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The Influence of *Chenwei* on Han Dynasty Literature and Literary Theory

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Abstract

Apocryphal *chenwei* ideas and beliefs rose to prominence in the Han dynasty as a political and cultural movement that became closely intertwined with orthodox classical scholarship. These ideas and beliefs profoundly influenced the literature and literary theory of this period, and their influence must be taken into consideration – alongside that of classical scholarship – when undertaking Han dynasty literary and cultural research. A comprehensive understanding of Han dynasty literature and literary thought can only be obtained when connections to both *chenwei* themes and classical scholarship have been recognized. Accordingly, this article seeks to shed light on the strong links between *chenwei* concepts and Han dynasty literary thought through an examination of *chenwei* influence on Han dynasty poetry and literary theories.

Keywords

chenwei – Han *fu* – Han dynasty poetry – Han dynasty literary thought

Academic works on the Han dynasty [206 BCE–220] often speak of *chenwei* 讖緯, a concept commonly translated as “apocryphal texts”. Made up through a combination of the word *chen* – generally understood as referring to prophetic texts such as oracles and predictions – and *wei*, a word that contrasts with *jing* 經 [canonical texts, classics], the term commonly refers to esoteric and unorthodox explanations of classical texts. But what really is *chenwei*? Is it a single concept, or does it refer to two separate things? How do we determine what constitutes *chenwei*? Generations of scholars have, ever since the Tang

dynasty [618–907], held differing understandings of the term *chenwei*, with the majority falling into roughly two camps: one holding that there is a distinction between *chen* and *wei* with the other maintaining that no such distinction exists. This latter understanding has been generally favoured by most scholars and academics since the beginning of the twentieth century. Yet an examination of historical records suggests that both these positions do not completely correspond with historical facts.

During the Han dynasty the terms *chen* and *wei* referred to distinctly separate ideas, yet, at the same time they would combine and separate in a complex web of meanings in the writings of scholars. The terms went through a process of dynamic change that roughly took place as follows. During the Qin [221–206 BCE] one can find the concept of *chen* but not of *wei* (as *wei* is a term relative to canonical *jing*, in a time when there were no *jing* then there could be no *wei*). The term *chen* continued to be used at the beginning of the Western Han [206 BCE–25], but this period also saw the emergence of *wei* as an intellectual practice in which prophetic *chen* texts were used to create esoteric commentaries of canonical *jing* texts. It should be noted that the term *wei* did not first appear until the later stages of the Eastern Han [25–220], with the combined term *chenwei* only emerging at the end of the Eastern Han. The use of *chen* to interpret and supplement canonical texts was a new intellectual trend that emerged with the rise of canonical studies in the early stages of the Western Han.

In the following four hundred years of Han dynastic reign, the relationship between *chen* and canonical texts deepened as it gradually became standard scholarly practice to use *chen* to interpret the canon. The written records that were formed in these endeavors have come to be known as *weishu* 緯書 [apocryphal writings], suggesting that the concept of *wei* as opposed to *jing*, is, in fact, merely referring to the use of prophetic *chen* texts. The concept of *wei* only arose because these prophecies [*chenyan* 讖言], prognostication texts [*chenji* 讖記], prediction charts [*tuchen* 圖讖], and omens marking the Mandate of Heaven [*fuming* 符命] were integrated with canonical texts, thereby forming what is now known as *wei* and distinguishing this term from the individual concept of *chen*. This trend became increasingly popular during the later stages of the Western Han and, by the reigns of Emperor Ming 明帝 [r. 57–75] and Emperor Zhang 章帝 [r. 75–88] in the Eastern Han, had become the ideological orthodoxy of the Han state, culminating with the discussions at the White Tiger Hall in 79 and the formation of the *Baihutong* 白虎通 treatise. Both the appearance of *chen* during the Qin and *chenwei* during the Han had a powerful influence on the intellectual fabric of society, an

influence that was highly political in nature. In essence, the rise of *chenwei* in the Han dynasty was a political and cultural movement, and it was this fact that provided the grounds for its dynamism and vibrancy.

In short, as an academic construct, *chenwei* can be characterized as prophetic *chen* texts used to create esoteric *wei* commentaries of canonical texts. Therefore, a more precise understanding of what *chenwei* is and is not needs to focus on the way that *chen* were used in the interpretation of canonical texts, while also considering the political motivations for such interpretations. This will provide a more accurate assessment of *chenwei*, one that can grasp its essential nature and avoid generalized understandings.¹

When did *chenwei* first emerge? Scholars have held differing opinions regarding the origins of *chenwei* since the Eastern Han.² The question of the origin of *chenwei* is itself closely intertwined with what does and does not constitute *chenwei*. Answering this question requires consideration of both historical facts and logical reasoning. Applying the basic criteria for *chenwei* given above, that it was the politically motivated use of *chen* to interpret canonical texts, then it becomes clear that mere prophecies and prognostication texts can not be seen as *chenwei* per se: they can only be considered as *chen*. It is only when these prophecies and prognostication texts intersect with classical scholarship and politics that they become *chenwei*. The logical conclusion of this understanding is that the origins of the academic construct of *chenwei* must lie after the emergence of the canon and classical scholarship (at the earliest, it could only have emerged in tandem with the rise of the canon). It therefore follows

