

Witchcraft and the Rise of the First Confucian Empire. By Liang Cai. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 276. \$85.00.

This book by Liang Cai tries to answer the question of when and why Confucianism started its ascent during the Han dynasty. As did some scholars before her, Cai argues that the victory of Confucianism did not take place under Emperor Wu 武帝 but only during the times when Huo Guang 霍光 had become regent for Emperor Zhao 昭帝 and when Emperor Xuan 宣帝 ruled. She thinks that Sima Qian 司馬遷 “invented an ideal world where Confucians could become rich and famous” (p. 3). According to Cai, modern scholars “habitually ignored the career paths of the Han officials” because “they have fastened on two chapters of *The Grand Scribe’s Records*: ‘The Basic Annals of Emperor Wu’ . . . and ‘The Collective Biographies of *Ru*.’” “The former,” she says, “is a forgery interpolated by later scholars; the latter is an imaginative refashioning of history” (p. 5). On p. 39 Cai adds that “Scholars suggested long ago that ‘The Basic Annals of Emperor Wu’ was quickly thrown together by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫. It is said that the original chapter on the basic annals of Emperor Wu was lost soon after Sima Qian died; Chu Shaosun extracted the passage describing Emperor Wu’s performance of the Fengshan sacrifice from ‘The Treatise on the Feng and Shan Sacrifices’ . . . and slipped it into the gap left by the missing ‘The Basic Annals of Emperor Wu.’”

I have to contradict Liang Cai here: Although many Chinese literati over the centuries (yet by no means all!) have thought that some later scholar, maybe Chu Shaosun, substituted the relevant part of Sima Qian’s “Fengshan shu” 封禪書 for the lost “Basic Annals of Emperor Wu,” to my knowledge nobody has ever argued that the “Fengshan shu” is a forgery that was not written by Sima Qian. The part that Chu Shaosun may have “extracted” is in fact a very large part of the treatise. *Shiji* 史記 12.451–85 (I am quoting the 1959 Zhonghua shuju version) corresponds to *Shiji* 28.1384–1404. The first part of the treatise of *Shiji* 28.1355–84 is actually shorter than the second part; it looks longer only because of a great number of commentaries. Liang Cai here tries to argue away the fact that in “The Basic Annals of Emperor Wu” as well as in the “Fengshan shu” the historian *himself* says that Emperor Wu promoted *ru* 儒 scholars and that he takes Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 as an example, probably because his case is the most famous one. She does not tell her readers that, no matter whether the text is called “Fengshan shu” or “Xiaowu benji” 孝武本紀, it was after all Sima Qian who wrote it. For me there is no reason at all to doubt that Sima Qian did say that Emperor Wu was inclined to the “techniques of the Confucians” and that Empress Dowager Dou 竇太后 “liked the teachings of Huang-Lao, not the techniques of the Confucians” (*Shiji* 12.452, 28.1384). This statement is then followed by the sentence that after the death of his grandmother the sovereign promoted literati such as Gongsun Hong. Sima Qian’s text is less straightforward than

the one by Ban Gu 班固 who writes that Emperor Wu established the six classics as his standard, and banned the “hundred schools” (*Hanshu* 漢書 6.212, compare 56.2525), a sentence discussed by Wang Baoxuan 王葆琰 to whom Liang Cai refers. But an appropriate discussion of Sima Qian’s text instead of this brief accusation of forgery would have been very important for the overall success of the argument of the book.

The first chapter, “Minority as the Protagonists,” argues that under Emperor Wu *ru* were in fact a small minority. Liang Cai employs a huge arsenal of statistics and graphs in order to show that there was only a tiny group of scholars with a *ru* training at the court of Emperor Wu of the Han. Only because Sima Qian wrote the “Rulin liezhuan” 儒林列傳 do we, according to her, believe that *ru* did actually play an important role. But is it not possible to explain the words of Sima Qian in another way? Sima Qian may just have described the *foundation* for the “victory of Confucianism” that Emperor Wu laid. Even without statistics is it obvious that his reign was characterized by power struggles between many different types of personalities. The antagonism between the Confucian Gongsun Hong and the Huang-Lao advocate Ji An 汲黯 has to be read as an exemplary fight between a winning and a losing group. This does, of course, not mean that with the promotion of *ru* by the Emperor nobody else was there from one day to the other. For Cai, Sima Qian was a staunch Confucian who thought that the *ru* training in the Five Classics “suited them for high office” (p. 4). Many experts, Chinese and Western, are, however, of the opinion that Sima Qian was not happy with what he described as the rise of Confucians—no matter how many of them there were already at his time—because he thought that they were not well equipped for handling important affairs of the state. One may interpret Sima Tan’s sceptical words on the *ru* in chapter 130 of the *Shiji* that way.

Cai dismisses on p. 21 attempts by “some scholars” (she means this reviewer) to see “*ru*” or “Huang-Lao” as labels for political factions. According to her “this treatment of Han history is not justified” because other scholars “have questioned the validity of applying the rubrics of those schools of thought to early China.” This entirely misses the point of my 1993 article that she is referring to.¹ I was not at all interested in applying rubrics of schools of thought to early China (Cai probably actually wanted to say: “applying rubrics of schools of thought *of* early China to political life in Han China”) but in finding out why Sima Qian used them—and the point was that he did so because behind these labels he concealed something that had nothing to do with what common wisdom understands as “Confucianism” or “Daoism” but with political orientations. Twenty years later it does remain obvious

¹ Hans van Ess, “The Meaning of Huang-Lao in *Shiji* and *Hanshu*,” *Études chinoises* 12, no. 2 (Autumn 1993), pp. 161–77.

to me that the narrative of the *Shiji* in general (!) is quite positive about Huang-Lao scholars while, as has been observed already by many traditional Chinese scholars, it is extremely negative about the major Confucian of the time, Gongsun Hong, and about functionaries who basically relied on “laws” (*fa* 法) while putting them into a nice Confucian disguise. This is what Sima Qian himself says at various points. “The Treatise on the Balanced Standard” 平準書 (*Shiji* 30) is quite clear about an alliance between *ru* such as Gongsun Hong and harsh legal officers such as Zhang Tang 張湯, the infamous minister of justice. For Sima Qian, the legal training of a Zhang Tang does, of course, not come from the same source as the *xingming* 刑名 training that such men as Zhang Ou 張歐 (mentioned on Cai’s p. 22) got, and that, according to the biographies of Han Fei 韓非 or Shen Buhai 申不害, was closely linked to Huang-Lao training. Here, the traditional categories of “Daoism” and “Legalism” are, indeed, not helpful. Yuri Kroll has argued that Sima Qian actually adhered to the school of “xingming,” and he has provided in his Russian book on Sima Qian an impressive list of earlier authorities who thought the same. I am well aware that the knowledge of such foreign languages as Russian is not a requirement in modern scholarship but since there are Chinese authors such as Shi Ding 施丁 or Ren Jiyu 任繼愈 who were of this opinion, too, and since the point is of paramount importance to Liang Cai’s argument, it would have been good to have seen a brief discussion or refutation of their views.

In my opinion, the question that we have to answer is not whether we can find many Confucians in high positions under Emperor Wu of the Han but what Sima Qian wanted to tell us with his narrative. I do think that the *Shiji* at many places discusses, in a very detailed and sophisticated way, Confucian values such as “rang” 讓 (to give way to someone else), or the way of dealing with bad rulers. It does seem to me that Sima Qian finds many Confucian ideals lofty and at the same time difficult to apply in reality. It is obvious that Sima Qian admired Confucius for many things although, as Cui Shu 崔述 and Herrlee Creel have argued, he may also have ridiculed him at some points. Admiration for Confucius does, however, not necessarily include the followers of his teachings under the Han. It seems to me that while Sima Qian deplored the fact that many Confucians, both past and present, were inefficient, he especially hated those people who used the aegis of Confucian values to make their own careers; and that this is the reason he had to cry when he read about the order to use Confucian training as an avenue to success in the bureaucracy (*Shiji* 121). He thought that this would be the beginning of what is, in later histories, described as learning for bureaucratic success, instead of learning to become competent in something.

Chapter 2 has the title “A Class Merely on Paper.” A small squabble here is that I would argue that “*ru*” certainly were not a “class” on its own but just a faction

within a “class.” I wonder whether we indeed should want to use this difficult term that has suffered a lot from Marxist usage of it. Yet, Marxists, too, would certainly not describe adherents of one school of thought as a “class.” For them, not even “intellectuals” constitute a class of their own because a class is defined by the possession of means of production or the absence of it.

I did like Cai’s discussion of the vexing problem of what *xueguan* 學官 means in *Shiji*. However, what follows in the chapter “invoking a sacred history of *ru* officials” (p. 51) in my opinion suffers from the same problem as chapter 1. There is no attempt at all to try to reconcile the positive descriptions of Huang-Lao or xingming-rule by Empress Lü 呂后 and Emperor Wen 文帝 with the fact that they were not favourably inclined to *ru* scholars. A *ru* scholar such as Ni Kuan 兒寬 is described by Cai as a “warmhearted and kind man” (p. 62) which is in fact said about him on *Shiji* 121.3125. Yet, he is a protégé of Zhang Tang, whom Sima Qian clearly despised. Sima Qian also says that Ni Kuan was not able to speak up for something at court or to admonish the emperor, so that even his subordinates did not take him seriously. His “warmheartedness” is given as the reason he could stay in power for a long time, and one wonders whether this is in fact a positive *epitheton*. Some authorities have suggested that Ni Kuan was one of those *ru* scholars whom Sima Qian profoundly disliked, although—or maybe because—he had to work together with him (this is something that Ban Gu tells us, who is much more positive about Ni Kuan than Sima Qian). For the *ru* group—that Cai tries to present as very fragmented in this chapter—it is very interesting to consult what Chinese scholars of the past had to say. Their opinions have been conveniently collected in the marvellous book *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji* 歷代名家評《史記》.² They certainly did not agree on the issues, but reading their opinions at least teaches us how difficult it is to understand what Sima Qian actually wanted to say. For example, Fang Bao’s 方苞 ideas have been attacked by Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 in modern times, but I personally still think that Fang’s reading of the *Shiji* presents a better alternative to Xu’s—and Fang thinks that Sima Qian disliked Confucians.

In her third chapter “An Archeology of Interpretive Schools of the Five Classics in the Western Han Dynasty” Liang Cai follows the same approach as before. By pointing to the fact that Gongsun Hong worked against fellow *Annals* specialists such as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 or Zhufu Yan 主父偃, she tries to show that *ru* were not a “unified class” (p. 81). One could add here that by giving this example, Sima Qian showed his readers how mean the most important of all Confucians under Emperor

² *Lidai mingjia ping Shiji*, ed. Yang Yanqi 楊燕起, Chen Keqing 陳可青, and Lai Changyang 賴長揚 (Beijing: Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 1986).

Wu was (it is only with Ban Gu that Dong Zhongshu assumed this position). Maybe this was a warning. “Look,” Sima Qian may have wanted to say, “this is what many of these rustic fellows with the background of people who once herded pigs will do if you employ them. They do not have the means that are needed for an independent mind and they are thus totally dependent on the ruler. Hence they will do everything to remove competitors who might be a danger for their own career.”

After this introduction to the third chapter, Cai moves on to outline the lineages of scholarship of the Former Han to be found in the *Hanshu*. This part of her book is a good piece of scholarship, although for further scholarly writings on the subject Cai may want to consider a look at Tjan Tjoe Som’s book *Po Hu T’ung* which in Western scholarship until today has provided the state of the art on this topic.³ Especially interesting to Cai should be the lineages that Tjan has drawn up. Cai attempts to show that a differentiation of these schools took place only under the rule of Emperors Zhao, Xuan, and Yuan 元帝, which by and large I find a valuable argument. However, it is problematic that she again tries to discuss away evidence from the *Shiji* that may show that reality may have been slightly more complicated. For example, on p. 106, she argues that a sentence on Dong Zhongshu’s expertise in the *Gongyang* 公羊 tradition must have slipped into the text long after Sima Qian because Ban Gu’s *Hanshu* had left it out. This is a very dangerous way of argumentation since, as the old Chinese *Ban-Ma yitong* 班馬異同 genre shows, differences between Sima Qian and Ban Gu may have had completely different reasons than the wrong-doings of irresponsible copyists who may have brought about “disorder in *The Grand Scribe’s Records*” that “may have come about long after Sima Qian’s day, when the bamboo slips of an early edition were shuffled.” Personally, I am not very convinced that bamboo slips were so easily “shuffled” as it is often said today under the impression of recent archaeological findings. Cai tries to justify this theory by pointing at another passage in which *Guliang Chunqiu* 穀梁春秋 is mentioned. There it is said that Gongsun Hong compared the *Guliang* interpretation of a Mister Jiang 江生 to Dong Zhongshu’s teachings and ended up using Dong’s. According to Cai this does not make sense, since Gongsun Hong had studied *Chunqiu* before and had no need for Dong’s learning. Thus, she concludes that the *Guliang* story is a late interpolation based on Ban Gu’s text which sounds more plausible to her. However, there is no need at all for such daring theories: What Sima Qian probably wanted to say is that Gongsun Hong’s training was bad and that he needed the wisdom of other authorities. In the end he did not hesitate to use Dong

³ Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu T’ung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949–52).

Zhongshu's teachings although he had slandered him before. The aim of the whole narrative at the end of the *ru* chapter is again to show how bad a character Gongsun Hong was. So one may conclude that Liang Cai is right when saying that differences between various schools of transmission of the classics were much more pronounced in the first century B.C. than in the second, but in my opinion there is no need to argue that Sima Qian did not know about *Gongyang* or *Guliang*.

The last two chapters of Cai Liang's book, "A Reshuffle of Power: Witchcraft Scandal and the Birth of a New Class" and "Begin in the Middle: Who entrusted *Ru* with Political Power?," deal with the witchcraft scandal and how Huo Guang used it to take power. The description overall is fine—the only additional question that a specialist of Han history would have is to know how much the description of the events differs from the one given by Michael Loewe in his book *Crisis and Conflict in Han China* which is in Cai's bibliography but not quoted in the footnotes to these two chapters.⁴ Her focus again is on careers of officials. She quite convincingly shows that many Confucians got into official positions at this time and she plausibly argues that the witchcraft scandal was a welcome opportunity for them. I do not want to go into detail about this reliable description that is based on Ban Gu's account. However, one further question should be raised. On p. 114 Cai quotes the most famous critique that Emperor Xuan had of *ru*. Afterwards, one of her main aims is to show that despite the appearance that this critique makes, Emperor Xuan was actually responsible for promoting *ru*. Yet, she nowhere tries to give an answer to the obvious question of why Ban Gu may have described Emperor Xuan as the opposite of what she found out with her own analysis. In other words, she uses Ban Gu's *Hanshu* in order to prove that Ban Gu cannot be correct. There is a serious problem here that the reader would have liked to have been addressed. Could it be that the promotion of *ru* scholars was, according to Ban Gu's description, something that the Emperor himself disliked? Was he, according to Ban Gu, forced to use them because of the circumstances? And is it not very likely that Ban Gu, who otherwise presents Emperor Xuan as a competent ruler, here wisely predicts that the domination of *ru* in the end would finally culminate in the ruin of the Han, which began with Emperor Xuan's own son and his wife from the Wang family and was finally accomplished by her relative Wang Mang 王莽, a *ru* scholar? This would throw an interesting light on Ban Gu's own convictions, as far as the "victory of Confucianism" is concerned. It is dangerous to use materials presented by historians of the Han to draw conclusions about historical truth. In the opinion of this reviewer, rather than following Ranke's fashion and trying to find out what actually happened in the past, modern scholarship

⁴ Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 104 BC to AD 9* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974).

should better investigate the motives that are hidden behind the narratives of ancient historians. This way we may get much more consistent stories than by using books of history as a quarry for historical facts.

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White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crises and Reform in the Qing Empire. By Wensheng Wang. Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2014. Pp. vi + 339. \$39.95/£33.95.

在清史研究中，嘉慶（1796–1820）一朝向被視為盛極而衰的一個轉捩點。相對於十八世紀盛清與鴉片戰後衰敗的兩個研究相當透徹的時代，嘉慶朝的二十五年充其量只被視為分隔前後兩個鉅變時代的一段平凡插曲。史家如孟森等或以「守文之主」評價嘉慶皇帝，認為他親政後，雖能對前朝弊政有所補救，但對當日國家根本問題並無決心與勇氣徹底清理，只能在枝節上補苴匡救，實不足與言大有為，亦無能力阻擋清王朝的衰敗。1976年 James M. Polachek 提交柏克萊加州大學的博士論文“*Literati Groups and Literati Politics in Early Nineteenth Century China*”，方對前人所誤解的嘉慶朝維新有所重估。數年前 Daniel McMahon 撰文指出，¹近代史家或從十九世紀清帝國坐困於內憂外患的視野來評價嘉慶皇帝，其時士人所論迫在眉睫的朝政衰敗，更強化了近代史家的論證。事實上，嘉慶皇帝親政後所作的革新努力，藉著對意識形態的算計與操弄，將其政敵和珅（1750–1799）的形象盡情糟蹋及刻意反面描畫，提升革新的合法性，激勵士人和大眾對革新的支持。革新外觀上似求助於儒家傳統，實質上卻是極具選擇性地、創意地及實效地運用了傳統。McMahon 認為，以此為基礎，嘉慶皇帝所信任及選拔的地方官員，在區域重建努力的成果，儘管無法力挽狂瀾，卻明顯緩解了十九世紀初時人所理解朝政衰敗的徵候；在飽受動亂蹂躪的地區，和平及社會秩序即便脆弱，仍苟延殘喘到清末。

Polachek 及 McMahon 等人的論著，或因篇幅及聚焦所限，仍有不少待發之覆，唯一致揭示了過去史家對嘉慶初期革新性質的一般認識，或失之片面而未能持平立論。新一波修正學派對嘉慶朝政提出更為肯定的看法，具體業績可見於2010年3月

¹ “Dynastic Decline, Heshen, and the Ideology of the Xianyu Reforms,” *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, n.s., 38, no. 2 (June 2008), pp. 231–55.