

REASSESSING ANCIENT HISTORY:  
TRENDS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY

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## ABSTRACT

Chinese historians at the end of the twentieth century have reexamined the issues that Republican era historian Gu Jiegang addressed at the beginning of the twentieth century confronted: the relationship between politics and scholarship, the role of archaeology in historical studies, and historical methodology. The issues Gu Jiegang raised remain pertinent to historical studies, and by referring to Gu Jiegang's work for understanding of these issues, historians have attested to his work's durability and flexibility, and even, its controversial nature. Today, as during the Republican period, historians have regarded Gu Jiegang as a revolutionary in the field of historical studies, but while some have admired his role, others have criticized it. However, close examination of Gu's work shows that Gu was not the iconoclast he and contemporary scholars have portrayed him as. Rather, like scholars of the dynastic period and many contemporary historians, he relied upon a thorough knowledge and dedication to the Classical texts, texts that he claimed to disavow.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Monica Cohn was born in Edmonds, Washington, on October 3, 1977. In the fall of 1996, she attended the University of Puget Sound and transferred to the University of Washington the following year. Fascinated by Chinese history and literature, she was unsure of what career she could pursue with such impractical interests, but having begun to study Chinese the summer of 1998, she decided to apply to graduate schools.

She graduated in 2000 from the University of Washington with a degree in History and a minor in China Studies. In the fall of 2001, she began graduate studies in Cornell University's East Asian Literature Department. She completed her Master's degree in May 2004.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

At the end of the twentieth century, Chinese historians began to address issues such as historical methodology, the relationship between politics and history, and the role of archaeology in ancient studies, the same issues that the historian Gu Jiegang raised at the start of the twentieth century. Because Gu Jiegang's formulations offered contemporary historians a flexible approach to all three issues, Chinese historians who have reexamined Gu Jiegang at the end of the century have mostly portrayed him as a model historian. However, they characterize Gu Jiegang as a strident, revolutionary voice in turn of the century historical studies. Examining these writings, contemporary historians conclude, as did their Republican counterparts, that Gu was an iconoclast in the field of history, but close examination of Gu's works calls into question this perception of him while showing that he raised issues relevant to his own time as well as the present.

The first issue is historical methodology. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contact with foreign historians brought methodological concerns to the forefront. Throughout the twentieth century, scholars have considered the usefulness of the theory of evolution, Social Darwinism, progressivism, materialism, Marxism, and processualism, to name just a few ideologies, in the field of history, but Gu did not wholly align himself with one of these Western imports. Gu Jiegang was one of the first staunch advocates of an historical methodology, *kexue fangfa* (scientific methodology); he himself defined this scientific approach differently than other early advocates. Notably, he combined Western methodology and Classical Chinese learning. Gu's imaginative description and deployment of *kexue fangfa* has rendered him a durable model for Chinese historians.

The second issue discussed in this paper is historians' position in society at large, and thus by extension the role of history itself, which altered substantially. During the last years of the Qing dynasty, with the end of the dynastic examination system, scholars lost their complementary role in government affairs, and to an extent, their formal responsibility to society in general. However, even though Republican era scholars such as Gu Jiegang began to advocate the separation of historical research from contemporary political trends in order to avoid biased interpretations, he believed, as contemporary historians continue to, that the ancient texts were relevant to immediate social and political concerns. Gu Jiegang sought solutions to immediate contemporary issues, such as the foreign encroachment on Chinese territory, the reshaping of a dynasty into a nation-state, and inclusion of various ethnicities into that nation-state, in history. In the process, Gu formulated an interpretation of the historical texts. Contemporary scholars target Gu's interpretation of the texts as a mode of historical research; some historians laud his interpretation and employ it in their research while other scholars criticize Gu's interpretation.

The third issue is the increase of archaeological discoveries and expansion of that field, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century with the discovery of the oracle bones of the Shang dynasty. Historical materials, or written texts, and archaeological data, or material remains, often present scholars with conflicting perspectives of antiquity. Contemporary scholars attempt to combine the written and the archaeological data, but to varying degrees. An interpretation that relies primarily on transmitted texts supplements textual information with a few archaeological artifacts. An interpretation that uses archaeology, meaning contextual field archaeology, differs from the textual interpretation. Consequently, the relationship between archaeology and transmitted texts is controversial among scholars today.



Chapters two, three and four of this paper center on Gu Jiegang's responses to these three issues during the Republican era. This paper considers his attempt to articulate a methodology for historians and then examines two of Gu's theories. The first is Gu's theory of the origins of the Yu myths, its political implications, and how these political implications in part refute Gu's methodology. The second is Gu's theory of the accumulated creation of ancient Chinese history, "Ceng lei di zaocheng de Zhongguo gushi".

The final three chapters revolve around contemporary scholars' perceptions of Gu Jiegang and how they respond to these three issues at the end of the twentieth century using Gu Jiegang's scholarship and methodology, particularly regarding the question of the existence of the Xia dynasty. Historians trace back to Gu Jiegang's theory of accumulated creation historical trends which function in contemporary scholarship to either deny or confirm the Xia's existence. The issue of the Xia dynasty is a political one; however, scholars on both sides of the Xia issue rely upon different historical methodologies, both claiming to be Marxist, in order to make their arguments. Their historical methodologies differ mainly in the role archaeology plays in them, vis-à-vis the transmitted texts. The issue of the Xia demonstrates that politics, methodology, and archaeology determine and are determined by each other in contemporary historical studies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### GU JIEGANG'S METHODOLOGY

In the *Gushi bian*, particularly the *Zixu*, which serves as the preface to that work, Gu Jiegang outlined his vision of scholarship's past and future.<sup>1</sup> The *Gushi bian* reflects the fact that it is a compilation of historical studies written at a time when scholars confronted methodological concerns, new archaeological discoveries, and an uneasy relationship to politics and social currents. Gu Jiegang was especially concerned with historical methodology; he addressed the two issues which he felt most influenced scholars' work, the unquestioned tradition and the political orientation of scholarship, and proposed a methodology to overcome these shortcomings. Directly and indirectly within his methodology and scholarship, he commented upon the other area at issue here, the future of archaeology in historical studies.

Since scholars of the Republican era had a greater awareness of Western methodologies and the work of scholars worldwide than their predecessors had had, Gu was exposed to and trained in both indigenous learning and Western methodologies. He was a student and colleague of Hu Shi, who studied in the United States, particularly with John Dewey, and proposed a "scientific methodology" (*kexue fangfa*) of hypothesis and proof for historical studies. Gu was also aware of various other Western ideologies, in particular the theory of evolution, popularized in part by Liang Qichao. Gu's difficulty, one faced by all his contemporaries, was how to relate indigenous scholarship to these foreign ideologies. Should they reject one or the other, or could the native and foreign complement each other?

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<sup>1</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Gushi bian zixu* (China: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000) 18-118. Also translated by Arthur Hummel. *The Autobiography of a Chinese Historian, Being the Preface to a Symposium on Ancient Chinese History* (Taipei: Chengwen Publ. Co., 1966).

The standard understanding of Gu Jiegang, as promulgated by Lawrence Schneider in his biography of Gu, is that Gu's work emphasized Western methodologies, and in particular, the "scientific." However, scholars have probably overstated this, or under-estimated the importance of traditional scholarship. Gu's methodology cannot be understood without reference to native scholarship; indeed, his methodology (and scholarship) relies equally on both.<sup>2</sup> Gu maintained that the Confucian, traditional mode of learning served by and large to confirm and reinforce itself. He proclaimed that the Confucian tradition, by which Gu clearly meant the Classical texts, indigenous scholarship, and its institutions and presuppositions, was largely a closed, comprehensive system with its own vision of the past, even to the extent that it was incapable of producing a critical appraisal of its own vision, institutions, and presumptions. Gu clearly perceived all previous scholarship as part of this tradition and openly challenged his own model only to the extent that he acknowledged solitary scholars and various schools had disputed individual books and interpretations. However, this challenge of his reveals a duality in Gu's attitude toward the tradition. Gu relied upon earlier scholarship to develop his ideas; his scholarly achievements rested upon a thorough knowledge and at least partial acceptance of the tradition. Discussing the tradition, therefore, required subtle sleight of hand; on the one hand Gu claimed to repudiate the tradition in order to make way for the entrance of Western methodologies and his own ideas based upon them, and on the other hand he had to rely on earlier scholarship.

Gu's dual attitude is evident in his critique of the Qing dynasty *kaozheng* scholar Cui Shu (1740-1816), who studied the Classics and noted their inconsistencies.<sup>3</sup> Gu admired and praised Cui Shu's adept usage of *kaozheng*

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<sup>2</sup>Laurence A. Schneider, *Ku Chieh-kang and China's New History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 71-77.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), 770-777.

scholarship on issues of the chronological dating and gradual accretion of the Classics; Cui's *Dong bi yi shu* was one of two Qing books that Gu most admired for its critical attitude toward the Classics, and he noted that “the reliability of Cui Shu’s *Kao xin lu* is excellent and it is also extremely meticulous writing.”<sup>4</sup> But as the title *Kao xin lu*, *A Record of Investigated Beliefs*, indicates, Cui Shu had faith in Confucian philosophy, a faith which manifested itself in two ways. First:

He only believed that rhetoric after the Warring States significantly disordered the truth about the ancients, and did not believe that rhetoric prior to the Warring States also significantly disordered the truth about the ancients. He only believed that Yangist and Mohist rhetoric had the idea to embellish on the ancients, and did not believe that the Confucian School's rhetoric also had the idea to embellish on the ancients. Therefore, he is only a Confucian engaged in examining history, not an historian engaged in examining history. Second, he wanted to straighten out the traces of ancient history directly from the ancient texts, but he did not have an appropriate and safe method. Because verifiable ancient documents are themselves particularly scarce, when at the same time we want to deny the usefulness of forged history in comparing them with other texts, we also have to admit that even with trustworthy documents we do not have tangible proof.

Cui Shu believed that the classical texts were in fact trustworthy documents; then he took a passage from these texts and treated them as standard [history], so that anything matching the texts constituted authentic documents; otherwise, it was a forgery. As for the results of his work, amongst the historical facts he established there actually is quite a bit worthy of our attention. Nevertheless, the problem is we cannot assert that the “the classical texts are in fact trustworthy documents”; we have to reevaluate all of that.<sup>5</sup>

Gu considered Cui Shu first and foremost a Confucian, educated and trained in the tradition and consequently unable to remove himself from it and critically evaluate

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<sup>4</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Gushi bian*, vol. 1 (Beijing: Jingcheng yin shu ju, 1926), 14, 59.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 59.

it as an historian. The purpose of Cui's scholarship was to return to the original texts of the Warring States by removing the incorrect elements that had been added during the Han and later dynasties, but this assumed that there was an accurate core to the Classics, dating to the Han (and presumably to Confucius himself as the author or editor), which once reevaluated could be used as a reliable source of Xia, Shang and Zhou history. In addition, Cui believed that any other source which referred to material in the Classics was itself reliable. Gu argued against both these presumptions, emphasizing that every text, whether it was a Classic or drew on material from a Classic, required critical investigation of internal evidence before Gu was willing to accept it as a believable source. Consequently, Gu did not advocate completely disavowing the Classics or later historians' work, but rather, he believed that contemporary scholars could draw upon Cui Shu's *kaozheng* studies in order to better comprehend the Classics, though first, however, they must reevaluate the texts which served as evidence before accepting Cui's scholarship.<sup>6</sup>

Through *kaozheng* techniques, Cui arrived at valid conclusions, which Gu himself drew upon. Cui Shu wrote in an autobiographical note that information about the earliest emperors increased over time, rather than decreased, as would be expected the farther away in time from the purported events the writers lived. Yu was the figure closest in time to the Zhou writers, supposedly ruling immediately preceding the three dynasties, and appeared in the *Shijing* (1000-600 BC); Yao and Shun, ruling just prior to Yu, were not mentioned in the *Shijing*; Shen Nong is first mentioned only in the *Mencius* (fourth century BC), and Pan Gu, supposedly the earliest figure, appears only in the Han dynasty (206 BC- AD 220).<sup>7</sup> Cui observed that information about the chronology accumulated over time, yet Cui's Confucian perspective prevented him

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<sup>6</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Gushi bian zixu* (China: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 62.

<sup>7</sup>Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, 772.

from taking his ideas to the farthest, logical conclusion. It was Gu who expanded on these observations in his theory of the accumulated creation of ancient Chinese history, to argue that the chronology of high antiquity was a fictitious creation of the Zhou and later periods.<sup>8</sup>

The tradition continued to prejudice contemporary scholarship, particularly in historical studies which did not rely solely on transmitted texts. Scholars had access to other epigraphical materials, including stele inscriptions, rubbings of inscriptions, and oracle bones. The field of systematic archaeological study grew out of the discovery of large numbers of oracle bones. Gu's contemporary, Wang Guowei (1877-1927), was an extremely adept philologist, and using the newly discovered oracle bones, was able to confirm the Shang king list given in the *Shiji* from King Wu Ding down to the founding of the Zhou.<sup>9</sup> Gu did not discuss his opinion of Wang Guowei's studies of the Shang king list, but his comments on Wang's adherence to the tradition and the probable future of archaeology in ancient studies in general reveal that Gu considered Wang's scholarship limited by a persistent adherence to the tradition, preventing him from differentiating between "authentic" and "forged" texts.<sup>10</sup> In *A Discussion of the Institutions of the Yin and Zhou*, Wang relied upon "forged" Qin and Han texts to argue that the institutions of the Shang and Zhou were inherited from Yao, Shun, and Yu. The texts Wang used, such as the *Da Dai li ji*, reached their final form in the Han dynasty, even though they may have largely been compiled from Warring States texts. Gu felt that Wang's usage of Han texts and even Zhou texts, as proof of the nature of the far-removed sage emperors' governments, was inappropriate. Gu attributed Wang's usage of such texts to Wang's belief in the fundamental accuracy of the

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<sup>8</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Gushi bian*, 1: 107. This theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history is discussed at length later.

<sup>9</sup>Joey Bonner, *Wang Guowei, An Intellectual Biography* (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), 177-190.

<sup>10</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Zixu*, 66-7.

tradition and acceptance of the entire chronology of sage emperors.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Gu disagreed with Wang's approach to archaeological materials. Since in the case of the Shang kings, archaeology validated the tradition, Wang Guowei considered archaeology useful, but certainly subordinate to the tradition; its value was as a secondary supplement to confirm the tradition.<sup>12</sup> Gu's stance on the relationship between archaeology and the tradition was the opposite. Rather than confirm traditional history, archaeology could simultaneously overthrow traditional history and substantiate an entirely different view of the past, by providing scholars with new materials which gave them a new perspective on "the real situation of ancient culture, resulting in a new realization of the imaginative character of many ancient writings and causing people to increasingly disbelieve ancient texts' ideas."<sup>13</sup> Archaeology highlighted the social conditions surrounding the creation of spurious literature, an example of which is the *Da Dai li ji*. Gu did not throw away texts such as the *Da Dai li ji*. He considered it an example of a text which did not record the truth about the most ancient reaches of history, but it remained valuable because it reflected the contemporary Han dynasty's ideas and conceptions of antiquity. Gu believed that the history of antiquity should rely more upon archaeology rather than on texts, as

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<sup>11</sup>Wang kept to a traditional way of life, also. His lifetime overlapped with the breakdown of the exam system and the fall of the Qing, but he remained a relic of the past, dressing in the scholar's traditional robes and keeping his queue. Beginning in 1923 Wang served in the imperial household; his main duties included cataloguing valuables such as bronzes, paintings, books, porcelains and jades. Even though Wang served the court and certainly preferred the imperial system, he did not actively participate in movements to restore the throne, and in general, especially in comparison with his contemporaries, he did not concern himself with arguing the issues of politics and culture so dear to May Fourth intellectuals. According to Joey Bonner, Wang's appointment to and acceptance of the imperial position were based upon the necessity of earning a living and not on a desire to take concrete action to restore the Qing. In Gu's opinion, Wang accepted the position and later committed suicide because the Republic had failed to find an economically secure and intellectually satisfying position for him. In his epitaph for Wang, Gu equated Wang's situation with the situation of intellectuals in China in general; they lacked places to work and study without molestation (physical and intellectual) by warlords, Nationalists, Communists, and other political and military authorities. See Bonner's biography of Wang, 199-201, and Schneider, 115-119.

<sup>12</sup>Lothar Von Falkenhausen (*Antiquity* 67 (1993): 839-49) believes that the same approach dominates archaeology in the PRC today.

<sup>13</sup>Gu Jiegang, *Zixu*, 93-4.

archaeology “promised valuable arguments for my own theories, because, after the work of destructive criticism is accomplished, this is the foundation upon which creative history must be built.”<sup>14</sup> Gu's statement leads to two obvious conclusions regarding the future of archaeology. First, once critical study refuted the supposed facts recorded in texts, such as the *Da Dai li ji*, archaeology offered its own interpretation of the past, one which, in Gu's opinion, would bear out his theories regarding the ancient chronology. Or in other words, archaeology was to be independent of textual studies. Second, Gu did not believe that archaeological finds would be limited to the oracle bones and few odd pieces uncovered at the time of his writing, rather, he anticipated the growth of more important archaeological finds and hoped for greater emphasis on this type of study.

Gu thus disapproved of the way Wang used archaeology as a supplement to the tradition and of Wang's subsequent uncritical acceptance of the entire tradition in the face of archaeological evidence. Gu was perhaps so dismissive of Wang's opinion of the relationship between discovered sources and transmitted texts because if traditional interpretations continued to influence scholarship, scholars could not judge archaeological material empirically and without preconceptions. On the other hand, Wang Guowei, in discussing the reception of his ideas, believed that they did not attract as much critical attention as they deserved. Wang regretted that “Doubters of Antiquity” like Gu Jiegang dismissed his work and the ability of archaeology to supplement and emend transmitted texts.<sup>15</sup>

During the dynastic era, historians followed particular schools of interpretation. A school's philosophical interpretation often incorporated corresponding political views, which scholars, such as the late Qing scholar and

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 66.

<sup>15</sup>Bonner, *Wang Guowei*, 187, 109.



reformer Kang Youwei, often actively applied to contemporary politics. Like the other Confucians discussed here, Cui Shu and Wang Guowei, Kang believed in the veracity of the Classics, but with a difference; he thought that the true meaning of the Classics had been obscured by the tradition. His desire of returning to the original, unsullied Classics served a very specific purpose - to forge socially relevant and unambiguously political ideas. The connection between Confucianism and politics was not new; Kang claimed that the "original" meaning (again, traceable to Confucius as author and editor) of the Classics was obscured in the Han dynasty for the purpose of creating political legitimacy, and he wanted to recover this "original" meaning and apply it to contemporary politics. However, Kang was part of the last generation to enter into government service based upon the Confucian examination system, and what Gu faced was the formal shattering of the link between scholars and the state, and between Confucianism and government ideology. As noted in his epitaph for Wang Guowei, Gu perceived economic and psychological damage inherent in the collapse of the old examination system (see footnote 10). Even so, Gu encouraged the separation of scholars from the state.<sup>16</sup>

Gu described Kang's motives to write and research as "political and not in order to research academic questions;" the purpose of Kang's critical methodology was not to understand antiquity better, but to bring about political reform.<sup>17</sup> Gu thought that although Kang did not always follow the dominant interpretation of texts, he still built his political theories around the belief that the Confucian Classics contained eternal, fundamental truths which were applicable to any era or situation, and this rendered Kang's scholarship of questionable historical accuracy and academic value.

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<sup>16</sup>This issue, of the political uses of scholarship, is taken up in the next section where I discuss Gu's theory on the origins of the Yu myths and its potential political ramifications, ramifications which partially nullify Gu's methodology.

<sup>17</sup>*Zixu*, 59.

Nevertheless, Kang's work did have a significant impact on Gu, containing elements that found their way into Gu's scholarship and methodology. Kang believed that Wang Mang, the short-lived Xin dynasty's (AD 9-23) emperor, ordered the creation of texts in order to provide himself with political legitimacy.<sup>18</sup> This idea, that Wang Mang and a few scholars around him, such as Liu Xin, largely influenced the direction of scholarship and the transmission of texts, had a long tradition behind it, but Kang's work on the subject seems to have had the greatest impact on Gu.<sup>19</sup> Gu gave Kang the credit for suggesting to him the idea that spurious literature emerges because of the ability of a few men to enforce their ideas in order to pursue a political goal, and this idea had two ramifications. First, Gu applied this idea to a specific historical problem, the Yu myths of the Warring States. Gu believed that scholars should consider philosophical and historical ideas the products of historical circumstances. Once texts were placed into their historical context, scholars had to assume that the texts recorded an accurate picture of the conceptions and ideas of the era when they were written, but scholars could not presume that the texts accurately recorded facts about events hundreds, even thousands of years earlier.<sup>20</sup> Gu recognized that this was a crucial first step toward a meaningful, critical approach to the past; scholars must recognize that the past is useful and therefore its interpretation is always susceptible to manipulations. This in turn Gu related to the current state of the field of history, where the division between historical and political writing was ambiguous, as in the case of Kang Youwei. Gu thought that scholars who examined history in order to address contemporary issues were more concerned with creating viable solutions to political and social issues than with historical accuracy. Gu Jiegang believed that scholars should separate from an affiliation with a particular

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>19</sup>Benjamin Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1984), 211.

<sup>20</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1:13.

school, because the adherence of scholars and ideas to a specific school, such as Kang Youwei to the New Text school and its progressively oriented viewpoint, was detrimental to students and their future scholarship. Students of such schools followed a historical interpretation and advocated a political agenda, accepting all of the school's precepts and questioning none of them.<sup>21</sup> According to Gu, every scholar should "strive to reduce one's partiality to a minimum," whether he had an affiliation to a particular political or ideological party.<sup>22</sup>

Gu recognized that the attitude of scholars affected their historical methodology. Gu Jiegang obviously admired these scholars' adept usage of *kaozheng* techniques, but according to Gu, they used them within the confines of the tradition, only debating the validity of minor points and shifting the boundaries and definitions ever so slightly.<sup>23</sup> They all approached the tradition confident of its fundamental accuracy, to the extent that they believed the tradition contained something eternal which could not be analyzed through critical methodology. Additionally, they all believed that this eternal aspect of the Classics had a timeless relevance to immediate concerns, and Kang in particular appropriated political theory from Confucianism. Although the scholarship of Wang Guowei and Cui Shu provided a promising beginning, their adherence to traditional interpretations of history often prevented objective use of new archaeological materials and the development of *kaozheng* scholarship to its furthest potential.

Consequently, scholars needed to return to the texts themselves, without relying on earlier historians such as Cui Shu and Wang Guowei as interpretive intermediaries, until the accuracy of their scholarship was established, and second, scholars needed to reassess the fundamental orientation or assumptions about ancient

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<sup>21</sup>Zixu, 48-9.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 156.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 46, 52, 63.

history. Even though the tools provided an empirical method of research, they were insufficient in themselves to overcome the boundaries established by earlier historical studies. Central to historical studies was an empirical spirit, a lack of preconceptions, and a dearth of political, cultural, or philosophical agendas.

Gu believed that the key to accomplish both these goals was *kexue fangfa*, or scientific methodology. Hu Shi, a professor of Gu's at Beida, introduced Gu to this type of historical methodology and was himself a primary proponent of it. *Kexue fangfa* was a new concept to Gu, as it was to a majority of Chinese scholars, but scholars searching for a new approach to scholarship quickly adopted it. Gu wrote of the impact learning about *kexue fangfa* had on him as a student:

Afterwards, from listening to Dr. Hu [Shi]'s lectures, I learned that the method for approaching historical research lies in seeking how an event relates to earlier and following events; such a method does not regard an event as independently occurring. Frankly, this is all of the scientific methodology that had an impression on me. I first survey various unrelated materials, then I apply a not-yet systematized scientific methodology to these disparate materials in order to analyze, categorize, compare, experiment, and seek the connections of cause and result. I even dare to make deductions, establish hypotheses, search for the evidence to support my hypotheses and deliver my conclusions. To speak boldly, perhaps these new methods have undergone the rigorous testing of science. But I often wonder to myself: Is scientific methodology this simple? Is it that these few fragmented concepts are universally applicable? I cannot reply to this uncertain question with confidence. Therefore, I hope to have spare time to thoroughly examine the various methods of the modern sciences, and then apply the results of my examination to seriously critique my own thought and work...<sup>24</sup>

Gu clearly articulated *kexue fangfa's* steps, which he learned of from Hu Shi, who studied Western historical methods in the United States. Hu stressed that his

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 110.

historical method was modeled after methodologies found in modern Western sciences. Hu plotted out steps involving hypothesis, experimentation, and the formulation of laws in order to explain the evolutionary changes of antiquity's society.<sup>25</sup> Gu conscientiously applied Hu's methodology to his work, notably in his academic work on the Yu myths.<sup>26</sup> Although analysis, comparison, and contrast are staples of historical research, Gu and Hu Shi also formed hypotheses which they believed could be either substantiated or disproved with further evidence. This assumption that historical hypotheses can be tested actually is a problem in Gu's scholarship; in some cases there was insufficient evidence to prove Gu's hypothesis and yet Gu made conclusions based on his hypotheses. However, this historical research method was something to be tested itself; Gu did not blindly accept his teacher's methods. Even though he believed scientific methodology was the best tool for historical research, Gu admitted that this methodology was as yet not rigorous. Consequently, he was determined to investigate the worth of this scientific methodology by investigating it in the natural sciences. However, since there is not one single universally applicable methodology, hopefully, Gu would realize this after he compared the differences between the methodologies of various modern sciences and the humanities. Thus, a "scientific" methodology in a branch of the social sciences could not reproduce blindly another field's methods of research.

Gu had great hopes for what Western ideologies could do to advance Chinese historical studies.<sup>27</sup> In his opinion, science's core approach, through empirical methodology, was the route to overcome or avoid personal prejudices. Also, because *kexue fangfa* was impartial, it was a way to confirm or invalidate the empirical value

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>26</sup>Gu's work on the Yu myths is his theory on the accumulated creation of ancient Chinese history. The theory is discussed at length in the section entitled "Gu Jiegang's Theory of the Accumulated Creation of Ancient History" and its evolutionary nature is discussed in the section "Conceptions of Scientific Method."

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 93.

of earlier scholars' work. When used to evaluate indigenous scholars and scholarship, this methodology illuminated elements in the Chinese tradition which were *kexue*, that is to say conformed to modern, empirical methods. *Kexue fangfa* provided Gu and other scholars like Hu Shi with a methodological concept which could help studies of Chinese history find a place in the modern world. Because *kexue fangfa* was modern, empirical, and drawn from the West, Gu accordingly placed native scholarship which met or surpassed the methodology's standards on a par with the West. By extension, China in general rose to the challenge of modernity and the West. *Kexue fangfa* was a way to carry on parts of their past while building a new world in both academia and society. It was a bridge that blended the traditional and the modern, China and the West. As shown in the next section, even though Gu advocated a separation of politics and scholarship, and even though Gu intended to revolutionize ideas about ancient history, the Chinese past was central to building a new society.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### REPUBLICAN POLITICS AND THE ISSUE OF THE ORIGINS OF THE YU MYTHS

In his methodology, Gu advocated the separation of politics and scholarship; in practice, however, his own scholarship did not lack political implications. Although he disapproved of other scholars' application of Confucianism to contemporary problems and his approach greatly differed from the majority of scholars, he believed, as did they, that the ancient texts could provide direction to scholars, reformers, and revolutionaries. Perhaps if his historical conclusions did not tally neatly with his political opinions and his historical conclusions were substantially evidenced, then there would be no difficulties accepting the validity of his historical argument. A case in point is his argument concerning the origins of the Yu myths. He believed that one of the most pressing problems in historical study was the confusion of the origins of the states of the Eastern Zhou period. "In the current understanding of ancient history, a unified genealogy shrouds the various dynasties' emperors and kings, and the four directions' races."<sup>28</sup> Through ancient texts, we learn that "the Shang came from the dark bird, the Zhou came from Lady Jiang... [the state of] Chu and Kui came from Zhurong (God of fire) and Yuxiong."<sup>29</sup> There were obvious contradictions in the received accounts, and one of the consequences was that the contributions of the various ethnic and cultural groups of the Warring States to Chinese culture were obscured. Gu concluded from his studies that the myths of Yu were probably of non-Han origin. He specified Yu's origins in the Warring States period state of Yue and outlined their transmission to the Central Plains. However, Gu's attempt to locate

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<sup>28</sup>*Gushi bian* 1: 99.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 99.

Yu's origins in Yue is based mostly upon circumstantial evidence. Gu sometimes embraced the tradition's interpretation of texts as evidence, but since Gu's conclusions obviously but enigmatically relate to his personal politics, it is difficult to determine whether or not his political ideas unduly influenced his historical conclusions, or vice versa. Interestingly, Gu did not consider his political opinions at odds with his scholarship; indeed, Gu felt it was particularly necessary to investigate the contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Chinese culture during all stages of dynastic history because he felt that there were parallels to and lessons for the Republican era.

Gu argued that Warring States Confucians, although they attempted to eradicate all indications of the divinities' local origins as they created a single political and geographic chronology, were unable to mask all such signs in transmitted texts. Gu located in transmitted texts the areas most closely associated with Yu, which he believed proved that the Yu myths migrated into the Zhou consciousness from Yue. The *Han shu* "Jiao si zhi" records that eight of the twelve figures who abdicated from their kingly positions (included in this dozen are Yao, Shun, and Yu) performed their abdication at Mount Tai. Of the four exceptions, three abdicated at mountains near Mount Tai, but Yu alone turned over his government farther to the south at Mount Kuaiji, which is located in modern day Zhejiang and was Yue's capital during the Warring States.<sup>30</sup> Gu argued that the idea of abdication was originally a Warring States period creation of Zou-Lu Confucians and extremely important to their political philosophy.<sup>31</sup> They synthesized myths and legends about important figures from local areas into a sole political lineage and also united its sacred places into one, centered at Mount Tai. However, considering the political agenda of the Confucians, Gu wondered why the place of abdication of Yu was so far to the south and answered

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 121, 122.

<sup>31</sup>For Gu Jiegang's full theory, see "Zhanguo Qin Han jian ren de zao wei yu bianwei" [The Creation and Criticism of Spurious Literature by Warring States, Qin, and Han Men], *Gushi bian*, vol. 7, part 1, p.1-64.



himself by contending that the Confucians eliminated most of the signs of the various divinities' transmission successfully, but they were unable to move Yu "because his position at Kuaiji was too firm."<sup>32</sup>

Gu pursued the link to Kuaiji and the south further; he noted that in the Republican period, divinities had strong ties to areas other than Mount Tai: Huangdi had a mausoleum at Mount Qiao in modern Shaanxi and Pan Gu had one near the South China Sea and at Guilin, Guangxi. Gu believed the mausoleums were indications that Pan Gu and Huangdi were not originally gods of the Central Plains, but were synthesized into the unified political and geographic entity. Gu emphasized that there existed, during the Republican era, a mausoleum to Yu located five *li* northwest of Kuaiji. He concluded that even though Huangdi and Pan Gu had a strong local presence, Confucians were able to arrange them into a single geographic and political lineage. However, Yu's ties to the south were even stronger because the Confucians were unable to remove all the traces of Yu's relationship to Kuaiji from the texts. Although the contemporary mausoleum was not concrete evidence that Yu originated in the south, it did convince Gu that Kuaiji was a principal center for the worship of Yu.<sup>33</sup> His argument, however, presumes that worship of Yu at Kuaiji may safely be dated back to the Warring States, but he did not substantiate his point by proving the existence in the Kuaiji area of a cult dedicated to Yu during the Warring States.

Gu used the contemporary mausoleum and the evidence from the Han dynasty text, the *Han shu*, to argue that since Yu was well-established at Kuaiji, he also originated there. From other texts, Gu gathered evidence that momentous events in Yu's life as a human king occurred in the south. The *Zuo zhuan*, Duke Yuan seventh

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 121-122.

year, records that Yu assembled the various lords at Mount Tu, and the "Gao tao mo" chapter of the *Shang shu* and "Tianwen" poem of the *Shijing* state that Yu's wife came from Mount Tu. Mount Tu is in present day Anhui; during the Zhou dynasty, it was the area between the Huai Yi and the Qun Shu, both non-Zhou peoples.<sup>34</sup> Gu argued that the Qun Shu people were responsible for transmitting the Yu myths from Yue to Chu. He concluded that "the center of these myths was in Yue (Kuaiji); the Yue people sacrificed to Yu as their primordial ancestor. From Yue he was transmitted to the Qun Shu people (at Mount Tu); from the Qun Shu he was transmitted to Chu; from Chu he was transmitted to the Central States."<sup>35</sup> However, given that his approach is limited to circumstantial information (the Republican era mausoleum at Kuaiji for example), Gu's conclusion is unconvincing. Gu's argument for Yu's route of migration is based solely upon selective textual evidence, as is his argument for the connection of Yu with Kuaiji.<sup>36</sup> Yet by pointing out snippets of information connecting Yu with Kuaiji, Gu opened up possible avenues to research the idea that various figures originated in diverse areas yet became incorporated into a single, linear chronology. The question then is how to construct a methodology that allows us to pursue these questions in a more reliable way. Further investigation may lie in the

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 121.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 127.

<sup>36</sup>Interestingly, Gu does not draw a conclusion by combining the probable dates of composition of these works and the origins of these texts. The specific portions of *Shang shu* and *Shijing* that he quotes he does not date, but they are 9-7th century B.C., while the *Zuo zhuan* is 4th century B.C. All the texts are from the Zhou states - not from Chu or Yue, suggesting that if Yu did originate in Yue, the Zhou had early knowledge of this figure. Also, the very information the quotations contains is interesting. The two early texts refer to relationships in the south created by marriage, while the later text refers to a more overtly political maneuver. If all these actions refer to political operations, then the texts seem to fit with contemporary political trends. During the early Zhou, political relationship were established and sustained by personal relationship such as direct feudal relations, or in this case, marriage. During the Warring States, these feudal, familial ties broke down and leaders relied upon more "modern" models, such as covenants and oaths between people, and contracts with a developing bureaucratic state, to create allegiances. The texts' describe Yu's political activities in accordance with contemporary trends.

conjunction of modern anthropology and archaeology with historical research, a methodology Gu hinted at but did not systematically apply in his research.

Gu pursued Yu's connections to the south further, by arguing that it was logical to say that Yu, with his special characteristics, originated from the environment of the southern states. Gu began by arguing that the classifiers the Zhou used in writing southern names reflected the south's natural environment. During the Zhou dynasty, the names of southern peoples contained the *chong* classifier and the names of southern states generally included the tree or grass classifier.<sup>37</sup> Using the *Shuowen Jiezi*, Gu suggested that the character “Yu” had etymological roots in the *chong* classifier and that this classifier typified southern names.

People of the Central Plains categorized southern peoples under the *chong* classifier. The people of the state of Yue of the southeast were named the Min. The people in the region of Min Mountain and the Yangzi were named Shu.... It is apparent that the Central Plains people looked at the South, and there arose an association with the category *chong*; thus in writing, the classifier *chong* was often used to indicate southern origins. Yu's name derives from the classifier *chong* and probably this is precisely such a case.<sup>38</sup>

Gu claimed that the people of the Central Plains wrote the names of southern peoples with the *chong* classifier, and since Yu's name also incorporated this classifier, “the emergence of [the character for] Yu from the southern clans names is very important evidence” in support of the theory that the myths of Yu were of southern origin.<sup>39</sup> Gu's etymological work is anecdotal, however. Though he gave several examples of people whose names were written with the *chong* classifier, his etymological argument was not comprehensive. He did not prove that only southern

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<sup>37</sup>I leave *chong* untranslated precisely because Gu seems to refer to a broad category which includes insects, reptiles, and amphibians.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

peoples' names fell under this classifier, while the names of peoples of other regions were excluded. Nor was Gu's etymological argument for the names of southern states all-inclusive. He claimed that the Central Plains used characters with the grass and tree classifiers in order to write Chu and its other name, Jing Chu. He regarded this as an indication that the north considered Chu's vegetation lush and profuse in comparison with that of the Central Plains.<sup>40</sup> However, he did not mention the fact that the characters for "Yue" and "Wu," two states in close contact with the Central Plains and Chu during the Warring States, which shared the basic geographic and flora and fauna features of Chu, and the supposed original location of Yu, and do not contain any such classifiers. More importantly, perhaps, Gu presupposed these names are the products of the Zhou states, thus reflecting the Central Plains' impressions of the south, and not the south's perception of themselves.

Although Gu clearly stated these classifiers were the north's invention, he glossed over the more pertinent question of whether or not the concerns and mentality recorded in the texts solely belonged to the north. He drew on the *Mencius*, *Han shu*, *Chu ci*, and other texts, to explain that the south had concerns widely different from those of the Central Plains. First, these texts record that the people of Chu and Yue needed to deal with issues of flood control and a different form of agriculture. Second, the south was inhabited by dangerous beasts, which made the south a hazardous area for settlement. He concluded that in order to cope with these two difficulties, the people of the south created a god with Yu's special characteristics.

According to the *Chu ci*, the south was more forbidding compared to all the other regions. He noted that the *Chu ci* characterizes the south as "scorching hot for a 1000 li;" it was hot, wet, and inundated with fantastic beasts and dragons.<sup>41</sup> Clearly,

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 124. This and the following footnote are from Gu's scholarship citing the *Mencius*.

Gu took this as representative of an environment quite different from North China. Gu drew the same conclusions about the environment from the *Mencius*:

In Yao's time, the empire itself not yet settled. Vast waters flowed unrestrained, over-flooding the empire. Grass and trees proliferated, birds and beasts multiplied, the five grains were not harvested.... In Yao's time, the waters flowed contrary, inundated the central states, and snakes and dragons resided there.... [Yao] ordered Yu to regulate it. Yu dug the earth, then filled its lake, and drove out the snakes and dragons.<sup>42</sup>

The *Mencius* passages emphasize that Yu performed work damming up destructive waters and taming a disordered land. Gu Jiegang concluded that southern states such as Chu and Yue needed to control the floodwaters, while states of the Central Plains did not. Although stories of the sage emperors claim that they all ordered the land and cosmos, a striking characteristic of the Yu myths is Yu's regulation of the floods. According to Gu, Chu and Yue created and adopted Yu in order to better cope with the challenges of their natural environment.

The *Mencius*, *Chu ci*, and *Han shu* characterize the animals indigenous to the south as prolific, exotic, and even frightening. The *Han shu* "Di li zhi" says about Yue, that "its lord was Yu before... he abdicated at Kuaiji. The tattooed bodies and long hair are used to repel the harmful effects of flood dragons."<sup>43</sup> The *Han shu* straightforwardly states that Yu originated from the south, but Gu quoted the *Han shu* not because of this flat assertion, but because it supports his argument that southerners themselves feared native creatures. Using this information, Gu speculated on why Yu originated in the south, citing specific reasons why they needed to imagine a god with Yu's special characteristics, while the Zhou people of the Central Plains did not. Yu

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 123. See *The History of the Western Han*, chapter 28, lower, in the "Siku quanshu."

first arose in the state of Yue, but Chu, like Yue, was marshy and semitropical. People of Chu and Yue

therefore had a need to drain and release long-standing water, and [because] the grass and trees were very luxuriant, they had reptiles harmful to people, and had a need to burn (clear) mountains and marshes, and disperse these reptiles.<sup>44</sup>

People in the southern regions were faced with the constant challenges of draining water from marshy lands and driving out pests by clearing marshes and thick growth. Gu gave passages of the *Mencius* and *Chu ci* as evidence for both these challenges. From the *Han shu*, Gu further deduced that the reason why some southern people were tattooed was in order to protect themselves. In his opinion, Yu may have originated in Yue, but the people of Chu found that the Yu myths spoke to their concerns also.<sup>45</sup>

There are fundamental illogical elements in his speculation regarding the formation and adoption of certain myths and legends in the south. Gu believed that the *Mencius* records the Zhou dynasty's perceptions of Yu's territory and provides information on people's relationship to the environment when the *Mencius* was written and do not necessarily accurately reflect the environment of the time when Yu purportedly lived.<sup>46</sup> Gu may accurately interpret the text as reflecting fears and needs, but he did not give the reasons why these would only belong to the south. Even if we partially accept the argument and concede that these challenges and accompanying

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>45</sup>Many scholars now believe that Chu originated in the north. Barry Blakeley has studied the location of Chu's first two capitals, Danyang and Ying, during the early Spring and Autumn period. Using the *Zuo zhuan*, *Shiji* and other texts, he concludes that Danyang was in southwest Henan and/or northwest Hubei at the time of the Zhou conquest (ca. 1050). He concludes that in the eighth century, the Chu capital was located in modern day Hubei province, in Yicheng county. See Barry Blakeley, "The Location of the Chu Capital in Light of the Handong Incident of 701 B.C." in *Early China* 15 (Institute of East Asian Studies, UC Berkeley, 1990), 49-70.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 123-124.

fears predominated among southern peoples, this does not necessarily mean that peoples of other regions did not have them. Indeed, the Central Plains had concerns about frequent flooding of the Yellow River. Gu, by giving the location of Yu's activities as the south, countered the traditional assumption that Yu supposedly performed his acts in the north in order to control the Yellow River. Gu's interpretation of the *Mencius* is faulty because the *Mencius* passages mention neither south nor north, simply *tianxia*, the empire. We have no way of knowing if the *Mencius*' description of a wild and disordered land refers specifically to the south. In addition, Gu did not provide evidence that the author of the *Mencius* had the intention of restricting Yu's activities - and his territory - to the south. In fact, the implication of the *Mencius* is that the entire world was chaotic. From the *Mencius*, Gu teased out cultural and ethnic boundaries between the north and south which provided evidence for his model yet he did not give arguments to support his reading of the text. In the case of the *Mencius*, Gu was more concerned with finding evidence for his model than understanding the texts' original meaning, and sometimes he ignored their implications for the Warring States and Han periods. One of Gu's ultimate goals was to form a critique of the tradition, yet he employed its texts without critical evaluation.

Besides the issues of the region, the identification of the speakers is another concern. In his textual discussion, Gu connected a fear of reptiles, insects, and amphibians and a concern about the environment to southern people's mentality. However, in his etymological argument, Gu linked the Central Plain's usage of the *chong* classifier to writing southern names and argued that it was the Central Plains, not the south, who used the tree, grass, and *chong* classifiers to denote the southern region. Since he primarily relied upon texts like the *Mencius* and *Han shu* which presumably originated in the north, this would substantiate the idea that the classifiers and fear of the southern environment belonged to the north. However Gu did not

clarify which position he supported: do the texts record the north's fears of the south or the south's fears of their own environment?

As with the *Mencius*, Gu interpreted the *Han shu* in a manner supportive of his hypothesis. According to the *Han shu*, the inhabitants of Yue tattooed themselves in order to protect themselves against *jiao long*, flood dragons. Ban Gu, the author of the *Han shu*, understood *jiao long* literally; since according to the *Shang shu*, Yu tamed the floods riding on the back of a dragon, translating *jiao long* as flood dragons is appropriate. Ban Gu, himself a Confucian, probably regarded the contents of the *Shang shu*, a primary text of the tradition, as a truthful record of facts, literally accepting the Confucian texts. He presumed, though a flood dragon today is labeled a mythical creature, that it does exist. Ban Gu perceived no discrepancy between what is today referred to as myth and fact. On the other hand, when Gu rewrote the *Han shu* sentences in his own words, Gu used the terms *long she* and *dongwu* in order to explain the term *jiao long*. *Dongwu* is easily translatable as "animals" and indicates that Gu considered the accounts 'scientific' and 'rational.' With *long she*, snakes and dragons, Gu probably intended to call attention to the exotic and even a magical view of the south held by northerners. Yet using two different terms for *jiao long* reveals that Gu considered the mythical and the real as two separate categories. Gu did not notice the dictomony he created out of Ban Gu's single living animal, though elsewhere, in his discussion of *Mencius* passage, Gu created a rational understanding of the natives' worship of the god Yu. The use of the term *long she* confuses this understanding of Ban Gu, because otherwise Gu argued that the promulgation of Yu was pragmatically related to southern life. He did not understand that Ban Gu did not perceive the modern dichotomy between the realities of life in the southern regions and the magical or religious aspects used in early societies to explain that realities of life. Here Gu fails to examine the biases of his texts, which in Ban Gu's case meant



that Ban probably literally accepted the texts and had faith in the Confucian tradition's accuracy.

The third major text that Gu used, the *Chu ci*, unlike the *Mencius* and the *Han shu*, gives quotes which provide more definite evidence of environmental differences between the north and south, but the quotes do not refer specifically to an indigenous fear of snakes and dragons, nor do they prove that Yu had to belong to southern cultures originally. The *Chu ci* dates to the fourth century B.C. state of Chu. From another piece of evidence, we can deduce that Gu accepted the traditional view of the *Chu ci*, believing that the *Chu ci* originated in the state of Chu and represented the poetry of the state of Chu, while the *Shijing* illustrated of the poetry of the Zhou states.<sup>47</sup> One point in support of his argument that Yu originated in the south is the single sentence: "The *Chu ci* 'Tianwen' has very rich myths about Gun and Yu."<sup>48</sup> Gu merely presumed Yu, by figuring prominently in the *Chu ci*, was native to the *Chu ci*'s place of composition, but did not elaborate. However, Yu also figures in the *Shijing* as well as the *Chu ci*, a much earlier text than the fourth century B.C. *Chu ci*. The northern Zhou states and Chu were in contact well before the fourth century; it is more than possible that Yu circulated from the south and was recorded in northern texts before southern texts. Yet neither does the fact that Yu is more prominent in the *Chu ci* than the *Shijing* prove that Yu was originally a southern deity. In fact, all the *Chu ci* does is give evidence of a different environment.

Based on the etymological and textual evidence above, Gu Jiegang concluded that Yu was originally a southern deity, but became a part of the pantheon of Zhou figures. Gu's basic premise, that various legendary figures originate from people of

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<sup>47</sup>May Fourth intellectuals were beginning to question the origins of the *Chu ci* around this time. In particular, Gu's friend and fellow contributor to the *Gushi bian*, Hu Shi, wrote a 1922 article, "Du *Chu ci*" (reprinted in *Hu Shi wencun*, series 2, 1953) where he expressed doubt that Qu Yuan, the traditionally accepted author, ever existed.

<sup>48</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1: 121.

distinctive cultural and geographic regions, certainly warrants attention. Nevertheless, if scholars wish to pursue this idea, it is worthwhile to discover his methodological flaws. Also, because an issue here is how to build a rigorous methodology and what Gu's legacy has been in creating one, it is important to examine how, although he criticized other scholars for not critically examining the tradition, he himself fulfilled the expectations he created for critical scholarship.

For his overall legacy, Gu conceived of it as partly political, or rather, hoped that it would have a bearing on politics. Even considering his lack of proof and various assumptions about the texts, by even arguing that a non-Han ethnic group contributed the Yu myths to Chinese culture, Gu upset the conventional concept of ancient history. He decentered the origins of Chinese culture, giving credit to diverse cultural and ethnic groups. This basic idea had relevance in the political debates of the Republican era. In the *Zixu*, Gu wrote that he was concerned about the future of the country and even though he had neither interest in government administration nor talent for social mobilization, he hoped to offer solutions to politicians, teachers, and reformers through his scholarship.<sup>49</sup> His political concerns and hopes are manifest in his discussions of the origins of the Yu myths and the contributions of non-Han people to China:

In the period of the Warring States (403-255 BC), when there was an influx of many new racial elements, China was unusually vigorous and powerful, but in the Han dynasty and later, the autocratic power of the monarchy and the monopoly of Confucian teaching brought Chinese culture to stagnation.... Had it not been for the invasion of the *wu hu* the (the Five Barbarian Tribes), the Qidan (Khitan, eleventh century), Nuzhen (twelfth century), and the Mongols (thirteenth century), giving the Han race a fresh infusion of blood, I fear that the Han race could not have survived to today. Now, every strong country of the world violently oppresses us. Their culture is higher than ours and their economic aggression increases daily, forcing our difficulties of living to an extreme.... Looking at it from this point of view, our people truly are extremely decrepit and the time of our extinction is imminent.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>*Zixu*, 105-106.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, 104.

The Warring States was one of many historical periods when non-Han people had introduced fresh elements and reinvigorated Chinese culture. Gu perceived the contributions of Mongols, Manchus, Tibetans, Muslims and other ethnicities in all periods as vital to China's survival; previously, non-Han peoples had restored the vitality of Chinese culture. China had arrived again at a turning point at the beginning of the twentieth century, and such contributions, in Gu's opinion, could save China from the various political troubles it was confronting.<sup>51</sup> An important issue was China's lack of territorial integrity and the advantage foreign nations were taking of this state of affairs. Gu believed that a better informed understanding of the ethnic and cultural makeup of the Zhou dynasty offered historical examples of mutual cooperation and could, during the Republican period, foster unity among ethnic groups. This in turn would strengthen China's ability to confront foreign nations.

Gu Jiegang countered the predominant assumption, inherited by the ruling

Gu Jiegang countered the predominant assumption, inherited by the ruling Guomindang party, that all Republican ethnic groups were descended from the sage emperors. This assumption of racial homogeneity formed the foundation of the Guomindang's argument for political unity. Opposing this, Gu's theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history, "Ceng lei di zaocheng de Zhongguo gushi," discussed at length in the next section, presents the theory that the chronology was a fictitious, politically expedient creation of Zhou era writers. The theory repudiates the veracity of the traditional lineage of sage emperors, their practice of abdication, and their rule by virtue. Gu applied Kang Youwei's idea, that spurious literature was created in order to fulfill a contemporary political need during the Xin dynasty (AD 9-23) of Wang Mang, to the Eastern Zhou period. Gu placed the Yu myths - particularly the abdication legend - into historical context and concluded that the myths served the

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 105.

underlying political needs of Warring States philosophers. Gu then made an analogy between the Warring States and the Republican period:

The most important reason [why this chronology emerged in the Warring States] was the contemporary political background. During the Warring States, the king of very strong state had the lofty goal of uniting the empire and carried out endless wars and attacks. Moreover, the aristocracy was unceasingly despotic and extravagant, injured the lives of the people, and destroyed the people's belongings. The people were pallid and wan because of the tyrannical government and truly were deeply wounded and tremendously pained. Philosophers of the time saw the pain and suffering of the people and desired to find a way to resolve the question of government. The most straightforward way to resolve this was without revolution.... But the relationship of ancient people to the king was the same that of as present-day people to the warlords. People in this situation have the heart but not the power [to overcome their oppressors], so from their desires they create a way to fundamentally resolve [the problem] and use it as propaganda.... The idea [during the Warring States] was government morality and inner potential.<sup>52</sup>

In order to promote the people's welfare and improve the political system, philosophers created the idea of the sage emperor, who embodied potential, virtue, and peace, and spread these qualities throughout the land. The ruler's inner potential was the most important criteria for ruling, and this idea found its clearest expression in the myths of Yao's abdication to Shun and Shun's abdication to Yu, where hereditary rights to rule were swept aside in favor of the sage's virtues. The passage above is ambiguous as to whether Warring States philosophers manipulated myths or sincerely believed they were history, but certainly Gu did not criticize them for creating and circulating the chronology because the chronology offered a politically expedient and morally valuable interpretation of the past to Warring States philosophers.<sup>53</sup> Gu

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<sup>52</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1: 120.

<sup>53</sup>Gu praised the Mohists elsewhere for the idea of the abdication legend, precisely because it served this purpose, but he blamed the Confucians for recording the legends as history. He disliked the Confucians and felt the need to attribute the politically expedient abdication theory to another group. Also, he probably thought, as contemporary scholars do, that many parts of the *Mozhi*, such as the

disapproved of contemporary writers such as Kang Youwei who created, out of their ancient sources, precedents for a course of action, yet the passage above does not condemn Warring States philosophers for creating politically expedient history. In addition, Gu, like Kang and Warring States philosophers, molded his scholarship to suit his political opinions by searching for historical precedent. In the passage, Gu vaguely equated Republican politics to the Warring States, and elsewhere he recorded his hope that his scholarship could provide guidance to politicians, teachers and reformers.

Clearly, Gu, similar to Kang, did not advocate a clean severance of ties between politics and scholarship. Given that the most obvious problem in Gu's studies of Yu's origins are some empirical ones, the idea that politics influenced his work and led him to draw unwarranted conclusions is an attractive consideration. Yet more interestingly, Gu shared with Kang Youwei and the majority of scholars a belief that the ancient texts, no matter how they were interpreted, provided direction and solutions to immediate issues. While Gu turned to the same texts as Kang Youwei, he produced different conclusions.

Gu's argument had the potential, according to the Guomindang, to forcibly undermine ethnic groups' connections even more and further reduce territorial integrity. According to the Guomindang,

The Zhonghua [Chinese, *Huaxia* ethnicity] nation, as may be seen from its history, has grown by a gradual amalgamation of various stocks into a harmonious and organic whole. These various stocks, originally of one race and lineage, were scattered east of the Pamirs, along the valleys of the Yellow River, Huai River, Yangzi River, Amur River and Pearl River. Due to their different geographical

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Dialectal Chapters, date to the fourth century B.C. and earlier. The Military Chapters of the 1, Mozi, Zhu Xizu argued were creations of the Han (*Gushi bian* vol.4, p.261-71). For Gu's opinion, see "Zhanguo Qin Han ren de zao wei yu bianwei" [The Criticism and Creation of Spurious Literature by Warring States, Qin, and Han Men] *Gushi bian* vol. 7, part 1, p.1-64.

environments, they had developed different cultures, and this in turn accounted for their different characteristics. However, during the last five thousand years a continuous process of amalgamation has been going on through frequent contacts and constant migrations so that they have now become integral parts of one nation.

In this process, culture and not military might has been the actuating force; and the method of assimilation has been by a stretching forth of a helping hand, and not by conquest.... they had either a common ancestry or were related to one another through many generations of intermarriage. Says the *Book of Odes* [*Shijing*]: "descendants of King Wen [early Zhou dynasty] for one hundred generations" - that is to say, the same blood runs through all the large and small branches of the same lineal descent. Again, the *Book of Odes* says: "Being of one large family they are no strangers to one another" - that is to say, in addition to blood relationships there were also marital ties knitting them together. This was how the Chinese nation came into being in ancient times.<sup>54</sup>

Using traditional texts, Chiang Kai-shek represented the Guomindang's position. He stated that the various ethnicities of China were all the descendants of the sage emperors. They had, over time, slowly become more distinct. However, they had gradually reconstructed cultural ties and political ties, constituting the Chinese dynasties, based, significantly, not on war and force, but on natural inclination. Chiang clearly imagined, or hoped his readers would imagine, the same scenario during the Republican period. This argument moves from antiquity -- the sage emperors -- to the historical era and texts of the Zhou dynasty, clinging to the traditional interpretation of a single origin for the various ethnicities. In contrast, Gu considered the Guomindang's version of history, though based upon the traditional texts and interpretation, incorrect. Gu believed that once ethnic groups discovered their unity was built upon the Guomindang's false history, any connection or cooperation between them would be destroyed.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Chiang Kai-shek, *China's Destiny*. Translated by Wang Zhonghui (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 4.

<sup>55</sup>Schneider, 261.

Gu Jiegang and other Doubters of Antiquity engaged in discourse with major political figures, though they seldom held official positions and their political opinions consequently carried little weight. They still addressed major issues such as cultural values, the system of government, and social roles. In the end it is precisely the radically new interpretation of the ancient texts which rendered Gu's scholarship useless to the Guomindang; the Guomindang and other political groups pursued their own policies irrespective of Gu Jiegang's opinions, and Gu's real legacy is academic, not political. Chief among his academic legacy is the theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### GU JIEGANG'S THEORY OF ACCUMULATED CREATION OF ANCIENT HISTORY

Upon its promulgation, Gu's theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history immediately attracted the attention of prominent Chinese scholars. It remains both controversial and venerated today. In the present section, I outline and analyze Gu's theory with emphasis on his empirical methodology and in particular his goal to reassess the traditional interpretation of ancient history. In spite of empirical weaknesses in his argument, the theory of accumulated creation occupies a central position in ancient studies today, providing a chronological framework.

Gu's new understanding of the Warring States shook the Classical model of ancient history, which claimed that Yao, Shun, Yu, the Xia, the Shang, and finally the Zhou had all ruled a unified empire. After drawing upon Cui Shu's studies and examining the relevant texts, Gu concluded "our traditional knowledge of Chinese antiquity was built up in successive strata, but the order of [Yao, Shun, and Yu's] appearance [in the texts] and the system of [their] arrangement [in the chronology] are exactly the reverse;" although Yu purportedly ruled after Yao and Shun, he nevertheless appears earlier than Yao and Shun in the literature.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the earlier the figure appears in the chronology, the later he actually appears in the texts. Warring States literature began to create a systematic understanding of the relationship between the figures, developing the relationship between Yao, Shun, and Yu into the abdication myths; Yu, placed before the Xia dynasty, became its founder. As the chronology grew, the myths about Yu changed and went through four stages of

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<sup>56</sup>*Zixu*, 68.



reverse euhemerization.<sup>57</sup> The earliest stories attributed to him godlike powers, while the later stories, dating to the Warring States and later, considered him a human king. The entire chronology of ancient history, gradually forming during the Zhou dynasty, reached its final form during the Han.

Gu's general argument -- the backwards accretion to the chronology, the reverse euhemerization of Yu, and the incorrect nature of the chronological outline -- is accepted among certain scholars today, but because Gu relied uncritically on earlier scholarship, Gu's full argument is seldom referred to. This is because even though Gu purposefully set out to demolish the tradition's interpretation of ancient history, he did not repudiate the tradition altogether, nor did he use archaeological evidence in the manner he advocated. First, he often did not give dates for texts or he presumed that the traditional dating was accurate, and he consequently accepted the traditional interpretation of texts. The matter of dating is often easy to fix in Gu's work, and providing accurate dates may most of the time alleviate his failure to question the origins of the tradition's interpretation. Second, when he did give dates for texts, his method relied on several procedures, some unsound. He did not clearly separate his analyses from his assumptions in the process of explaining his chronology. Sometimes he was able to rely upon recent dating which had a new, wider consensus among Republican scholars, but for other texts he suggested dating based upon his sense of where they should fit into his model; at other times he simply assumed that the traditional dating was acceptable. Third and most significantly, Gu accepted part of the tradition without even providing direct textual evidence. For example, even though Gu denied the existence of Yu, the supposed founder of the Xia, he assumed

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<sup>57</sup>This term is not Gu Jiegang's, but was used by Western scholars such as Derk Bodde, to explain Gu's idea. Euhemerization is when an historical figure gradually takes on supernatural characteristics in stories and legends. Reverse euhemerization, the term used to explain Yu's transformation, is the opposite; a figure who was originally a god is increasingly portrayed as human in the literature. See Bodde's "Myths of Ancient China" in *Essays on Chinese Civilization* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 75-80.

that the Xia existed, without textual or archaeological evidence from the Xia dynasty itself. Gu believed that the tradition could be overturned, in part by archaeological studies, however in this case, he overlooked his own reliance on the traditional chronology.

All of the texts pertinent to Gu's work are safely dateable to the Zhou period. The earliest stories appear in the “Shang song” section of the *Shijing*, which Wang Guowei dated using phonological evidence to the middle Western Zhou. Here, Yu appears alone, without his fellow sage emperors Yao and Shun. In the *Shijing* and earliest portions of the *Shang shu*, Yu is a godlike figure who created heaven and earth.<sup>58</sup> In those early portions of the *Shang shu* dating to the Western Zhou, Yu is the only godlike figure, but in later chapters such as the “Yao dian,” Yu is discussed along with his counterparts Yao and Shun. Gu did not offer an approximate date for these sections of the *Shu*, leaving himself open to the suspicion that he created his outline of reverse euhemerization and accretion to the chronology, then placed texts into the framework, without using critical methodology. Gu worked from the hypothesis that later texts added more information about the figure in question and consequently concluded that texts with more information were later products. The “Yao dian” is the first place where Yao and Shun's “virtues and administrative exploits are splendidly portrayed,” while they were merely mentioned in the other chapters of the *Shang shu* and the *Lun yu*.<sup>59</sup> He compared the passages in the *Shijing* and *Lun yu* to the “Yao dian,” and concluded that because the “Yao dian” provides more information about Yao and Shun than the *Shijing* and *Lun yu*, it was even later than the *Lun yu*. Gu had believed earlier that the “Yao dian” dated to the Spring and Autumn, but when he compared the explicit information in the “Yao dian” to the sketchy material in the *Lun*

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<sup>58</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1: 62.

<sup>59</sup>*Zixu*, 67-8.

*yu*, he decided that, based on his model, the “Yao dian” was written later. It is a reasonable beginning hypothesis to place texts such as the “Yao dian” into the model based upon what information they provide. However, Gu did not return to the texts and provide internal evidence. The date of the “Yao dian” remains debated, but based on its language and thought, it seems to date to the late Spring and Autumn period. This would indicate that the information on Yu in the “Yao dian” is earlier than the *Lunyu*, and consequently, that Gu's dating of information breaks down, though his hypothesis necessarily does not. Authors of the *Lunyu* included information about Confucius; Yu arises only as an addendum to their main subject. In this situation, providing much information about Yu is irrelevant.

Gu established his four stages in Yu's transformation with the “Pi gong” of the *Shijing* as representative of the second stage and the *Lun yu* as representative of the third. In it, Yu has begun his transformation into a human king, but his actions are still similar to his supernatural feats of dispersing the floodwaters and ordering the land, as recorded in the “Shang song.” The “Pi gong” is the sole piece from either the *Shijing* or *Shang shu*, dating to the Western Zhou, which does not attribute godlike powers to Yu even though it describes the same sorts of feats that these earlier two texts do. The third stage, seen in the *Lun yu*, grew naturally out of the second stage.<sup>60</sup> Here, Yu is a human king, as in the “Pi gong,” but he is particularly concerned and involved in the agricultural rhythms of life and his great accomplishments dispersing the floods and ordering the land and mountains are not mentioned.<sup>61</sup> Gu relied upon these texts as representative of these stages, yet he used unreliable methodologies to date the texts. In the case of the *Lun yu*, since he did not give a date for it, readers must assume that he accepted the traditional dating of the work to the early Warring

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<sup>60</sup>Zixu, 67-8.

<sup>61</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1: 108, 117.

States, shortly after the death of Confucius. For the "Pi gong," Gu relied on the standard dating which conventionally placed this piece, which praised Duke Xi of Lu, in the Duke's reign (659-627 BC).<sup>62</sup> For his example of the second stage, Gu clearly indicated the traditional date reign as the time of composition but he did not specify the period of composition for the *Lun yu*, his example for the third stage.<sup>63</sup>

The fourth stage, the idea that the human king Yu founded the Xia, Gu dated to the late Warring States. The *Shijing*, *Shang shu*, and *Lun yu* do not connect Yu with the Xia. The *Lun yu* speaks simply of two dynasties, the Xia and the Shang, and three figures, Yao, Shun, and Yu, but did not connect Yu to the Xia. In the *Shijing*, Hou Ji was already credited with being the ancestor of the Zhou, and Qi with being the ancestor of the Shang. Only the Xia dynasty lacked a founder and primordial ancestor. In the *Lun yu*, because "Yao, Shun, and Yu were directly before the Xia and Shang, and then Yu and Xia follow right next to each other, therefore, there was a tendency to combine them together."<sup>64</sup> By the middle of the Warring States, in texts such as the *Zuo zhuan*, *Mencius*, and *Mozi*, Yu is the founder of the Xia dynasty.

Besides the fact that he often did not provide dates, he also did not dispute the traditional interpretation of their origins. Gu envisioned, as did the majority of his predecessors and contemporaries, that the *Lun yu* formed a coherent whole. Since the "Pi gong" supposedly was a folk song of the state of Lu, Confucius' home state, the second stage's origins in the state of Lu naturally gave rise to the third stage, represented by the *Lun yu* of Confucius. If the *Lun yu* is not, however, a coherent whole, and dates later than Gu assumed, and if the "Pi gong" was not collected from folk songs of Lu, as was conventionally believed, then the continuity of time and place between the "Pi gong" and the *Lun yu* collapses.

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<sup>62</sup>*Gushi bian*, 1: 62.

<sup>63</sup>The date of the *Lunyu* is problematic. The text itself was likely formed through accretion over a long period.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 117.

Gu did not consider the possibility that different conceptions of Yu circulated simultaneously. Gu primarily relied upon texts which were central to the tradition, like the *Lun yu*, *Shijing*, and *Mencius*, and other texts like the *Zuo zhuan* and *Mozi* which were edited by the tradition or grew out of close association with it. Texts within the same tradition would tend to have a more unified vision or be molded to conformity through later editing, than texts drawn from a range of traditions. Although not an anthropologist or ethnographer, Gu noted that there was a mausoleum to Yu at Mount Kuaiji, but he ignored the possible religious connotations suggested by a mausoleum in the contemporary understanding of Yu.<sup>65</sup> In Gu's own time, there was no single interpretation of Yu, yet he assumed that during the Warring States, the tradition's interpretation was the sole vision of Yu. If several different ideas about Yu circulated during the Warring States, Yu's progression from god to human, and the gap in knowledge between the "Pi gong" and the *Lun yu*, would be a significant problem to investigate, but it never appeared as an issue for Gu. The stories of Yu did not need to proceed through a single line of evolution, propagated by the Confucian school alone. In sum, Gu's model for the reverse euhemerization and accretion of the chronology appears correct, even though work on dating is unfinished. In the case of the *Lun yu*, Gu relied upon the tradition's dating because the phonological and textual work needed to refine our understanding of its date was (and still is) unfinished. This consequently gave rise to the main problem in Gu's work. Accepting the tradition's dating also meant accepting the tradition's interpretation of its origins. This may be clarified with more textual study, but there are still times when Gu accepted the tradition's interpretation, when matters of dating were not an issue.

This reliance on traditional interpretation is especially clear in his usage of archaeological materials. Gu rarely relied on archaeological evidence, but his usage of

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 121.

it in his own work did not live up to the standards he placed on Wang Guowei. Though Gu objected to Wang Guowei's use of archaeology to confirm the tradition, Gu is guilty of an equal or greater offense. In his studies of the Yu myths, whenever Gu ventured away from transmitted texts, Gu entered into speculation on probable finds of archaeological evidence. His side comments in his argument on the Yu myths reveal that although he doubted Yu's existence, he did not question the Xia's even though he had no written or archaeological evidence from the Xia. At one point, he speculated on the possible location of the Xia's capital.<sup>66</sup> Early in his argument about Yu's origins, he even suggested that Yu appeared on the nine tripods of the Xia, symbols of political legitimacy, which the Shang supposedly inherited.<sup>67</sup> There is no written or archaeological evidence directly from the Xia, although the name Xia appears a few times in the *Shijing*. However, precisely what this term meant to the Shang, if it existed then -- the *Shijing* poems do not date to the Shang -- is debatable; it may refer to the supposed dynasty, or it may refer to the people of the Central Plains, the *Huaxia* as they later called themselves. In addition, there is no evidence that a specific set of nine tripods was passed from the Xia to the Shang to the Zhou; they are not mentioned until much later in the *Zuo zhuan*.<sup>68</sup> The *Zuo zhuan* was probably written down in its present form in the fourth century BC, although it may be based in part upon material dating back several centuries. The specific passage in the *Zuo zhuan* discussing the nine tripods (Duke Xuan of Chu asks about the tripods) is set in

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 124.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>68</sup>A recent archaeological discovery exhibited at the Poly Art Museum in Beijing, may prove illuminating on the "Yu gong" of the *Shang shu*. The first lines inscribed on a bronze vessel, the *Bin gong xu*, strikingly parallel the opening of the received text of the "Yu gong." These opening lines refer to Yu's ordering of the land and taming of the floods. Probably the following portions of the "Yu gong" date from later, but the opening is of earlier origin than Gu imagined. Ma Chengyuan, curator of the Shanghai museum, believes that though this vessel was purchased on the Hong Kong antiquities market, it dates to the early part of the ninth century B.C. See Edward L. Shaughnessy's paper, part of the Harvard-Yenching Library's Conference, 17 October 2003, for his personal communications with Ma Chengyuan and others. Several have studied the inscription; see *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2002, no. 6 for four scholars' studies of it.

606 BC. Gu, persuaded by Qian Xuantong's objections, later dismissed his own attempt to locate Yu on the tripods, but his original argument, that Yu was so important to the Xia that he appeared as the principle figure on the tripods, relied upon the traditional idea that Yu founded the Xia.<sup>69</sup> The archaeological record confirmed the Shang, but we have no written evidence from the Xia which confirms their existence, nor do we have a specific set of nine tripods which was passed from dynasty to dynasty. Gu presumed the existence of archaeological evidence, as yet undiscovered, which would support traditional interpretations, although he claimed that archaeology and his textual studies were capable of negating traditional interpretations.

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<sup>69</sup>Here Gu believes that the Xia existed, though Yu did not, and he also believes that the Xia themselves believed Yu, a mythical figure, was their founder, perhaps much like the Zhou traced their origins to the mythical Hou Ji.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS

Gu Jiegang's entire theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history relies upon empirically inaccurate details and does not altogether fulfill Gu's own call to critique traditional scholarship. Yet even so, his theory of accumulated creation presents scholars today with an alternative outlook on ancient history, replacing the traditional chronology with Gu Jiegang's basic premise that the ancient lords and emperors were fictitious creations of Zhou dynasty philosophers. Hu Shi and Qian Xuantong, among others, immediately recognized the radical nature of Gu Jiegang's theory and agreed that the theory warranted further attention. They pressed Gu Jiegang for more elucidation of his idea, namely, more empirical research. Hu Shi believed that scholars should open-mindedly research Gu Jiegang's ideas, and not allow the traditional chronology to block consideration of this important idea.<sup>70</sup> Hu's comment indicates that Gu's theory and approach helped usher in two new radical conceptualizations in Chinese historiography. Below, these two are analyzed through contemporary perceptions of Gu Jiegang's scholarship. First, in the remainder of this section, I examine contemporary perceptions of Gu's historical methodology of *kexue fangfa* (scientific methodology). Second, in the following section, the theory of accumulated creation serves as the basis for scholars to formulate alternatives to the dominant, nationalist concepts of Chinese history and culture. This section will demonstrate that historical research following the theory of accumulated creation is in effect a methodological approach that constantly stands in opposition to today's state-sponsored scholarship.

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<sup>70</sup>Liu Lina, *Gu Jiegang xueshu sixiang pingzhuan* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 279.



Hu Shi and Qian Xuantong, who centered their work around the theory's chronology, both challenging and refining it, but ultimately subscribing to it, became known as leaders of the Doubters of Antiquity or the *Gushi bian* school.<sup>71</sup> On the most basic level, the theory of accumulated creation is a chronological framework for historical research. However, the theory, particularly when paired with another work of Gu Jiegang's printed in the *Gushi bian*, "Da Liu Hu liang xiansheng shu" (A Letter Responding to Mr. Liu and Mr. Hu), has extended significance for historical methodology and politics. In "Da Liu Hu liang xiansheng shu," Gu outlined four steps for historical research. The first and second steps aim "to destroy the concept of the emergence of the ethnicities from a single one" and "destroy the concept of a united territory." This required approaching the texts without preconceived conclusions, especially conclusions based upon personal philosophy or politics. As discussed earlier, these two steps had political ramifications during the Republican period, and as will be discussed in the next section, they still do today. The third step intends to remove the assumption of most scholars that the people of antiquity recognized a boundary between spirits and humans. Gu asserted that people of antiquity did not completely separate humans from gods and history from myth. Gu in effect proposed a new perspective on ancient texts, a perspective that regards these texts not as objective records of factual history but as subjective documents of peoples' beliefs and conceptions of the world. As a result of these three steps, he could proceed with his fourth and final step, "to destroy the concept of a golden age" in Chinese antiquity, and reconfigure ancient history altogether.<sup>72</sup> His goal was to progressively "establish

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<sup>71</sup>It is interesting to note that scholars who are not labeled Doubters of Antiquity, such as Feng Youlan, were also contributors to the *Gushi bian*. The equation of the *Gushi bian* with the Doubters of Antiquity is a misnomer, but current scholars closely link the two and ignore the contributions of others. Gu and scholars who followed his chronology and methodology were not a closed-off group or adverse to discourse with peers, even though they are commonly grouped as a finite "school."

<sup>72</sup>*Gushi bian*, 99-100.

a backbone of trustworthy history," "topple aspects of false and accurate history," and challenge the dominance of the traditional historical outlook.

Various scholars concur that Gu's theory of and approach to ancient history achieved just this purpose. According to another member of the Doubters of Antiquity, Fu Sinian, Gu's theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history was the first, necessary step to a complete reevaluation of ancient history. Fu believed that the theory removed the layers of false facts from history, creating a revolution in historical studies.<sup>73</sup> Fu credits Gu with developing textual studies in a new direction because he had no personal investment in proving the veracity of the ancient chronology. In Fu's opinion, Gu's skeptical, objective attitude toward the texts was the central component of Gu's methodology that allowed this revolution in the field. The subsequent generation of scholars agreed with Fu's assessment and description of Gu Jiegang's role in the development of historical studies. Yang Xiangkui admired Gu, his teacher, for his scrutiny of ancient history and persistent doubt.<sup>74</sup> Evaluations extend beyond Gu's students and contemporaries to current scholars; a flurry of articles followed Gu's death in 1980, as did a forum in Suzhou commemorating the 100th anniversary of Gu's birth in 1993.<sup>75</sup> Bai Shouyi, who paid tribute to Gu in a 1993 article in *Journal of Historiography*, considers Gu's role central to the Doubters of Antiquity movement and even believes that Gu's studies were the precise origins of the Doubters of Antiquity school.<sup>76</sup> Wang Xuhua, writing at the centennial of Gu's birth, credits Gu Jiegang's theory of accumulated creation with providing a basic

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<sup>73</sup>Liu Lina, *Xueshu*, 298, 309.

<sup>74</sup>Wang Xuedian and Sun Yanjiao, *Gu Jiegang he ta de dizimen* (Shandong huabao chubanshe, 2000), 321.

<sup>75</sup>These articles also emerged out of the widening of models for historians that began around this time. As mentioned in the next section, as China opened politically and flourished in the early 1980's, Marxist ideology's influence on historiography and other fields diminished, causing the classical Marxist model of history to give way to others, including Gu Jiegang's theory of accumulated creation.

<sup>76</sup>Liu Lina, *Xueshu*, 299. Bai Shouyi, "Remembering Gu Jiegang" in *Journal of Historiography* (Beijing Normal University Press, 1993 No.2), 3-6.

chronology and giving a new perspective on traditional histories (or myths, as Wang Xuhua, following Gu Jiegang, labels them).<sup>77</sup> Wang mentions Gu's new perspective on traditional histories, while Fu emphasizes Gu's removal of false layers of history, but their different statements highlight the same factor. They both refer to Gu's third criteria in "Da Liu Hu liang xiansheng shu," which proposes a new usage of the texts by considering them to be based on myths, not factual history. These scholars, from Fu Sinian to historians at the close of the twentieth century, label scholarship before Gu as the tradition and define it much like Gu did. This tradition was created and promulgated by scholars who believed that the Classical texts transmitted accurate history and guiding principles for society and politics. Accordingly, from the perspective of Gu's followers, because Gu's approach abjured from personal belief in the tradition, it lent itself to empirical scholarship. In addition, because of its critical stance toward the tradition, it demanded a mode of reasoning independent of all the tradition's schools of interpretation and referred instead to Western scholarship.

Contemporary scholars identify the influx of Western theories as part of what enabled Gu Jiegang to revolutionize the field of history. Recent publications on Gu note the cross-germination of several ideologies, including the theory of evolution, Dewey pragmatism, Marxism, and materialism, in Gu's scholarship, but current historians characterize Gu's use of Western ideologies as a whole as *kexue*. This term, *kexue*, is generally translatable as "scientific" or "science," but a methodology based on *kexue* varies along with the field of study. Gu correctly wondered if scientific methodology, as practiced in the natural sciences, could be applied indiscriminately to all academic fields. Even within a particular field, the understanding of the term may differ. Gu's definition for historical research differs slightly from those of

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<sup>77</sup>Wang Xuhua, "Qian Yan." in Deng Guangming and Zhou Yilang, ed. *Gushi bian zixu* 1-14. Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000.

contemporary scholars, and as discussed in the following section, contemporary scholars certainly disagree among themselves about what constitutes *kexue fangfa*. For current scholars who positively assess Gu's scholarship, *kexue* describes the empirical application of Western ideologies, mainly Marxism and related theories, as the foundation of historical research.

Below are two examples of Gu's scholarship that several current scholars perceive as paradigms of *kexue* in historical research. The first illustrates the influence of the theory of evolution on Gu's studies. During the late Qing and early Republican period, this was one theory borrowed from Western natural sciences and applied to the social sciences. In the field of history, historical interpretations utilizing the theory of evolution emphasize the progressive development of a society to a more complex level of civilization. The development may refer to the process of change of a Neolithic society into a Bronze Age society, or to the political development of a small group into a large, centralized state. The specific forms of change vary, but they invariably are conceived of as movement toward a higher level of civilization. According to Liu Lina, Si Weizhi, and Wu Huaiqi, in their retrospectives of Gu's scholarship, the theory of accumulated creation is a demonstration of evolutionary politics.<sup>78</sup> As the political situation transformed during the Springs and Autumns and the Warring States periods from a collection of loosely related states with contending rulers to a centralized state overseen by a single ruler, political philosophy similarly congealed. Warring States philosophers fashioned the argument that, in high antiquity, during the era of peace and plenty, political control had existed at one cosmological center with a single ruler. However, according to these three present-

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<sup>78</sup> Wu Huaiqi. "The Republican Period New Culture and the Historical Thinking of Gu Jiegang" in *Journal of Historiography* 1993 No. 2. (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1993), 15-21.  
Si Weizhi. "The Contributions of the Gushi bian to Historical Studies" in *Journal of Historiography* 1993 No. 2, (Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1993), 7-11.

day scholars, the theory of accumulated creation was not just a demonstration of Warring States evolutionary politics; it was also a political argument directly relevant to the Republican era. Gu's theory argues that the people of antiquity were not descended from a single ethnicity and there was no golden age of peace and prosperity in antiquity. Consequently, high antiquity did not provide a political model for the Republican era, particularly to conservatives who hoped for the restoration of the monarchy. Gu's theory denied that a monarchical government in China had ever produced a golden age and this offered hope to revolutionaries, Nationalists, Communists and other parties for the validity and effectiveness of other political models.<sup>79</sup> Notably, these three scholars themselves turned their attention to this matter and produced this interpretation only in the 1980's, when centralized control was again relaxed. These scholars applaud Gu's interpretation, clearly empathizing with it.

The second example demonstrates that contemporary scholars attribute an overwhelming influence to Marxism, which Wang Xuhua characterizes as "historical materialism" and "science" (*kexue*).<sup>80</sup> By historical materialism, Wang refers to the Marxist theory that cultural products and social institutions are the superstructure of a material economic base. According to Wang Xuhua, Gu's goal, stated in "Da Liu Hu liang xiansheng shu," to reconsider ancient texts as myths, was in line with Marxism; these texts were the remnants of the tradition's "superstition" and "feudal culture." In Wang Xuhua's opinion, the tradition is superstitious because, despite portraying itself as a mode of scholarly research is a philosophical and/or religious belief system which impedes empirical research; it is also feudal because it entails a pre modern social and political system based upon personal and kinship relations. On the other hand, Wang does not believe that Gu's theory was orthodox Marxism. Instead, it demonstrates the

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 7-11; 15-21.

<sup>80</sup>Liu Lina, *Xueshu*, 2.

understanding of a lower level of Marxism. According to Wang, Gu had realized feudalism politics produced various manipulations (such as superstition and religion), but had not traced these institutions back to an economic root.

These two illustrations raise three points. First, contemporary scholars inject political and cultural meaning into their interpretations of Gu's scholarship and its relationship to *kexue*. The political arguments they find do not tally with Gu's own. The argument for diversity Gu made is irrelevant to contemporary models, which see the theory of accumulated creation as a call for a modern nation-state. Liu Lina, Si Weizhi, and Wu Huaqi, who interpret Gu's theory as partially a call for a democratic political system, though they do not specify which political system. However, these scholars also assume -- correctly -- that political arguments are not the ultimate pursuit of his theory. Contemporary scholars also believe that the "value" they find in Gu's scholarship is empirical, not political, in nature. Indeed, they consider the political implications of Gu's arguments secondary to his scholarly achievements, recalling at this juncture other aspects of Gu's methodology that are considered *kexue*, as a way to promote historical correctness, not political relevancy.

Second, Marxism is basically a more specialized form of the theory of evolution, establishing consecutive levels of a society's advancement, from slavery to feudalism to capitalism. Thus, with the theory of evolution, scholars essentially infer a Marxist influence. This raises the third issue concerning the discrepancies between Gu's works and current scholars' understanding of his work. These scholars directly correlate Marxism and *kexue*. Gu's interpretation of Western ideologies' role in *kexue* was more broadly based, mainly following Hu Shi's lead. Additionally, Gu clearly articulated a process of analyzing, comparing, and creating hypotheses. Contemporary scholars, on the other hand, do not evaluate the precise steps of Gu's studies. They are

more interested in analyzing Gu's conclusions than in analyzing or describing *kexue fangfa*, whether that means *kexue* for historical studies in general or Gu's in particular.

As noted earlier, contemporary scholars use the term the "tradition" in the same manner as Gu. Wang Xuhua, in his description of indigenous scholarship, deems it superstitious and feudal, while Western ideology is modern and progressive. This dichotomy between Western science and the superstitious tradition is a common one among scholars today, but even while upholding this distinction, scholars single out several academic endeavors of the Qing that should be part of the "tradition" and yet counter their definition of the tradition. Chief among them is Kang Youwei's *jinwen* school. According to Zhou Chunyuan, Gu and the *Gushi bian* school began opening new avenues of research and repudiating the tradition in part by building on the progressive spirit of the *jinwen* school.<sup>81</sup> Also important is *kaozheng* scholarship. Si Weizhi, evaluating the Marxist qualities of Gu's scholarship, says that using *kaozheng* methods did not preclude Gu from accomplishing Marxist goals. Si's statement implies that no matter what political system *kaozheng* developed under, it is an empirical methodology capable of sidestepping, to a degree, political influences and personal beliefs.<sup>82</sup> They and other contemporary scholars believe that these two Qing dynasty endeavors provided the Doubters of Antiquity with the roots of their methodology, both the empirical tools and the beginnings of a new attitude toward the texts.

Among the *jinwen* and *kaozheng* scholars, contemporary scholars locate indigenous methodologies which Gu inherited. Cong Xiaoping, in his research on Republican era historiography, believes that Gu Jiegang did not, nor did he need to, break completely with the past; Doubters of Antiquity selectively fused Western

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 303.

<sup>82</sup>p7 *Journal of Historiography* 1993 #2

ideologies with native methods of research in order to create a scientific (*kexue*) revolution in the field of history. On the other hand, Cong describes the *kexue fangfa* of the *Gushi bian* school as a parting from indigenous methods of empirical evaluation of texts, such as *kaozheng* scholarship, occurring during this era because Gu Jiegang had access to Western ideas and methods. Cong Xiaoping, in language reminiscent of Wang Xuhua's, differentiates the "methodology of doubt and hypothesis" of the *Gushi bian* school with the "religious and authoritative methods of former textual studies."<sup>83</sup>

Other scholars blur Cong's clear demarcation between the Republican era Doubters of Antiquity and the school's earlier empirical models. They regard earlier models as the tradition's Doubters of Antiquity. Cai Shangsi, in an article about Gu's creation of a new Doubters of Antiquity school, takes as his basic premise the prior example of a lineage of Doubters of Antiquity, including Cui Shu's *kaozheng* scholarship and Kang Youwei's *jinwen* school. He then argues that Gu exceeded their accomplishments.<sup>84</sup> Liu Lina agrees with Cai's opinion that the *Gushi bian* school combined the Chinese tradition of Doubters of Antiquity with Western science.<sup>85</sup> Zhou Chunyuan, Yu Jiansheng and others writing about Gu Jiegang, the Doubters of Antiquity, and Republican era historiography in general identify Kang and Cui as part of the tradition's Doubters of Antiquity. Such an understanding offers a way to connect the Republican period's Doubters of Antiquity to prior scholastic trends, thus emphasizing the rational, empirical aspects of the tradition and countering claims that the tradition as a whole was superstitious. These contemporary scholars' motivation is probably twofold. In response to scholars who follow the traditional chronology, they want to legitimize the Doubters of Antiquity by claiming that it naturally grew from

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<sup>83</sup>Liu Lina, *Xueshu*, 305.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 302.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 302.



earlier scholarship.<sup>86</sup> They also want to legitimize aspects of the tradition for use in contemporary scholarship.

Though it is natural to search for the source of the Doubters of Antiquity, calling the *jinwen* school and various earlier scholars "Doubters of Antiquity" poses the question of why the Republican era Doubters of Antiquity movement was so earthshaking. Again, Gu Jiegang's methodology provides the key element to answer this question; Gu criticized textual interpretations charged with political agendas and confined to belief in the Classics' veracity. Without doubt, Kang Youwei's writings conform to this first criticism; his motives were avowedly political. Other Qing scholars, although they served as *kaozheng* models for Gu Jiegang, were the target of Gu's second criticism. All these Qing scholars researched the Classics in connection with their own era and concerns, but without perceiving and/or acknowledging the connection. Gu, noticing their limitations, desired to return the interpretation of the Classics to historical context.

The view of the tradition also separates the Doubters of Antiquity from earlier scholars. The Doubters of Antiquity defined the tradition as scholars use the word today. The Doubters of Antiquity movement was a self-conscious attempt on the part of Gu Jiegang, Hu Shi, and others to separate themselves from all earlier schools and lineages. The tradition included dynastic historians, as opposed to scholars of a modern state. Thus the Doubters of Antiquity movement, by severing ties to earlier scholarship, envisioned a new relationship between academia and a modern nation-state. Dynastic scholars did not see themselves as part of the "tradition" as defined today, in part because they did not view the object of their research, "history," as an

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<sup>86</sup>The final section of this paper discusses in further detail the complex situation these scholars are facing. Methodology and politics are tightly knit. A more "traditional" methodology, one which repudiates the Doubters of Antiquity, draws upon traditional scholars and texts as its base. These scholars wish to appeal to the base of the traditional also, while at the same time promoting the theory of accumulated creation.

archetype for a model of human evolution which generates the very dichotomy between traditional and modern. Gu Jiegang, by labeling something "the tradition," set boundaries for it, thereby limiting what scholars could accomplish in it, or at least perceptions of what they could accomplish in it. Moreover, the "tradition" could not be simply equated to the dynastic era; traditional interpretations of history flourished during the Republican period. Doubters of Antiquity viewed themselves in opposition to other Republican era historians who relied upon earlier historical models. There were many points of contention between Doubters of Antiquity and their contemporary critics, but the dividing point between them is Gu's theory of accumulated creation and the political issues surrounding it, not ideology, though perhaps Doubters of Antiquity claimed this. The seemingly simple combination of empiricism and Western ideology, as Gu Jiegang mentioned concerning Kang Youwei's study, did not necessarily produce *kexue fangfa*. Liang Qichao's writings, which evoked the theory of evolution, serve as another example of the often murky boundary between scholarship and political rhetoric.<sup>87</sup> Nor can modern and Western be simplistically equated with the Doubters of Antiquity, as perhaps Gu Jiegang would have wanted. "Traditional" historians, such as Wang Guowei, cannot be dismissed as remnants of a superstitious feudal culture simply because they were perceived as old-fashioned, in both their scholarship and lifestyle; Wang actually was well-versed in Western literature and philosophy. If the juxtaposition of Chinese and Western ideologies is unwarranted, then the issue becomes a matter of defining empiricism.

Gu Jiegang and these contemporary scholars state correctly that some dynastic scholars also questioned the tradition, but it is the very construction of a tradition by the Doubters of Antiquity that makes it possible to counter it. In their construction of and argument against the tradition, Doubters of Antiquity relied upon *kexue*, drawn

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<sup>87</sup>See Joseph Levenson, *Liang Ch'ich'ao and the Mind of Modern China*.

from Western ideologies, as one value to legitimize their work. If Gu had relied only on the tradition as the sole legitimate source to argue against its primary texts, then his "doubt" of the texts would have lost its foundation. Consequently he appealed to other sources, such as Western science, for legitimacy; he predicted that archaeology would be another source, though he rarely referred to it. But by selecting elements from the tradition that were *kexue*, such as specific works by Cui Shu, Gu did not rely on *kexue fangfa*'s inherent qualities alone. He referred to something outside of *kexue fangfa* -- the tradition -- for legitimacy of *kexue fangfa*.

In the same way, contemporary scholars who consider Gu Jiegang an empirical model combine various elements in order to depict Gu in ways that are useful to them. They are all active proponents of *kexue fangfa*, a mode of historical research portrayed as employing Marxist-related theories to reach empirical, objective conclusions. There are differences among their conceptions of the Doubters of Antiquity's relationship to the tradition, but in my opinion, the Doubters of Antiquity's conscious efforts to break with earlier scholarship and establish new approaches, lends credence to the contemporary arguments that the *Gushi bian* stands as a revolution in the field of history. Contemporary scholars create links between earlier scholars to the Doubters of Antiquity, and so to themselves. They place themselves within an academic lineage with an emphasis on empirical scholarship over political and cultural considerations, whose roots they understand to extend back to the mid-Qing.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SCHOLARS AND THE STATE

Throughout China's long history, scholars have reinterpreted the Classical texts, claiming that their interpretations tally more with the Classics' original meanings than earlier or competing interpretations. Interpretations of the classical texts serve, then as now, to indicate contemporary thinking about cultural and social identities, often expressing a faction's political vision of the state. This section discusses two contemporary interpretations which revolve around the debated existence of the Xia dynasty, which Yu supposedly founded. The first is the state-sponsored mononuclear archaeological and historical sequence of the *Huaxia* ethnicity, which presumes the correctness of the transmitted texts and the existence of the Xia. The second interpretation follows Gu's revised chronology of ancient history, which objects to calling the Erlitou culture, spread throughout the middle Yellow River Valley, the Xia.

A comparison of these two interpretations brings up an issue revolving around empiricism. These two interpretations are based upon different historical methodologies, mainly because of their different application of archaeological material. Yet both interpretations, by emphasizing certain kinds of evidence, claim to be empirical. What is empirical, or what is capable of being proved or disproved through observation and data, is a central question addressed in this section.

Politics is another central issue; scholarship and politics were intimately connected during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but during the last few decades, politics' sway over academic trends has weakened. Scholarship is no longer censored as strenuously by the state as it was during the Mao era. Yet Marxism remains an essential consideration for scholars; the construction of historical methodology requires a foundation in Marxist ideology. Scholars' reappraisals of Gu's

relationship to Marxist ideology throughout the twentieth century testify to a greater tolerance of alternative interpretations of ancient history on the state's part and yet also demonstrate Marxism's secure ideological position. During the 1950's, scholars had to claim their scholarship conformed to Marxist ideology, even if their projects or conclusions had little or no bearing to Marxism. No matter what their personal opinion, the majority of scholars, including Gu's student Yang Xiangkui, claimed that Gu was not a Marxist. After 1980, as politics opened up and academic censorship was relaxed, scholars began to freely pursue a wider range of empirical models and interpretations. At this point, the contemporary scholars mentioned in the previous section, including Yang Xiangkui who revised his earlier statements, reevaluated the role of Marxism in the Doubters of Antiquity movement. To varying degrees, they concur that Gu's scholarship was a necessary part of the process of revolutionizing the field of history, politics, and culture. According to Yang Xiangkui, Chen Hanming, and Yin Da, Gu did not actively advocate or participate in the building of socialism, but his skeptical attitude toward the texts resonated in society at large, opposing elements of feudal culture.<sup>88</sup> Locating a Marxist influence on Gu's scholarship provides legitimacy for his scholarship, but it also legitimizes an interpretation and methodology based upon Gu's scholarship which I will call, following Li Xueqin for simplicity, doubting antiquity.

This term is actually very appropriate because, as demonstrated in the previous section, contemporary scholars credit Gu with a central role in the May Fourth reinterpretation of texts. However, even if these scholars consider the Marxist influence small and even if Gu did not claim Marxism was a part of his methodology, because Marxism is the state's orthodoxy, a prerequisite to claiming Gu's methodology and interpretation as a model is the identification of it with Marxism. Yet the

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<sup>88</sup>Liu Lina, *Xueshu*, 299.

interpretations arising out of the historical methodology of doubting antiquity counter the Communist party's official interpretation, which at least pay lip service to the state's ideological apparatus, Marxism. The state's position is now most visibly advocated by the historian Li Xueqin, who articulated in several articles during the late 1980's and 90's arguments favorable to the state's interpretation. His interpretation was confirmed by the party officials Song Jian and Li Tiewan at a 1996 meeting and by Song Jian, who published the party's view on ancient history in newspapers such as *Ke zhi bao* and *Guangming ribao*.<sup>89</sup> In his articles, which predate Song Jian's statements, Li offers two terms which are reminiscent of the two basic positions on the ancient chronology of conservative Republican era historians. He refers to the Doubters of Antiquity's methodology and interpretation as *doubting history*, and the traditional position of presupposing the texts' accuracy as *trusting history* (which he does not link to the traditional interpretation).<sup>90</sup> Once he has articulated these two positions, Li Xueqin states that historians need to move away from doubting antiquity, and instead of either doubting ancient history or trusting it, historians should explain it.<sup>91</sup>

Li Xueqin assumes the seemingly innocuous position of desiring to explain history in an attempt to bypass either methodological approach of critiquing the ancient texts or accepting them at face value. Li's "methodology" of explaining history is insightfully critiqued by Ge Zhaoguang.<sup>92</sup> According to Ge, although Li attempts to adopt "explaining history" as an historical methodology, it is not an

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<sup>89</sup>Li Xueqin, *Zouchu yigu shidai* (Liaoning daxue chubanshe, 1994), 356-57. Li published his various articles together in one volume after Song Jian's newspaper articles. The title of Li's book, *Leaving Behind the Era of Doubting Antiquity*, is reminiscent of the title of Song's article, "Surpassing Doubting Antiquity and Moving Away from Confusion" (Chaoyue yigu, zouchu mimang).

<sup>90</sup>Li does not link the position of trusting antiquity with the traditional interpretation, probably because to be closely allied with the "tradition" may not be politic, since Marxism supposedly overcame the feudal oppression of traditional society. Yet his interpretations are actually often strikingly similar to the traditional one.

<sup>91</sup>*Zouchu yigu shidai*, 18-19.

<sup>92</sup>Ge Zhaoguang, "Gudai lishi hai you duoshao aomi?" *Dushu* #11, 1995, p3-11.

historical methodology, but rather the goal of historical inquiry. To explain history requires an historical methodology. However, in Ge's opinion, Li's second methodology, that of trusting antiquity, is not a true historical methodology either, because it simply presumes that the texts are correct, even concerning affairs from over a thousand years ago, without close investigation of the texts. A true methodology requires an empirical approach, one which critiques the texts and the archaeological evidence. In short, Ge believes that any true historical methodology

According to Ge's reasoning, Li Xueqin must mean either doubting antiquity or trusting antiquity with his slogan of explaining history. Through other articles, we can know that Li trusts antiquity. Li equates the Xia dynasty of the transmitted texts (ca. 2100-1600 BC in traditional accounts; the Three Dynasties Chronology Project, a recent state-sponsored ideological and academic tour-de-force, has decided on 2070 BC as the founding date for the Xia) with late Longshan culture and Erlitou culture (ca. 1900-1550 BC). Doubtless Li's interpretation of ancient history led to his appointment as the project director of the Xia-Shang-Zhou Chronology Project, funded by the government in order to establish reliable dates for early Chinese history. The equation of the modern day site of Erlitou with the Xia is nothing new. In 1959, Xu Xusheng of the Institute of Archaeology began to look specifically for the Xia capital. He used historical geography to pinpoint the general area of the Xia as either central Henan or the plain of Loyang.<sup>93</sup> Xu basically relied upon references to place names found in pre-Qin texts that can be connected somehow to the Xia dynasty. The problem with his methodological approach to historical geography is obvious; he presumed that the Xia named these sites (as opposed to later sites or even contemporaneous sites being named in honor of the Xia), and that the names of Xia

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<sup>93</sup>Chang, K. C., *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 244-245.

dynasty sites remained unchanged for over 1000 years. Considering the great fluctuations between place names in latter-day China and the movement of people, this is at best an inconclusive methodology.

However, once the area for investigation was determined, Xu and his team spent time at modern day Erlitou, which had been discovered in 1957. They excavated bronzes, jades, pottery, and pounded-earth walls surrounding a compound with pounded-earth sections inside designed as the foundations for palaces and smaller buildings.<sup>94</sup> Though this was obviously a site of great importance requiring a centralized authority and social stratification (two signifiers of a complex civilization) to command the labor to build these walls, Xu interpreted this site as a Xia capital. Using the distribution of the pottery type found at Erlitou, Xu reconstructed the area controlled by the Xia.

For K. C. Chang, Xu's clues to the historical geography of the Xia lend historical reality to the Xia. Chang writes, "the textual record of the Hsia [Xia] is regarded by Chinese historians as basically believable primarily because of the many historiographical and folkloric traditions concerning the towns and cities that served as the political centers and cells of the Hsia."<sup>95</sup> Chang admits that the persistent legends and names surrounding towns and cities "is an article of faith for any scholar," but he still believes this is a viable methodology.<sup>96</sup> As evidence of such names, Chang cites texts such as the *Shui jing ju* and the *Taiping huanyu ji*, which date to the first millennium AD. Using the distribution of potsherds found at Erlitou and other contemporaneous sites in the area, Chang argues that the concept of the Xia dynasty is equivalent to the material culture of the modern day archaeological site of Erlitou. In

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<sup>94</sup>These bronzes are small, crude, and basically undecorated when compared to Shang bronzes. However, they were cast, signifying that the ancient inhabitants had a very sophisticated technique to make bronzes. Various cultures, including the Shang and Zhou, inherited the same technology.

<sup>95</sup>Chang, 244.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.



short, he equates a pottery type which is spread throughout the middle Yellow River with a later name. However, the equation of a pottery type with a political unit is as flawed as the methodology for historical geography. According to Bruce Trigger, "distributions of material culture do not necessarily conform with social and political organization."<sup>97</sup> Consequently, the distribution of a pottery type probably does not match the territory of a coherent political, ethnic, or cultural unit.

Li Xueqin, however, has inherited the arguments of Xu Xusheng and to an extent K. C. Chang. Li became the project director of the Three Dynasties Project, which was funded by the Chinese government to establish the chronology of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties. Li Xueqin adds new archaeological material to the evidence. Chang hints that the Xia were literate; he notes that though there are no oracle bone inscriptions at Erlitou, there are signs and symbols on pottery.<sup>98</sup> Li Xueqin more explicitly posits the existence of a writing system, a marker of high civilization, during the Xia. This consequently pushes the origins of writing back from the Shang dynasty oracle bones (ca. 1250 BC), to close to the third millennium B.C. mark, and to the Erlitou, Longshan, Erligang, and Dawenkou cultures.<sup>99</sup> What Chang and Li Xueqin, as well as other scholars, identify as the earliest writings are markings on pottery, but these markings are not well understood. These are mostly one or two stroke "symbols," yet their very simplicity brings up the question of whether these marks were intended as decoration or as writing, which in these cases would probably identify the owner or maker of the pot. Yet if they were intended as writing, their meanings are not evident either by internal evidence on the pottery or by connection to external factors such as the oracle bones' writing. A second problem is context; we cannot place these marks into either a proto-writing system, a system able

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<sup>97</sup>Trigger, Bruce, *Time and Tradition: Essays in Archaeological Interpretation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 237.

<sup>98</sup>Chang, *The Archaeology of Ancient China*, 250.

<sup>99</sup>*Zouchu yigu shidai*, 26-28.

to met specific political and social needs without representing its spoken language grammatically, or a writing system, a system able to replicate almost completely the grammatical structure of the spoken language.<sup>100</sup> There is no evidence that prior to the oracle bones (the late Shang) either existed.

Li first assumes a writing system must have been a part of the Xia, then searches for any shred of material he can use as evidence.<sup>101</sup> The reason he assumes these marks are writing is because the transmitted texts presume that the Xia were literate. Rather than place the question of the Xia's literacy or their very existence in abeyance, he chooses to build an interpretation primarily founded on the transmitted texts, largely ignoring archaeological material.<sup>102</sup> Li's reliance on the texts in order to decide these two points corresponds to his statements concerning the relationship between history and archaeology. In his opinion, historical methodology should be a combination of textual studies and archaeological research, but Li defines archaeology very specifically. In his definition and usage, archaeology is the recovery of certain important artifacts, especially the recovery of items with writing. Li reduces archaeological artifacts to vessels carrying writing, conveying the longevity of Chinese writing and civilization, thereby also reducing the discipline of archaeology to

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<sup>100</sup>I draw my definition of writing from Qiu Xigui, who also believes that the writings system is able to almost completely replicate the spoken language. Its earlier forms, which I call proto-writing here, he calls primitive writing. The markings on the pottery Li Xueqin cites, however, are not confirmed as part of even a primitive writing system. See Qiu Xigui. *Wenzi xue gai yao (Chinese Writing)*. Trans. Gilbert L. Mattos and Jerry Norman. Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 2000, 1.

<sup>101</sup>Li Xueqin actually does not provide evidence that these pottery markings are writing; he is more concerned with listing the times and places where these marks are found. He provides an overabundance of evidence to stifle objections. Other scholars have done more "scientific" work on the pottery and Li relies upon their idea.

<sup>102</sup>The archaeological recovery of a site is often non-comprehensive. Lothar Von Falkenhausen, in "On the historiographical orientation of Chinese archaeology," cites several reasons why. One reason is because these are mainly salvage expeditions, simply to quickly remove the most significant items before a site is bulldozed for new construction. Among reason is because excavators assume that archaeology will bear out the written record, which is the reason why Li Xueqin ignores archaeology. Current reports mention few of the objects found, without listing all of the artifacts or the stratigraphy.

a sub-discipline of history. Li's historical methodology takes the transmitted texts as the ultimate empirical source.

Li Xueqin (as does K.C. Chang though he did not work for the P.R.C.) does not state what he was looking for particularly in the archaeological record to make the identification of the Xia. Both rely, as stated before, on questionable historical geography to determine Xia territory. Both use radiocarbon dates for the Erlitou culture which prove that it significantly predates the Shang dynasty, thus placing the Xia in the correct chronological order. Yet neither piece of circumstantial evidence proves that the Erlitou is the Xia. Written evidence from the Xia itself is necessary to irrefutably accomplish this, but there is nothing thus far like the Shang oracle bones from Erlitou.<sup>103</sup>

However, by calling the Erlitou the Xia, they make inferences about the Erlitou culture based upon the transmitted texts. Foremost, they presume that the distribution of potsherds delineate the boundaries of a state, which, according to Trigger, is an invalid conclusion. They draw upon the Zhou dynasty's theories about the Mandate of Heaven, a political justification for the conquest of the Shang and a theory of the legitimate transfer of power between ruling families.<sup>104</sup> From Confucius, Mencius and even later scholars, the Mandate of Heaven is further refined to the parable of virtuous rule at the beginning of the dynasty and moral decline of the last rulers, leading to Heaven's revocation of the Mandate and its transfer to a deserving family. This is a general concept which later transmitted texts apply to every dynasty.

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<sup>103</sup>We are able to call them the Shang because they identify themselves as the inhabitants of the city of Shang. If their name for themselves did not match later records, then calling the remains of Anyang the remains of the Shang would be more than a misnomer; it would be a presumption.

<sup>104</sup>Though this theory shows up mainly in transmitted texts of the Eastern Zhou, we know from Western Zhou dynasty bronzes that this idea was circulating in the Western Zhou. A tenth century bronze commissioned by the Marquis of Xing (a son or grandson of the Duke of Zhou) mentions *tianzi*, the Son of Heaven. Here the Zhou king claims a special relationship to a supreme deity.

The Xia of the transmitted texts overshadows the Erlitou culture. Yet factual information about the Xia is sorely lacking. Yu, the founder, is often mentioned, but as discussed earlier, the mythic tints and late dates of the texts demonstrate their origins in the political climate of the Zhou. Sima Qian's *Shiji* is the earliest, fullest record on the Xia, but since it gives little information on the Shang besides a few myths about its rise and fall, following the parable of virtue and decline, and a king list, yet does not mention details of Shang society that are manifest in the archaeological record (such as the numerous human sacrifices of the Shang kings), the few "facts" about the Xia can be taken as no more than the application of the theory of the Mandate of Heaven, with a king list tacked on.

Li Xueqin does more than insist on the correctness of the transmitted texts; he insists on their supremacy, reducing the role of archaeology. Li disapproves of some contemporary historians and archaeologists who emphasize archaeology as a more empirical source. These scholars define archaeology as systematic field archaeology which recovers and records every item and its context or position in the ground.<sup>105</sup> Li attributes to the pervasive influence of the Doubters of Antiquity this definition of archaeology, as well as the contemporary existence of interpretations and methodologies diverging from his.<sup>106</sup> In effect, even though Li writes of avoiding either doubt or trust, he blames the Doubters of Antiquity for what he perceives of as problems in historical methodology. In his opinions on the Doubters of Antiquity and his interpretation of the Xia-Erlitou issue, Li Xueqin obviously follows the historical methodology of trusting history.

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<sup>105</sup> An unfortunate reality is that archaeology in China is often salvage archaeology, so that this definition does not apply. When construction workers come upon archaeological sites, they allow archaeologists time to quickly excavate the site. However, archaeological crews may only have a few months to perform work which ought to be stretched over a few years. Erlitou, though, was a planned excavation. Moreover, only the exposed materials are recovered; complete excavations are rare.

<sup>106</sup> *Zouchu yigu shidai*, 19.

Li Xueqin's interpretation of ancient history is inescapably linked to his methodology. Zhu Fenghan's scholarship displays the same unbreakable tie between interpretation and methodology, but since his interpretation is more complex, so is his methodology. Zhu is a professor in the history department of Nankai University and a member, along with Li Xueqin, of the Three Dynasties Chronology Project. His major areas of research are pre-Qin history, and ancient bronzes with writing. Zhu divides the materials of ancient studies into three categories (whereas Li Xueqin only writes of two): archaeological artifacts, historical texts, and myths and legends. Zhu does not believe that the Xia had writing, but as a participant in the Three Dynasties Chronology Project, he does believe that the Erlitou is the Xia. In this quandary, then, to prove the Erlitou culture is the Xia, to bridge the gap between history and prehistory, transmitted texts and archaeological evidence, Zhu employs the third category, myths and legends. These are recorded in texts that Li considers historical documents, but Zhu's description of them contains two key differences: Zhu acknowledges these texts date to later periods, and he labels them myths and legends, not historical writings. While he does not believe, as Li does, that these are factual accounts, he believes that they may serve to supplement knowledge of this era. Zhu uses myths and legends to reconcile his commitment to a critical methodology, which allows the archaeological materials a greater degree of independence from the transmitted texts, and his interpretation in favor of the Xia. However, the very usage of myths and legends counteracts his commitment to a critical methodology and his entire methodology collapses. Zhu's choice of terminology for this third category, myths and legends, reveals that their veracity is suspect. How much of these myths is truth and how much is imagined is the very issue that Gu Jiegang tackled in the theory of the accumulated creation of ancient history. Yet Zhu does not discuss the criteria for selection, or the methodology for judging which portions are to be discarded and

which are to be adopted, giving rise to the possibility that selection may be based upon the individual scholar's (highly politicized) interpretation, not empiricism.

Our question concerning Zhu Fenghan is why he would employ a suspect textual approach when his archaeological approach is more critical than Li Xueqin's. This is a question which cannot fully be answered. For Li Xueqing and Zhu both, there are advantages to being part of the Three Dynasties Chronology Project, including academic appointments. However, a belief in the Xia may not be entirely self-centered. Another possibility which cannot be proven is that these scholars, having absorbed the interpretation of the transmitted texts, believe there was a Xia dynasty. Having been taught that there is a Xia dynasty, these scholars and others, like Xu Xusheng and K.C. Chang, naturally interpret sites which fall into the correct time and place as Xia. Xu purposefully set out to find the remains of the Xia, presupposing their existence; K.C. Chang presumed that once the Erlitou site was found it had to belong to either the Xia or Shang. However, since scholars have criticized the interpretation of the Erlitou as the Xia, the government has a vested interest in employing scholars to buttress their position with archaeological evidence. The government hires scholars the government knows will attempt to substantiate their interpretation; how scholars approach archaeological material determines what projects they undertake and are offered.

The transmitted texts prejudice archaeological work in general. Li Ling, professor of Chinese at Peking University, names several impediments created by the undue influence of texts on archaeology.<sup>107</sup> First, archaeologists and historians such as Li Xueqin are concerned about the artifacts (and selective ones at that) but they do not consider their context, which reduces the amount of information. Second, because

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<sup>107</sup>Li Ling. "Ru shan yu chu sai" (Entering the Mountains, Crossing the Borders). *Wenwu* 2000 #2, 87-95.

transmitted texts, having mainly been produced and filtered through the *Huaxia* ethnicity itself, record that *Huaxia* culture spread from the Central Plains to other regions and ethnicities, archaeological digs have centered on the Central Plains while the other regions have been neglected. Because the transmitted texts dictate the choice of archaeological digs, antiquity in areas outside the Central Plains is not as well understood. Third, this belief that *Huaxia* culture spread outward from the Central Plains has influenced the interpretation of archaeological artifacts with "foreign" features. These artifacts are considered foreign imports, not natively produced. This mode of interpretation supposes that cultural influence was one-way, taking for granted the north's cultural influence on other ethnicities. This also denies the possibility that other cultures influenced the *Huaxia* ethnicity and that these artifacts might exhibit a combination of various cultures' features.

Li Ling recommends a change in archaeological practice to remedy the first point above. He proposes that archaeologists concentrate on the procedure of excavating artifacts and not just on the artifacts themselves, because the context of discovery and the relative positioning of artifacts add to the archaeologist's information. Stressing context is one way to begin questioning the transmitted texts, because if the interpretation of the artifacts is presumed to be known before excavation, then the context and certain artifacts may appear to provide extraneous, or even embarrassing, information. To address the second and third impediments, Li suggests that scholars reassess the role of non-Han or non-*Huaxia* in antiquity. In short, the transmitted texts' influence must be reduced to rectify all these issues.

The mononuclear interpretation of the transmitted texts not only has an archaeological component, but a political dimension as well. Tong Enzheng discusses the problem of how state-sponsored, nationalist archaeology promotes archaeology in the Central Plains and a conception of the *Huaxia* ethnicity's dominance over other

ancient cultures and provides an explanation of why this occurs.<sup>108</sup> In his understanding, when Mao Zedong's anti-western policy became anti-foreign, this promoted theories of indigenous evolution and cultural diffusionism. In the theory of indigenous evolution, culture, writing for example, developed in the Central Plains. These markers of superior culture then spread, according to cultural diffusionism, from the Central Plains outwards. As a consequence of Mao's policy, nationalism and state rhetoric directed archaeological research. Tong provides a reason why the government would fund projects such as the three dynasties project, but as indicated for Zhu Fenghan above, there may be other reasons. The reason why Xu Xusheng chose to search for the Xia capital is unclear; politics may be a factor, but an ingrained presupposition that the Xia remains were simply waiting for discovery probably also played a role.

The alternative to the interpretation of every site as *Huaxia* or influenced by *Huaxia* culture is the division of the mononuclear interpretation into various cultures. The discovery in 1980 of the Sanxingdui Bronze Age culture in Sichuan province widened the lens on Shang-era China. The Sanxingdui culture was obviously in contact with the middle Yangzi region cultures centered in Southern Hubei and Northern Henan because intermingled with native artifacts of Sanxingdui culture are a few artifacts which have characteristics distinctly indicative of the middle Yangzi region cultures.<sup>109</sup> This shows that the Sanxingdui culture had contact with the middle Yangzi region, which in turn was in contact with the Shang directly, but there is not evidence that the Sanxingdui culture was itself in direct contact with the Shang. However, the Sanxingdui and Yangzi cultures were sophisticated enough, both in

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<sup>108</sup>Tong Enzheng, "Thirty Years of Chinese Archaeology" in Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, ed., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 177-197.

<sup>109</sup>Two of these characteristics, realistic animal motifs dissimilar to the Shang faces or *taotie* and the large number of bells, link these cultures with the later Zhou-era cultures of Chu, Wu, and Yue in the same region.



terms of bronze technology itself and social and political organization, to use technology comparable to the Shang's.<sup>110</sup> These examples from the Shang period show that greater ancient China did not have a centralized political authority, nor did *Huaxia* culture dominate. The Shang are so important because out of all their neighbors, only they had written records which have survived until today. The technology of writing transferred to the Shang's conquerors, the Zhou, who in turn transmitted records of their conquest of the Shang. Yet the archaeological record clearly demonstrates the limitations of these records, which make contemporary historians and archaeologists overemphasize the Shang's role in ancient China. If the Shang were not the sole civilized force in ancient China, then neither was the Erlitou culture, even if scholars do not think of them as the Xia. Other Bronze Age cultures flourished contemporaneous to the Erlitou.

However, even this more diverse approach to understanding early China is not without traps. According to Lothar Von Falkenhausen, during the 1980's and 1990's, provinces formulated their own archaeological sequences, ignoring the national one. These constructs or interpretations of the archaeological record use the name of an ancient state or ethnic group found within the transmitted texts to signify all the sites within their modern-day political territory, usually a province, as this ancient group. Like the nationalist, monolinear sequence, these interpretations emphasize native cultural traits and disregard cultural exchange. In addition, these sequences overlook the fact that ancient cultural boundaries do not correspond directly to present-day cultures or provincial boundaries. These interpretations exude false perceptions of

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<sup>110</sup>Most archaeologists believe that the Yangzi cultures obtained their bronze technology from the Erligang culture, which preceded the Anyang phase of the Shang and followed the Erlitou culture. Archaeologists and historians debate whether the Erligang can be termed the early Shang period or not. However, there is no written evidence from the Erligang culture to support this interpretation. The Sanxingdui bronze technology may come from contact during the period between the Erligang culture and the Anyang phase of the Shang, and from intermediaries, not from the middle Yellow River Valley directly. See Robert Bagley's chapter in the *Cambridge History of Ancient China* on Shang Archaeology.

continuity, both of antiquity's political organization (whether based upon a state or an ethnicity's separate political organization) and of the ethnicity or state's distinctive cultural traits, from antiquity to today.<sup>111</sup>

Even though these provincial-level interpretations diverge from the national one, they still do not deviate from the transmitted texts. Since transmitted texts have enormous power to direct areas of research in archaeology, cautious use of their information is indispensable. Their power to influence should not compel archaeologists to discard the texts altogether. Yu Weichao offers solutions to the field of archaeology in general and to its relationship with transmitted texts in his collected essays and articles, discussing archaeology and future developments. To begin with, Yu rarely mentions archaeology's relationship to transmitted texts. Instead, he concentrates on examining methods of archaeological field analysis, such as stratigraphic principles, categorization, and analysis of settlement patterns. Yu separates archaeological studies from the transmitted texts, or from the field of history. Yu is more concerned with archaeology's connections to other disciplines such as anthropology, geology, ecology and underwater research, not history. He encourages the sharing of technological resources and results between these disciplines. In his points on the technical aspects of archaeological research and its relationship to other disciplines, Yu is influenced by his observations of American and European archaeology. He believes that archaeology ought to be influenced more by developments in American and European archaeology departments and less by history. Yu Weichao's archaeological methodology, then, is significantly divorced from history. Historical texts act, for him, as a supplement. When it is empirically supported, Yu use the names of ancient states and cultures to refer to archaeological

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<sup>111</sup>Lothar Von Falkenhausen, "The Regionalist Paradigm in Chinese Archaeology" in Philip L. Kohl and Clare Fawcett, ed., *Nationalism, Politics, and the Practice of Archaeology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 198-217.

cultures. For example, he labels the material remains of the late Western Zhou dynasty state of Chu with the name the Chu themselves used, Chu.

Yu Weichao and Li Ling's ideas are the products of what Li Xueqin labels the persistent influence of the Doubters of Antiquity. Under Li's two terms, doubting antiquity and trusting history, lurk many different methodological and political concerns. First, because they have different conceptions of the relationship between archaeology and history, their methodologies accordingly differ. Li Xueqin believes the transmitted texts are the ultimate empirical source, while Li Ling emphasizes the archaeological material. These two standpoints essentially give a different definition of empirical. Second, the varying definition of empirical evidence determines the historical/archaeological interpretation. Scholars of Chinese antiquity who presume that transmitted texts provide the most reliable source of information believe that the Erlitou culture corresponds to the Xia dynasty. Scholars who cautiously employ the transmitted texts do not make this match, or reserve judgment on the issue. Third, these interpretations have a relationship to politics. The government currently sponsors the Three Dynasties Chronology Project, promoting this interpretation and use of the transmitted texts, but this interpretation of the Erlitou site dates back to the very discovery of the site. These three points form a chain; deciding what constitutes empirical evidence determines historical methodology, but since methodology is unavoidably linked to interpretation, it also determines interpretation. History, archaeology, methodology, and politics are inescapably linked in the Xia-Erlitou issue.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to examine how twentieth-century historians of ancient China have devised approaches to respond to three issues: how to create a methodology in order to do historical research; what is the relationship between history and archaeology; and how should historians and historical writing interact with politics and society. However, this paper has attempted to demonstrate that a response in one arena has an impact on the other two.

The first episode revolves around the Republican era historian Gu Jiegang. Noting problems in historical research, namely, the influence of politics and the tradition, Gu articulated a historical methodology that derived directly from his knowledge of *kexue fangfa*, as presented by his professor at Peking University, Hu Shi. Though he was uncertain of the exact worth of the steps of *kexue fangfa*, Gu believed that it was the best methodology to pursue academic questions. However, since Gu believed that the methodology required testing before it could be rigorously and universally applied, his actual methodology is best seen in his scholarship rather than in his discussions of it.

The paper turned to examine Gu's application of the methodology in historical research. Gu Jiegang was one of the earliest historians to propose that the ancient chronology of emperors was a fictional Zhou dynasty creation, and perhaps the most influential. He pursued several models for the possible accretion to the chronology, suggesting that Yu was originally a god from Chu and Yue of the Warring States Period. His application was unsystematic and does contain trace influences of the two issues he warned about, politics and the tradition. The connections Gu Jiegang tried to make between Yu and the south are unsubstantiated because he often relied upon the

tradition. In terms of archaeology, though Gu thought it would develop into a reliable source, he again relied on the tradition when he assumed that a dynasty which called themselves the Xia preceded the Shang, though there is no evidence to support this claim and overlooked the fact that none of the transmitted texts come directly from the Xia.

Gu also used this idea to present a parallel between the Warring States and the social and political history of the Republican period. Gu Jiegang hoped that contemporary politicians and reformers would take into consideration the diverse origins of the many ethnicities of China when integrating them into a modern nation-state. Gu did not divorce his scholarship from political currents, though he criticized other scholars for drawing on historical texts for political arguments.

Though locating the origins of the Yu myths has fallen to the side in contemporary scholarship, the main thesis of Gu's theory -- that the sage emperors were pulled from various people's beliefs and mythologies to form a monolinear political chronology in Zhou dynasty philosophy -- flourished in the twentieth century. Though Gu did not fully succeed in following his methodological criteria in the theory of accumulated creation, his call for an empirical methodology and his new perspective on ancient history have a place in contemporary research of ancient China. The theory of accumulated chronology is in effect an historical methodology which insists upon regarding the texts as the products of the society that produced them, the Zhou and the Han, and not as accurate reflections of earlier eras. Consequently, these texts are not historical documents, but clues to Zhou and Han political and mythical thinking.

Our questions for contemporary scholars who examine Gu and his scholarship are twofold. One, how do these scholars understand Gu as a Republican era historian and what does this say about contemporary historical research? Two, how do these

scholars use Gu, or, how does the theory of accumulated creation function in contemporary scholarship?

Realizing that intellectual history is better understood when it is combined with social and political history, contemporary scholars perform the same exercise on Gu that Gu did on the Warring States philosophers by examining his scholarship in its Republican context. Contemporary scholars perceive that the theory of accumulated creation has a counterpart in Republican era politics, but the connections to politics they articulate -- the call for a strong nation-state -- differ from the hopes for diversity within the nation that Gu discussed. The very fact that Gu is a topic (and a model) for historians indicates a shift in internal Chinese politics during the 1980's. As the political situation opened, academic censorship slackened, allowing scholars to pursue a wider range of topics and models. This means that not only is Gu Jiegang as a topic for historical research, but he is a model of how to conduct research. That is to say, the theory of accumulated creation is a methodological model for how to research history. This paper examined the above point of methodology regarding the

This paper examined the above point of methodology regarding the current debates on the Xia Dynasty. The government sponsors the Three Dynasties Project which is dedicated to determining dates for the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties. Participants in the project, as exemplified here by Li Xueqin, take as their starting point the existence of the Xia and equate it to the Erlitou culture. Their historical methodology presumes that the transmitted texts are the ultimate empirical source. They supplement their argument with archaeological materials, but scholars select out archaeological materials that will not compromise their mononuclear interpretation.

The connection between a scholar's preexisting concepts of antiquity and the work he does is clear. Li Xueqin and Zhu Fenghan, because they subscribe to the equation of Erlitou-Xia interpretation, have positions in the government-sponsored

Three Dynasties Project, while others like Li Ling do not. The Xia is a politicized issue because the government has aligned itself with the Erlitou-Xia interpretation.

On the other side of the Erlitou-Xia interpretation are scholars who begin to research the Erlitou culture from the premises that textual sources need to be examined as documents of the era in which they were recorded and that archaeology provides an empirical source, especially for antiquity before there were written sources. The Erlitou culture falls into this category as a pre-literate society; consequently, it cannot be labeled the Xia.

This methodological approach is seen by Li Xueqin as the inheritance of the Doubters of Antiquity. Contemporary scholars studying Gu Jiegang agree. Gu articulated the first premise above and foresaw that the second would be another empirical source, though he himself was not an archaeologist nor did he consistently use his few archaeological sources empirically.

The Erlitou-Xia issue is but one example of how a methodology based on the transmitted texts, and backed by a government, influences archaeology. Yu Weichao, by simply ignoring transmitted texts in his descriptions of archaeology, shows that the transmitted texts ought to be either ignored or used cautiously (in examples such as Chu tombs). Li Ling proposes several reparations to current historical practices in order to reexamine the central role attributed to the *Huaxia* culture in developing Chinese culture and the early dynasties. They substitute a more fluid understanding of ancient cultural exchange and fluctuation for the monolithic, monolinear interpretation. This resembles Gu's idea about the origins of the Yu myths, which are the products of non-*Huaxia*, but were a contribution of another culture gradually incorporated, or rather, gradually combined with the *Huaxia* and other cultures.

Even if their methodology and interpretation are not overtly political, there remains the power of ancient history over political behavior. Doubters of Antiquity,

whether of the Republican era or the modern counterparts, do not reject the traditional texts. All these scholars clearly consider the transmitted texts and archaeology as relevant to the present, though they may give different reasons why. Gu Jiegang looked for parallels between ancient and contemporary political situations which could offer hope to the present. Now, ancient history is a matter of pride in Chinese civilization and its accomplishments.



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