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- 1 For a more detailed investigation into the meaning and characteristics of *chenwei* see the following: Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, "Lishi weidu de queshi: Zi Tang qi jin chenwei mingyi yanjiu zhi shuping 歷史維度的缺失 – 自唐迄今讖緯名義研究之述評 [Lacking a Historical Perspective: A Critique of Studies into the Meaning of *Chenwei* from the Tang to the Present]," *Wenxue yu wenhua* 文學與文化, no. 2 (2010): 89–98; Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, "Liang Han chenwei kaolun 兩漢讖緯考論 [An Exploration of *Chenwei* in the Han Dynasty]," *Wen shi zhe* 文史哲, no. 4 (2017): 5–24.
 - 2 Different theories regarding the origin of *chenwei* have been outlined by Jiang Zhongkui 姜忠奎, *Weishi lunwei* 緯史論微 [Detailed Investigations into the History of *Wei*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 18–37. Jiang separates these theories into three broad categories that explore the origins of *wei* in terms of different time periods, historical figures, and canonical texts. Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬 has identified twelve different theories in the first chapter of his monograph *Chenwei lunlie* 讖緯論略 [A General Study of *Chenwei*] (Shenyang: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1991), 11–21. Scholars and academics have proposed a range of time periods for the origin of *chenwei* that have ranged from pre-history, the Spring and Autumn period, the Warring States period, the crossover between the Qin dynasty and the Han, the Western Han, somewhere between the Western Han and Eastern Han, the Eastern Han, and even (though there is not much evidence for it) as the invention of scholars in the Tang and Song.

that, in light of existing historical sources, the origins of *chenwei* can, at the earliest, be traced back to the beginning of the Western Han. In other words, the gradual establishment of the canon during the early stages of the Han dynasty witnessed an emerging association between prophetic *chen* texts as well as the increased use of *chen* within the field of politics.³

How did *chenwei* evolve during the Han dynasty? What influence did it have on the scholarly class of the Western and Eastern Han? An analysis of historical sources suggests that the evolution of *chenwei* during the Han dynasty can be roughly divided into three major periods: from the beginning of the Western Han to the reign of Emperor Ai 哀帝 [r. 7–1 BCE]; from the Wang Mang 王莽 [r. 8–23] interregnum (including the reign of Emperor Ping 平帝 [r. 1 BCE–5]) to Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 [r. 25–57]; and from the reign of Emperor Ming to the end of the Eastern Han.

During the first period prior to the reign of Emperor Ai, the use of *chenwei* was marked by an antagonistic attitude towards the ruling regime and a tendency towards moral suasion and even political criticism. This meant that many of the *chenwei* scholars of this time were ignored, expelled, imprisoned or even sentenced to death. However, the increasing use of *chenwei* during the reigns of Wang Mang and Emperor Guangwu saw a change in this dominant trend as *chenwei* came to be used to justify the legitimacy of the political regime. *Chenwei* scholars in this period who were able to meet the political demands of the times would inevitably be rewarded with official positions and titles, while those few who came into conflict with the ruling regime would fall out of favor or even be punished. By the time of Emperors Ming and Zhang, the integration of *chenwei* with classical studies and its use as a tool to interpret (and be interpreted by) the canon had become the state ideological orthodoxy. During this period, *chenwei* became a path to office and would be studied by all scholars alongside the canon. Looking across the intellectual sphere of the Western and Eastern Han periods, it is evident that all scholars were well acquainted with both the canon and *chenwei* texts and would freely make use of both, regardless of whether they were orthodox scholars employed by the government, learned practitioners engaged in prophecy and divination, or independent thinkers and philosophers.⁴ This had a profound influence on Han dynasty literary thought.

3 For a more detailed analysis see Zhang Fengyi, “Liang Han chenwei kaolun,” 5–24.

4 See further Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, “Chenwei sichao yu liang Han shiren xintai zhi bianqian 讖緯思潮與兩漢士人心態之遷變 [Chenwei Thought and the Changing Attitudes of Scholars During the Han Dynasty],” *Nankai xuebao* 南開學報, no. 5 (2017): 114–38.

1 *Chenwei* Influences on Han *Fu*

During the Han dynasty, the highest forms of artistic expression were to be found in the *fu* 賦 [rhyme-prose, or rhapsody] and *shi* 詩 [lyrical poetry] genres.⁵ Taking these two genres as the focus of investigation, this article aims to provide a general description of the relationship between the rise of *chenwei* ideas and literary trends during the Han dynasty. This section will first examine how this relationship played out in the composition of Han *fu*.

Before the reign of Emperor Ai, the use of *chenwei* was marked by an antagonistic attitude towards the ruling regime that often adopted a politically critical stance. Careful analysis suggests that the development of *chenwei* during this period can be divided into two sub-periods, the first running from the beginning of the Western Han to the reign of Emperor Wu 武帝 [r. 141–87 BCE]; the second commencing with the reign of Emperor Zhao 昭帝 [r. 87–74 BCE] and lasting until the reign of Emperor Ai. While *chenwei* tendencies can be found in literature prior to the reign of Emperor Wu, they had not yet come to hold sufficient political influence to attract the attention of those in power. During this period the intellectual association between *chenwei* and the scholarly class was still relatively rare. The use of *chenwei* as a tool for political critique reached a high-water mark during the second half of the Western Han between the reigns of Emperor Zhao and Emperor Ai. Scholars writing at this time began to use their knowledge of *chenwei* to actively shape political discourse, and, in doing so, forged a stronger connection between *chenwei* ideas and politics.

There are just over fifty *fu* from the Western Han period in existence today, all of which were composed prior to the end of the reign of Emperor Ai. Of these, eleven *fu* have themes that touch upon *chenwei* related content.⁶

5 While other literature in the Han dynasty was not without aesthetic beauty and literary form, they were generally more pragmatic and practical texts on politics and history or treatises and letters. Given the limitations imposed on the length of this article these genres are not delved into here.

6 These eleven *fu* are Jia Yi's 賈誼 "The Owl [*Funiao fu* 鵞鳥賦]" and "Dry Clouds [*Han yun fu* 旱雲賦]"; Kong Zang's 孔臧 "The Owl [*Xiao fu* 鴞賦]"; Liu Xiang's 劉向 "Praying for Rain at Mount Hua [*Qing yu Huashan fu* 請雨華山賦]" (parts missing); Wang Bao's 王褒 "Eulogy on the Sweet Springs Palace [*Ganquan gong song* 甘泉宮頌]" (parts missing); and Yang Xiong's 揚雄 "The Shu Capital [*Shu du fu* 蜀都賦]", "Sweet Springs Palace [*Ganquan fu* 甘泉賦]", "East of the River [*Hedong fu* 河東賦]", "The Barricade Hunt [*Jiaolie fu* 校獵賦]", "Tall Poplars Lodge [*Changyang fu* 長楊賦]", and "Examining the Spirit [*He ling fu* 覈靈賦]" (parts missing).

1.1 *Influences on Han Fu During the Early Western Han*

Han *fu* written prior to the reign of Emperor Wu include Jia Yi's 賈誼 [ca. 200–168 BCE] “The Owl [*Funiaofu* 鵩鳥賦]” and “Dry Clouds [*Han yun fu* 旱雲賦]” and Kong Zang's 孔臧 [ca. 201–ca. 123 BCE] “The Owl [*Xiaofu* 鴞賦]”. While Jia Yi's “The Owl” was written in the political context of being dismissed from court and sent into exile, it is clear that his specific representation of the owl as an inauspicious portent is an expression of personal anxiety for his own fate and is not directly related to politics. Similar ideas can be found in Kong Zang's “The Owl”. Though this *fu* also sees Kong Zang worrying about his own fate, it differs from the work of Jia Yi in that Kong Zang expresses his commitment to further cultivate his Confucian education. Again, this text should be seen as the manifestation of personal sentiments and not as political criticism. It is only in Jia Yi's “Dry Clouds” where elements of *chenwei* can be found expressing the political idea that there is a resonance between the human and cosmic orders [*tianren ganying* 天人感應]. Jia Yi begins “Dry Clouds” describing how an imbalance in cosmic forces has resulted in a drought, “During this summer's great drought, the natural order of balanced forces has been lost.” The drought is then later shown to be the result of the dishonorable conduct of the ruling regime, and “... there is resentment in the people's hearts which cannot be relieved, this disaster is due to a failure of those who rule ... their conduct is not virtuous, state affairs are handled inappropriately and proper standards are violated.”⁷ However, it is important to note that the political critique in “Dry Clouds” is still bound within Jia Yi's expression of his own intense personal sentiments and is markedly different from the dispassionate, rational critiques found in *fu* after the reign of Emperor Zhao. That is to say, the use of *chenwei* as a political critique in “Dry Clouds” is ancillary to the expression of personal expression. It should not be seen as the deliberate use of *chenwei* concepts as a tool for political critique. This is reflected in Zhang Qiao's 章樵 [d. 1235] commentary on “Dry Clouds” which interprets the metaphor of the dry cloud that does not bear rain as an analogy for Jia Yi's inability to put his talents to good use following his exile from the capital.⁸

1.2 *Influences on Han Fu During the Late Western Han*

The eight *fu* composed by Liu Xiang 劉向 [77–6 BCE], Wang Bao 王褒 [ca. 84–ca. 53 BCE] and Yang Xiong 揚雄 [53 BCE–18] were all written during the period

7 Zhang Qiao 章樵, annot., *Gu wen yuan* 古文苑 [Garden of Ancient Literature], *Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊, Yingyin tieqin tongjian lou cang Song kan ben 影印鐵琴銅劍樓藏宋刊本, vol. 3.

8 See Zhang Qiao, *Gu wen yuan*, vol. 3.

from Emperor Zhao to Emperor Ai, with the majority expressing a clear political intention to praise or criticize the ruling regime. Generally speaking, these *fu* have a tendency to veer more towards criticism rather than praise, especially those composed by Yang Xiong. In a similar fashion to “Dry Clouds”, Liu Xiang’s “Praying for Rain at Mount Hua [*Qing yu Huashan fu* 請雨華山賦]” touches on *chenwei* concepts through expressing resonances between human and cosmic orders. Although the *fu* as it has been passed down is a corrupted text with missing and distorted words, the gist of the piece can be summarized as follows: Following a long drought, the emperor accompanied by his officials made their way to Mount Hua to pray for rain and perform a rain sacrifice [*yu* 雩] – one of the most important ceremonies undertaken by the state. The god of rain was moved by their call and “the sky became cloudy and rain fell”.⁹ The final section of the *fu* praises the illustrious virtues of the emperor. Liu Xiang is here using his *fu* to express the accepted political idea that there were resonances between the cosmic and human orders, while at the same time using these resonances to eulogize the virtue of the emperor. In a similar vein, Wang Bao’s “Eulogy on the Sweet Springs Palace [*Ganquan gong song* 甘泉宮頌]” is also another example of using *chenwei* concepts to praise the emperor. Although the text only exists as a fragment, it is evident that the first part of the eulogy depicts the majestic beauty of the Sweet Springs Palace while the second half touches on a range of *chenwei* motifs such as auspicious creatures and symbols in what is clearly a celebration of the Han emperor’s Mandate of Heaven.¹⁰ In contrast to the works of Liu Xiang and Wang Bao, Yang Xiong’s “Sweet Springs Palace [*Ganquan fu* 甘泉賦]”, “East of the River [*Hedong fu* 河東賦]”, “The Barricade Hunt [*Jialie fu* 校獵賦]”, and “Tall Poplars Lodge [*Changyang fu* 長楊賦]” were, according to his biography in the *History of the Han* [*Hanshu* 漢書], primarily works of subtle criticism and moral suasion. These *fu* contain a vast range of *chenwei* material of which a few examples are given below.

“Sweet Springs Palace”: Written after Yang Xiong accompanied Emperor Cheng 成帝 [r. 33–7 BCE] to the Sweet Springs Palace north of Chang’an 長安,

9 James Legge, trans., *The Li Ki*, vol. 28 of *Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Müller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1966), 273–74.

10 Wang Bao describes the emperor as follows: “Alone, I imagine the leisurely life of our sagely emperor, often with a joyful and relaxed spirit. I imagine him sitting in his phoenix hall, listening to the chiming carriage bells, entering the Qilin pavilion, examining auspicious portents that have been presented to him, singing melodious music, and incanting peaceful eulogies.” [竊想聖主之優遊，時娛神而款縱。坐鳳皇之堂，聽和鸞之弄。臨麒麟之域，驗符瑞之貢。詠中和之歌，讀太平之頌。] See Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢, ed., *Songben yiwen leiju* 宋本藝文類聚 [*Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories, Song Edition*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013), 62.1680.

this *fu* describes the journey of the imperial entourage to the palace and the sacrifice that was made on their arrival. The use of *chenwei* can be seen in Yang Xiong's analogy between the palace and the "hanging garden" [*Xuan pu* 懸圃], said to be the residence of the Celestial Lord situated at the top of the Kunlun Mountains, as well as in his reference to the blessings of the "Three Spirits" [*San shen* 三神] on the Emperor.

"East of the River": Composed roughly around the same time as "Sweet Springs Palace", Yang Xiong's "East of the River" describes the journey of Emperor Cheng and his entourage of ministers as they traveled to Fenyin 汾陰 to make sacrifices to Houtu 后土 [the deity of soil and earth]. The *fu* describes the purpose of the sacrifice as an opportunity for the emperor to leave behind a grand legacy and create an auspicious climate in which fortune and prosperity would cover his empire. The sacrifice is shown as bringing order to the spiritual world whereby "the numinous earth-spirits having been feted, the five positions are in proper sequence."¹¹

"The Barricade Hunt": A description of an imperial hunt held by Emperor Cheng in 10 BCE, this *fu* is preceded with a preface in which Yang Xiong extols the virtuous rulers of the past for the way they cared for the land. In only hunting for what they needed and not giving over to extravagant indulgence, these rulers were, according to Yang Xiong, able to create a wealthy state that was blessed with auspicious omens of good government such as the yellow dragon, phoenix, and *qilin* 麒麟.

"Tall Poplars Lodge": Composed after another hunt following "The Barricade Hunt", this *fu* describes the founding of the Han dynasty through astrological symbolism. Metaphors symbolizing adherence to the will of heaven are found in the description of the first Han emperor Liu Bang 劉邦 [r. 206–195 BCE] following the direction of the Dipper and the Pole star, while the harmonious reign of Emperor Wen 文帝 [r. 180–157 BCE] is symbolized through the ordering of the Grand Stairway [*taijie* 太階], a six star constellation that was seen to reflect political and social hierarchy.¹²

11 The "Five Positions" refer to the lords of the five directions, East, West, North, South, and Center. [靈祇既鄉, 五位時敘。] English translation taken from David Knechtges, *The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong (53 B.C.–A.D. 18)* (Tempe, Arizona: Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1982), 2.115.

12 The *fu* says of Liu Bang: "Thereupon, the Lord on High turned a kindly nod toward Gaozu [Liu Bang], and Gaozu received the mandate. Following the Dipper and Pole, turning with the Celestial Barrier, he traversed the giant sea, shook the Kunlun." [於是上帝眷顧高祖, 高祖奉命, 順門極, 運天關, 橫鉅海, 票昆侖。] After extolling the deeds of Liu Bang, Yang Xiong then describes the reign of Emperor Wen: "Next came sage Emperor Wen, who, following the founder's customs and riding in his wake, cast all his thoughts on perfect concord ... Thus, the Jade Transverse was correct and the Grand

These four *fu* are examples of the *chenwei* concept that there is a resonance between the celestial and terrestrial worlds. This can be seen in the way the emperor connects with the spirits of the heavens and the earth in “Sweet Springs Palace” and “East of the River”, in the way in which good governance is reflected in a harmonious environment as found in “The Barricade Hunt”, and in the way the Mandate of Heaven is received and a new dynasty is established in “Tall Poplars Lodge”. The purpose of Yang Xiong’s adept use of *chenwei* concepts in these *fu* was to provide the emperor with subtle criticisms and moral suasion and can be seen as a manifestation of the late Western Han tendency to use *chenwei* as a political critique.

1.3 *Influences on Han Fu During the Wang Mang Interregnum and Early Eastern Han*

Chenwei use changed during the Wang Mang interregnum (including the reign of Emperor Ping) and the rule of Emperor Guangwu and was marked by a tendency to meet political demands and directly serve the ruling regime. The development of *chenwei* during this period can also be broken into two sub-periods. The first stage can be seen just prior and during the Wang Mang interregnum as he began to monopolize power before usurping the throne in 9 CE. The development of *chenwei* during this stage was complicated by the fact that, while mainstream discourse primarily used *chenwei* to justify Wang Mang’s usurpation of the Han dynasty, there were others during this time who were using prediction charts to oppose him. This conflicting use of *chenwei* was resolved with the return of the Han under Emperor Guangwu during which time *chenwei* concepts were all used to validate the restoration of the Han dynasty. While there were some during this time who criticized the use of *chenwei* (such as Huan Tan 桓譚, Zheng Xing 鄭興, and Yin Min 尹敏), they were only denouncing *chenwei* as absurd and unorthodox from an academic standpoint and not as a form of political critique.

Only a small number of *fu* written during this time have survived, with eleven in total (including those of which only fragments remain) composed by Cui Zhuan 崔篆 [fl. 10–25], Feng Yan 馮衍 [fl. 30], Ban Biao 班彪 [3–54] and Du Du 杜篤 [d. 78].¹³ Of these eleven, five contain *chenwei* related themes: Feng Yan’s

Stairway was well-ordered.” [逮至聖文，隨風乘流，方垂意於至寧 ... 是以玉衡正而太階平也。] English translation taken from David Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982–96), 2:141–43.

13 Han *fu* recorded in both Fei Zhengang 費振剛 et al., *Quan Hanfu jiaozhu* 全漢賦校注 [Collation and Annotation of Complete Han Fu] (Guangzhou: Guangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2005) and Gong Kechang 龔克昌, ed, *Quan Hanfu pingzhu* 全漢賦評註 [Notes and Commentary of Complete Han Fu] (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 2003)

“Making Clear My Aims [*Xian zhi fu* 顯志賦], Ban Biao’s “Viewing the Sea [*Lan hai fu* 覽海賦]” and “Nomadic Sojourn [*You ju fu* 遊居賦]” (also known as “On Jizhou [*Jizhou fu* 冀州賦]”), and Du Du’s “The Many Auspicious Portents [*Zhong rui fu* 眾瑞賦],” and “Discussing the Capital [*Lun du fu* 論都賦]”. All five were written during the reign of Emperor Guangwu.

The reign of Wang Mang from the end of the Western Han to the Xin Dynasty [9–23] witnessed a continued increase in prognostication texts and omens marking the mandate of a new dynasty. However, no *fu* survive from this time¹⁴ and it is not possible to analyze the relationship between *chenwei* and *fu* composition during this period. Of the five *fu* touching on *chenwei* themes composed during the reign of Emperor Guangwu, Feng Yan’s “Making Clear My Aims” is rather unique. Written late in life during his retirement after a failed official career that had left him in poverty, “Making Clear My Aims” is an early autobiographical *fu* in which Feng Yan describes his travels both to actual places near his new home and ancestral home, as well as to imaginary places in which he makes a complete circuit of the world. During the latter journey, Feng Yan employs the use of *chenwei* concepts including *yin-yang*, the five elements and the four auspicious beasts. However, these references do not seem to be directly connected to the politics of the times and are more likely to be representations of the anger and frustration felt by Feng Yan after being rejected and stripped of his position by Emperor Guangwu.¹⁵ In contrast, the use of *chenwei*

for this time are the same. The only exception is the anonymous *fu* of *The Divine Crow* [*Shenwu fu* 神鳥賦] which the *Quan Hanfu jiaozhu* also lists as coming from this period. This is inappropriate, however, as *The Divine Crow* was found in the sixth tomb at Yinwan 尹灣 in Lianyungang 連雲港, where both the identity of the tomb-owner and the date of internment have been identified. According to the report on the tombs by the Lianyungang shi bowuguan, the tomb-owner was Shi Rao 師饒, a scribe in the Bureau of Merit [*Gongcao* 功曹] in the Donghai Commandery 東海 and the year of internment was the third year of the Yuanyan 元延 [12–9 BCE] era. Lianyungang shi bowuguan 連雲港市博物館, “Jiangsu Donghaixian Yinwan Hanmu fajue jianbao 江蘇東海縣尹灣漢墓發掘簡報 [Report on Excavations at the Han Tombs at Yinwan in Donghai County Jiangsu],” *Wen wu* 文物, no. 8 (1996): 24. For an English article on the tombs and *The Divine Crow* see Hans van Ess, “An Interpretation of the *Shenwu fu* of Tomb No. 6, Yinwan,” *Monumenta Serica* 51, no. 1 (2003): 605–28. This evidence suggests that *The Divine Crow* was composed at the end of the reign of Emperor Cheng or even earlier.

14 The possible different reasons for this are very complex. See the analysis in section one of chapter fourteen in Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, *Liang Han jingxue yu wenxue sixiang* 兩漢經學與文學思想 [*Classical Scholarship and Literary Thought During the Han Dynasty*] (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhì sanlian shudian, 2014), 379–80.

15 For details, see his biography in the *History of the Later Han* and his entry in David Knechtges and Taiping Chang, ed., *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1:229–32.

in the other four *fu* was solely to praise the restoration of the Han dynasty and the rule of the Liu clan.

“Viewing the Sea”: Most likely written around 37 when Ban Biao was the magistrate of Xu 徐 (modern day Xuzhou, Jiangsu),¹⁶ this *fu* draws heavily on characters, objects and locations associated with the world of immortals [*xian* 仙]. Beginning with a description of the sea and the mountains of immortals, Ban Biao then portrays his journey through an imaginary emperor’s palace that includes auspicious plants, legendary immortals, and mythological beings. The poem finishes with an expression of Ban Biao’s desire to climb up the social hierarchy through the support of those in power: “and then via the heralds of the Purple Palace, worship the deity Taiyi 太一 and receive his auspicious talisman.”¹⁷ Given that religious Daoism had not yet emerged in the early stages of the Eastern Han, Ban Biao’s metaphors and allusions to immortal beings and the *xian* realm should be seen here as the use of *chenwei* concepts.

“Nomadic Sojourn”: Presumably written while he was governor of Jizhou 冀州 (hence the alternative title “On Jizhou”), “Nomadic Sojourn” begins with Ban Biao’s travels throughout the central plains before delving into the mytho-historical events of the places he records. At Mengjin 孟津, the place where King Wu of Zhou 周武王 [ca. 1056–1043 BCE] forded the Yellow River on his expedition to conquer the Shang [ca. 1600–1046 BCE], Ban Biao writes of the white fish that leapt into King Wu’s boat as he made the crossing, an auspicious portent that was seen as heralding the passing of the Mandate of Heaven from the Shang to the Zhou [ca. 1046–256 BCE]. This is followed by a description of Emperor Wu of Han making his way to perform the *feng* 封 and *shan* 禪 sacrifices (rituals publicly announcing the Mandate of Heaven) at Mount Tai. By describing these two events together, Ban Biao is clearly stating that the Han dynasty had inherited the virtue of the Zhou dynasty and had also received the Mandate of Heaven.

“The Many Auspicious Portents”: Only seven lines of this *fu* still exist, making it difficult to understand the general context. However, taking into account the name chosen for the title and the years in which Du Du was active, it is clear that this piece extols Emperor Guangwu’s restoration of the Han through the description of numerous auspicious signs and portents.

16 Born to the northeast of modern day Xianyang 咸陽, Shaanxi, Ban Biao spent his youth in the western and central areas of China and saw the sea for the first time during his tenure as the magistrate of Xu. Zhang Cangshou 章滄授, “Lan hai xianyou ganwu rensheng: Ban Biao *Lan hai fu* shangxi 覽海仙游 感悟人生 – 班彪《覽海賦》賞析 [Feeling Life Through Viewing the Sea and Travelling in Immortal Realms: Appreciating Ban Biao’s *Lan hai fu*],” *Gudian wenxue zhishi* 古典文學知識, no. 1 (2003): 9–12. Translator’s note.

17 Kirkova, *Roaming into the Beyond*, 163.

“Discussing the Capital”: Written by Du Du as a mock debate between himself and an imaginary guest on whether the capital should be in Luoyang 洛陽 or Chang’an, this *fu* uses *chenwei* themes to praise the Han dynasty. The text includes narrative accounts of the founding of both the Western Han under Liu Bang and the Eastern Han under Emperor Guangwu that draw heavily on auspicious omens and portents which, during the Han, were seen as signs that each emperor had received the Mandate of Heaven. These include “the cleaving of the white snake, the gathering of the dark clouds,¹⁸ and the conjunction of the Five Planets in the Eastern Well constellation”¹⁹ during the ascendancy of Liu Bang, and the emergence of the *Red Hidden Tally* [*Chifu fu* 赤伏符]²⁰ prophecy foretelling the rise of Emperor Guangwu. Du Du describes how the blessing of the mandate and the assistance of spirits and magical weapons

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- 18 The “cleaving of the white snake” [斬白蛇] and the “gathering of the dark clouds” [屯黑雲] both allude to stories found in the Basic Annals of Liu Bang in the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記]. In the first, a drunken Liu Bang slew a great white snake by cutting it in two. As Sima Qian relates, when one of Liu Bang’s retainers came to the spot where the snake lay, he found an old woman crying and claiming that her son had been killed. “My son was the son of the White Emperor.” “He had changed himself into a snake and was lying across the road. Now he has been cut in two by the son of the Red Emperor, and therefore I weep.” See Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 80. The story was understood as a metaphor of the passing of the mandate from the Qin dynasty (represented by the white snake) to Liu Bang and the Han (which was later to revere the color red). The anecdote regarding the gathering clouds takes place shortly after the incident with the white snake and similarly alludes to Liu Bang being blessed with the Mandate of Heaven. As narrated by Sima Qian, the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 [r. 247–210 BCE] had noticed that there were signs in the sky indicating the presence of the “Son of Heaven” and set out to suppress this threat to his power. Liu Bang, believing that he was the cause of this sign, went into hiding deep into the mountains and the marshes. However, regardless of where he hid, his wife, the future Empress Lü 呂太后 [d. 180 BCE], was always able to find him. When he asked how this was possible, she replied, “There are always signs in the clouds over the place where you are. By following these we manage to find you every time.” See Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, 81.
- 19 The “conjunction of the Five Planets in the Eastern Well constellation” [聚五星於東井] was understood as an omen that a virtuous man could win the Mandate of Heaven. William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 8:18. For a more in-depth examination of the way in which conjunctions of the planets were interpreted as portents of dynastic change see David W. Pankenier, “The Cosmo-Political Background of Heaven’s Mandate,” *Early China* 20 (1995), 135.
- 20 The *Red Hidden Tally* was a prophecy delivered to the Emperor Guangwu prior to his accession to the throne. The prophecy specifically named Emperor Guangwu as the future emperor and was used to bolster support for his claim to the throne. See Zhao Lu, “The Great Peace and the Ends of Time in Early Imperial China,” in *The End(s) of Time(s): Apocalypticism, Messianism, and Utopianism through the Ages*, ed. Hans-Christian Lehner (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 81–83. Translator’s note.

allowed both emperors to establish dynastic reign, with Liu Bang defeating the Qin and Emperor Guangwu pacifying the empire and restoring Han rule.

1.4 *Influences on Han Fu During the Late Eastern Han*

The years between the reign of Emperor Ming to the end of the Eastern Han saw the complete integration of *chenwei* ideas with orthodox classical scholarship, best illustrated by the conference held at White Tiger Hall in 79 on the meaning of the classics and the written report of these discussions in the *Baihutong*. This era saw the state set out the intellectual framework within which *chen* texts could be used to interpret the classics (and vice versa), with *chenwei* rising to become the central intellectual belief of the Eastern Han period.²¹ Intellectuals, *chenwei* scholars and *fangshi* 方士 [doctors, diviners, magicians] active after the reign of Emperor Ming would invariably incorporate the orthodox canon into their work, while most official classical scholars as well as highly independent and critical thinkers would similarly incorporate *chenwei* concepts and beliefs in their own writings. This phenomenon is reflected in the *fu* written during this period.

Of the approximately 60 *fu* composed from the reign of Emperor Ming to the end of the Eastern Han, 19 display *chenwei* related themes.²² This proportion, roughly a third of all *fu* written during this era, shows a much higher prevalence than found during the Western Han, and was directly related to the rising prestige of *chenwei* during the Eastern Han. *Chenwei* related *fu* during this period can be divided into the following categories.

21 See Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, “Jing chen qianhe, yi chen shi jing: Dong Han jingxue zhi sixiang tezheng gaishuo 經讖牽合，以讖釋經：東漢經學之思想特徵概說 [The Synthesis of the Canon and *Chen*, Using *Chen* to Interpret the Canon: An Outline on the Intellectual Features of Classical Scholarship in the Eastern Han],” *Wenxue yu wenhua* 文學與文化, no. 2 (2017).

22 These 19 *fu* are as follows: Fu Yi’s 傅毅 “The Luo Capital”; Cui Yin’s 崔駰 “Returning to the Capital [*Fan du fu* 反都賦]”; Ban Gu’s 班固 “The Two Capitals [*Liang du fu* 兩都賦]”, “Communicating with the Hidden [*Youtong fu* 幽通賦]”, “Zhongnan Mountain [*Zhongnan shan fu* 終南山賦]”; Ban Zhao’s 班昭 “The Great Bird [*Daque fu* 大雀賦]”; Huang Xiang’s 黃香 “The Nine Chambers [*Jiu gong fu* 九宮賦]”; Li You’s 李尤 “The Hangu Pass [*Hangu guan fu* 函谷關賦]”, “Fu on the Royal Academy [*Piyong fu* 辟雍賦]”; Zhang Heng’s 張衡 “The Hot Springs [*Wenquan fu* 溫泉賦]”, “The Southern Capital [*Nan du fu* 南都賦]”, “The Two Metropolises [*Er jing fu* 二京賦]”, “Responding to Criticism [*Ying jian* 應問]”; Ma Rong’s 馬融 “The Zither [*Qin fu* 琴賦]”; Deng Dan’s 鄧耽 “Suburban Sacrifices [*Jiaosi fu* 郊祀賦]”; Cui Shi’s 崔寔 “The General Amnesty [*Dashu fu* 大赦賦]”; Wang Yanshou’s 王延壽 “Hall of Numinous Brilliance [*Lu Lingguang dian fu* 魯靈光殿賦]”, “A Dream [*Meng fu* 夢賦]”; and Cai Yong’s 蔡邕 “Defense Against Admonition [*Shi hui* 釋誨]”.

1.5 *Fu on Metropolises and Capitals*

The most influential *fu* on metropolises and capitals written during this era were Fu Yi's 傅毅 [d. 90] "The Luo Capital [*Luo du fu* 洛都賦], Cui Yin's 崔駰 [d. 92] "Returning to the Capital [*Fan du fu* 反都賦], Ban Gu's 班固 [32–92] "The Two Capitals [*Liang du fu* 兩都賦]" and Zhang Heng's 張衡 [78–139] "The Two Metropolises [*Er jing fu* 二京賦]". These four pieces all draw heavily on *chenwei* elements to both praise the Han dynasty and put forward the personal opinions and beliefs of their authors. Zhang Heng's "The Southern Capital [*Nan du fu* 南都賦]" can also be included in this category. While the *fu* does not touch on the capitals at Luoyang or Chang'an, its exposition of the ancestral home of the Emperor Guangwu at Nanyang 南陽 and the origins of the Liu clan celebrates the Han regime by presenting the ruling family as the descendants of the sage ruler Yao 堯 and by suggesting that the dynasty has inherited the power of the fire element [*huode* 火德]. This celebration of the Han and Emperor Guangwu is further seen in Zhang Heng's allusions to a prophecy foretelling that the ninth descendant of Liu Bang – said to be the Emperor Guangwu – would encounter great glory.²³ The use of *chenwei* themes in "The Southern Capital" as a means of praising the Han is no different to those found in the four *fu* mentioned above.

1.6 *Fu on Rites and Institutions*

Fu composed after the reign of Emperor Ming also show a tendency towards using *chenwei* concepts to extol Han dynasty rites and institutions. This is most evident in Li You's 李尤 [44–126] "Fu on the Royal Academy [*Piyong fu* 辟雍賦]", a glorification of the religious, political, and educational institutions of the Eastern Han. The *fu* honors these institutions through grandiose descriptions of the building complex situated just south of the walled city of Luoyang where sacrifices, government affairs and educational activities were carried out during the Eastern Han. Made up of the Luminous Hall [*Mingtang* 明堂], the Royal Academy [*Piyong* 辟雍], the Divine Tower [*Lingtai* 靈臺], and the Imperial University [*Taixue* 太學],²⁴ the complex was a physical manifestation

23 The prophecy is found in the biography of Cao Bao 曹褒 [d. 102] in the *History of the Later Han* which records it as coming from a text known as the *Chart of the Yellow River* [*Hetu* 河圖]. The prophecy reads: "The Red ninth will encounter glory. In the tenth generation it will be luminous, and in the eleventh it will rise." [赤九會昌、十世以光、十一以興。] See Gopal Sukhu, "Yao, