Bei was already popular, and Cao Cao was seen as the powerful villain. In his own works, moreover, the two *fu* rhapsodies on the Red Cliff, and one *ci* poem "Meditations on the Red Cliff," Su Shi indicates that the site of that battle had already acquired a patina of heroism and splendour. In particular, in the first of the rhapsodies and in the lines from the poem:

I think of Zhou Yu in those days,
Newly married to the young Qiao girl -
His heroic looks, majestic and spirited,
Holding a feather fan and wearing a silk kerchief,
Amidst talk and laughter,
He reduced his enemy to flying ashes and smouldering smoke;
he gives an important position to that commander, while the later celebrated Zhuge Liang
has no such dominant role.⁹³

⁹⁰ This celebrated judgement is commonly credited to the modern writer and critic Lu Hsün in his *Brief History of Chinese Fiction*. As Yang, "Literary Transformation," 81-82, points out, similar comment had been made by the eighteenth-century scholar Zhang Xuecheng.

⁹¹ The article on Three Kingdoms stories during the Tang period by the pseudonymous Yisu presents evidence for the circulation of such tales, and in the poem *Jiaoer shi*, "The Arrogant Child," Li Shangyin (813-858) describes how his young son laughs at his father's guests for being "barbarous like Zhang Fei" or "stammering like Deng Ai." Both Zhang Fei and Deng Ai are characters of the Three Kingdoms period, and stories concerning them must have been well-known for a young child to have been aware of them. See, for example, Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, 9-10 and 327-328 note 26. Cf., however, Ma, "Professional Story-Telling," 233.

Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 368, summarises the discussion on the evidence for this early tradition, and concludes "that from an early period on the hero cycles that grew up around the exploits of the San-kuo figures became a major subject of oral story-telling, and this tradition has continued right down into the twentieth century."

⁹² *Dongpo zhilin* 1, 7; but again cf. Ma, "Professional Story-Telling," 233, and Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 368 and note. Su Shi in fact ascribes the observation to a friend.

⁹³ *Chibi huaigu* and *Chibi fu*. The lines quoted come from the translation of the *ci* by Liu Wu-chi, *Introduction to Chinese Literature*, 110. Translations of the two rhapsodies by A C Graham appear in the *Anthology* edited by Birch, 385-388. See also note 78 to Chapter 4 above.

On the comparative importance of Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang at the Red Cliffs, see also Chapter 4 at notes 82 to 88. We may note, incidentally, that Zhou Yu had taken the Lady Qiao as his wife in 199, so they had been married almost ten years.

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On the other hand, although we know that some story-tellers specialised in tales concerning the Three Kingdoms,⁹⁴ there are no extant *huaben* texts of vernacular tales which might provide information on their content. The earliest significant written source on popular fiction concerning the Three Kingdoms is *Sanguo zhi pinghua*, dating from the Yuan dynasty in the early fourteenth century. That work, though apparently clumsy in style, and concerned rather with the sensationalist and supernatural than with serious history, confirms the popular regard of Cao Cao and his state of Wei as the forces of evil, and emphasises the achievements of Zhuge Liang and the legitimacy of Shu-Han.⁹⁵

In more scholarly terms, the view of Shu-Han as true successor to Later Han had been confirmed by the arguments and arrangements of the great philosopher Zhu Xi in his *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*.⁹⁶ For the men of Southern Song, maintaining a state in the south and west, but exiled from the Chinese heart-land about the Yellow River, the succession of the Liu house of Shu-Han appeared more valuable and attractive than the great but morally flawed power of Wei, and from that time of Southern Song, ideal scholarship and popular opinion were quite agreed on the true values of the Three Kingdoms.

To some extent parallel with the vernacular tradition, plays about the heroes and events of the Three Kingdoms appear to have flourished from the time of Northern Song, in early "shadow plays" *piying xi*, popular during the eleventh century, on the regular stage during Southern Song, and in the *yuanben* style of the contemporary Jin dynasty in the north. During the Yuan period of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, several *zaju* dramas were concerned with the Three Kingdoms, and some of them have survived to this day. Like the popular stories, theatrical tradition generally sympathises with Shu-Han and the heroes of that state.⁹⁷

It is, however, the novel *Sanguo yanyi*, here cited as *Romance*, which represents the major and most influential version of later tradition concerning the Three Kingdoms. The essential composition is commonly ascribed to Luo Guanzhong of the late fourteenth century, but Luo Guanzhong's work, which appears to have been commonly titled *Sanguo zhizhuan*, became the basis for a number of different publications of varying quality. Most notably, a more literary and sophisticated version of the novel, *Sanguo zhi*

⁹⁴ *Dongjing meng Hua lu*, "A Record of the Dreaming of Hua [Xu] in the Eastern Capital," by Meng Yuanlao of the early twelfth century, records that during the last years of Northern Song there was a story-teller in Kaifeng named Huo Sijiu, who specialised in tales of the Three Kingdoms.

⁹⁵ On the evolution of *Romance*, see Liu Ts'un-yan, "Authenticity of the Historical Romances," 221, and "Lo Kuan-chung and His Historical Romances," 93, also Yang, "Use of the 'San-kuo chih'," 50-61.

⁹⁶ As we have observed elsewhere, Zhu Xi chose to follow the calendrical arrangements of Shu-Han in preference to those of Wei, formerly accepted by the *Zizhi tongjian* of Sima Guang. See Chapter 7 at note 74, also note 69 above.

⁹⁷ For a general discussion of the development of the dramatic tradition in China, see, for example, Liu Wu-chi, *An Introduction to Chinese Literature*, 159-184.

Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, has discussed the early dramatic tradition of the Yuan and Ming. At 371 he notes that:

when one reviews the extant plays, one finds very little in the way of textual overlap that might indicate direct reliance on any of these dramatic works as sources, and even the basic story elements often depart very radically from the narratives of the *Yen-i*.

On occasions during the discussion of the history, I have referred to plays in the Yuan and Ming drama, and in the traditional repertoire of the Beijing opera and of modern China, as recorded or summarised in *Guben Yuan-Ming zaju*, in Arlington and Acton, *Famous Chinese Plays*, in *Peking Opera Texts*, and in *Jingju jumu chutan*. Apart from those of the Yuan and Ming periods, however, the plays which may be performed at the present day commonly owe a great deal to the novel, and they no longer represent a truly independent tradition.

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tongsu yanyi, appeared in 1522, and more than a hundred years later, at the beginning of the Qing dynasty in the mid-seventeenth century, a revised version was published by the scholar Mao Zonggang. The Mao Zonggang edition forms the basis for the present-day text of *Romance*.⁹⁸

In his discussion of the development of the novel, however, Plaks has argued that the 1522 edition is based upon interpretations of that time, not upon the earlier work ascribed to Luo Guanzhong:

the *San-kuo chih yen-yi*, as we know it from the 1522 text and later editions, [is] an example of the sixteenth century literati novel, one that was either newly created during the second Ming century or was substantially altered by that time.⁹⁹

Through detailed reading of the treatment of various incidents and characters, Plaks has demonstrated the skill with which the author of the novel has taken the popular and historical tradition well-known in his time and created a work "which pointedly transforms the earlier material as it casts it into a new generic mold."¹⁰⁰ In particular, as Plaks points out with repeated examples, a central theme of the novel is the "Limitations of Valor," with an ironic reinterpretation of such popular heroes as Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei and Zhuge Liang. The novel accepts the heroic and romantic tradition, but then demonstrates the manner in which the qualities of the heroes are flawed, and their ambitions destroyed, by these very weaknesses. Thus Guan Yu's emphasis on personal honour leads him to an arrogance which brings repeated failures and ultimate destruction,¹⁰¹ while Zhuge Liang's cleverness is corrupted into a "self-destructive egotism."¹⁰²

I shall return again to Plaks' approach and interpretation of the novel in its present form. At this stage, however, we may observe that, by the end of the fourteenth century, the essential pattern of what may be referred to as the romantic tradition was well established and confirmed in popular imagination, in early story cycles, and in works for the stage. And it is with that pattern, the culmination of several centuries' development of story cycles, that we should deal here.

In his comparison of the history told by *Sanguo zhi* and the version of *Romance*, Winston Yang has discussed the manner in which the historical characters of Cao Cao, Liu Bei, Zhuge Liang and Zhou Yu were re-interpreted by later tradition. In particular, he has pointed out the degree to which the authority and prestige of Zhuge Liang has been emphasised at the particular expense of Zhou Yu, his some-time colleague and long-term rival from the state of Wu. Yang, however, is inclined to accept the picture presented by *Romance* as an appropriate development, and indeed an improvement, from the material presented by Chen Shou and the other early historians. Where *Sanguo zhi*, for example, is "Nothing more than a collection of historical facts put together with little historical imagination," Luo Guanzhong presents a "more dramatic and interesting account"¹⁰³ - though Yang does not often put the case so bluntly, he and other readers show a tendency

⁹⁸ Liu Ts'un-yan, "Authenticity of the Historical Romances," 221-229, describes and analyses the relationship between the *Sanguo zhizhuan* of Luo Guanzhong, the edition dated to the first year of Jiajing (1522), and the revised form of the novel prepared by Mao Zonggang, and he presents a table comparing the work as revised by Mao with an earlier edition of *Sanguo zhizhuan*.

⁹⁹ Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 363-364.

¹⁰⁰ Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 369.

¹⁰¹ Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 410-413.

¹⁰² Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 443.

¹⁰³ Yang, "Literary Transformation," 48.

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to regard *Romance* as an alternative, equally valid and perhaps superior version of the history of the late second and third centuries AD. And indeed, as Yang observes, far more people have gained their knowledge of the Three Kingdoms period from the novel than from the official history.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, despite the importance and the influence of the work, to regard *Romance* as "the retelling of history in a plainer language," and Luo Guanzhong as a "popular historian" demonstrates a strange sense of what any historian is trying to do.¹⁰⁵ Yang has suggested that the genre of *yanyi* "popular elaboration" can find no parallel in Western language; it can readily be argued, however, that the "History" plays of Shakespeare, giving an impressive, lively, imaginative and heroic, but frequently inaccurate, view of English history for a hundred years from the time of Richard II to that of Richard III, are very close in style.¹⁰⁶ And just as the emphasis upon Shu-Han and Zhuge Liang may be seen as reflections of the problems and needs of Song society, so it has been observed that the plays of Shakespeare reflect the opinions and interests of his own time, and may totally ignore the real concerns of the period they purport to describe.¹⁰⁷ Though all writers are bound by their own cultural and intellectual background, the playwright and the novelist may be allowed a freer rein than the historian.

If we view the whole matter from the beginning, *Romance* may be regarded as one particular development of a story cycle tradition which had already begun in the third century, during the Three Kingdoms period itself. I have demonstrated the manner in which tales gathered about Cao Cao's encounter with Lü Boshe and how the affair reached its ultimate description in *Romance*. We have noted also the possibility of a cycle of stories told about the conquests of He Qi in the service of Wu against the hills people south of the mouth of the Yangzi, and it may well be that the several chapters of *Romance* which describe the seven campaigns of Zhuge Liang against the non-Chinese peoples of the southwest under their unlucky chieftain Meng Huo represents an achieved story cycle in similar vein to that of He Qi.¹⁰⁸ And perhaps most insidious of all, there are a number of incidents, tricks and stratagems, which were originally attributed to other men but which *Romance* has transferred to Zhuge Liang. Two which I have noted elsewhere are the stratagem of the Empty City, which the history records as being played by Wen Ping against Sun Quan in Jiangxia in the autumn of 226, not by Zhuge Liang against Sima Yi;¹⁰⁹ and the incident at Ruxu in 213, when Sun Quan was compelled to turn his boat about lest the arrows sticking in one side should cause it to capsize. It is very possible that

¹⁰⁴ Yang, "Literary Transformation," 81.

¹⁰⁵ Yang, "Literary Transformation," 81.

¹⁰⁶ Yang, "Literary Transformation," 81-84. The same parallel with Shakespeare has been advanced by Ma, "The Chinese Historical Novel," 292.

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories"* at 141-142 where in a detailed discussion of "The Troublesome Reign of King John," she observes how Shakespeare reflected the contemporary concerns of Elizabeth with her Roman Catholic cousin and rival Mary Queen of Scots, so that his play *King John* placed great emphasis upon John's conflict with the Pope and his dealings with his cousin Arthur. On the other hand, the earlier work of *King Johan*, by John Bale, written in the time of Henry VIII, places great emphasis on the role of Sedition supported by Religion, but makes no mention of the unfortunate Arthur: Henry did not have the same problems as Elizabeth, and the different concerns of the two plays reflect the different concerns of their audiences. Professor Campbell applies similar analysis to the later history plays.

¹⁰⁸ See *Romance* chapters 87-91.

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter 7 at note 52.

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the latter story was later developed into Zhou Yu's and then Zhuge Liang's celebrated feat of acquiring one hundred thousand arrows, also from Cao Cao, at the time of the Red Cliffs.¹¹⁰

As an example of uncertain history developed deliberately for dramatic effect, we may also consider the matter of Zhou Yu's proposed attack against Liu Zhang in the west, soon after the victory at the Red Cliffs, which provides a notable incident in the novel:

In the biography of Zhou Yu in *Sanguo zhi*, we are told only that he was planning an attack up the Gorges of the Yangzi, but that he was taken ill and died before the preparations were complete.¹¹¹

In the *Xiandi chunqiu* of Yuan Ye it is said that Sun Quan later proposed a similar expedition under the command of Sun Yu, but that this was opposed by Liu Bei and the plan was abandoned; I have argued that the expedition probably never even got under way.¹¹²

In *Romance*, however, this putative attack is developed into the final, fatal triumph of Zhuge Liang over his rival Zhou Yu: as the unfortunate general of Wu struggles against the stream in a futile attempt to break through to the west, he looks up and see Zhuge Liang, comfortable on a hill-top, laughing at his discomfiture. This proves to be the culminating humiliation, and Zhou Yu dies of grief and rage.¹¹³

It is the account in the novel of this last incident which moved Plaks to comment upon the arrogance and egotism of Zhuge Liang, and the hypocrisy of his ostentatious sympathy for Zhou Yu's sad end, but one may also observe the manner in which a story has developed from the early records into a notable scene in the romantic tradition.

And finally, there is the matter of the Red Cliffs campaign itself, central item of *Romance* and a major theme of the dramatic tradition. In *Sanguo zhi*, the confrontation of Cao Cao by the allied armies of Zhou Yu and Liu Bei, and the defeat and retreat of Cao Cao, are referred to in a number of different passages, for the most part in the section dealing with the history of Wu. Even allowing for bias between the rival powers, it seems clear that it was the action of Sun Quan's forces that was decisive, first in holding Cao Cao's advance, and then, through the fire-ship attack led by Huang Gai, inflicting the tactical defeat which compelled Cao Cao to withdraw.¹¹⁴ There is no justification for *Romance* so to enlarge the role of Liu Bei's men, and in particular that of Zhuge Liang.

Moreover, as I have suggested elsewhere, while the campaign of the Red Cliffs, viewed in retrospect, was an important and even decisive event in the civil war, it was not necessarily a major military engagement. Despite the success of the allied forces in the preliminary skirmishes and in the fire attack, it may indeed have been the case, as Cao Cao claimed, that retreat was forced upon him through sickness among his troops rather than through the devastation wrought by his opponents.¹¹⁵

For the purposes of literature and drama, of course, it is quite appropriate that the battle of the Red Cliffs should have a central position in the novel, and that the events of that time and place should be painted with a broad brush upon a splendid canvas. Such artistic embellishment, however, has no historical authority, and tells us nothing about

¹¹⁰ See Chapter 4 at note 86.

¹¹¹ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1264.

¹¹² See note 29 to Chapter 5, and above.

¹¹³ *Romance* chapters 56-57, and see also Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, 443, cited in note 102 above.

¹¹⁴ See Chapter 4 at note 79.

¹¹⁵ See note 83 to Chapter 4.

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the real events of that time. *Romance*, indeed, and the whole tradition which it represents, is no form of history as a modern historian would understand it.

One would hardly believe it necessary to make this point, for no serious scholar of the West would regard a traditional work of fiction, compiled under different auspices more than one thousand years later, without any new or independent evidence, as a source of authority for analysis of the original events which it purports to describe. Those statements in *Romance* which appear to be true obtain that status for no other reason than that they are based upon material from *Sanguo zhi* or some comparable historical evidence. And true statements in *Romance* are accompanied by others for which there is no good authority, while some episodes have a foundation in earlier records but are re-interpreted and applied in a manner based upon the requirements of literary artifice and propaganda and not at all upon the original record or facts.

In any such discussion as this, however, where one must deal with both the "historical tradition," based upon *Sanguo zhi* and other early works, and the "romantic tradition," developed in later centuries and culminating in the present-day novel, one is faced with this constant dichotomy and contradiction. In his "Literary Transformation," Yang does not claim specifically that Luo Guanzhong was writing as a historian or that *Romance* is a full alternative source for the history of the Three Kingdoms, but he does get very close to such a position. In many respects, the difficulty is that Yang begins his study of the Three Kingdoms period from the point of view of *Romance*, and he then seeks some factual basis for the interpretations of the novel.

In contrast, the approach of Plaks' *Four Masterpieces*, which considers *Romance* essentially as a work of fiction, and analyses its treatment of the traditional material in terms of literary style and philosophical approach, is markedly more satisfactory. By such means, one may observe the occasional contact of the novel with historical fact, but give chief and proper attention to the manner in which the compiler has formulated and presented his message.

The real problem is that we are operating at many different levels of knowledge and interpretation: in studying the history of the Three Kingdoms, we must not only deal with the fragmentary and often distorted records of the past, but we are also viewing those events through the interpretations of a literary and artistic tradition which has attracted the interest, enthusiasm and emotions of people for hundreds of years, and which has been responsible for a multitude of popular tales and sayings, for numbers of dramatic works, and for one of the greatest compilations of fiction in any language. It is a striking tribute to the quality of the novel, and to the romantic tradition founded on the Three Kingdoms, that our view of that time is so largely gained from the perspective of Luo Guanzhong, his colleagues and successors. If it is hard to find the true figure of Richard III behind the magnificent distortions of Shakespeare, the reality of Wei, Shu and Wu is yet further away.¹¹⁶

And at a higher level than simple matters of misapplied anecdotes, or even the misplaced emphasis upon a military engagement, there is one more disservice which the *Romance* has done to history. In all the concern about the potential might of Cao Cao in

¹¹⁶ One may well compare the influence of *Romance* with that of Shakespeare's libel against King Richard III. Despite the efforts of modern revisionist scholars, and even the propaganda of amateur societies which favour Richard III, no historian dealing with the history of England in the late fifteenth century can avoid taking account of the villainous image of the king, first presented by the protagonists of his successful rival Henry VII, but maintained throughout the Tudor period and brilliantly supported by the play one hundred years later.

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the north or the putative right of Liu Bei in the west, the role of Wu in the south and east has often been neglected or distorted. With its concern for fictionalised characters rather than with the pattern of events, the romantic tradition has neglected the real development which took place at that time. For the centuries which followed, the success of the Sun family in establishing an independent government south of the Yangzi was of far greater importance than the local conflicts between warlords in the west. And so the present work has given chief attention to the "third kingdom," Wu, in an attempt to redress the balance and to discover both the romance and the achievement of the generals in the south.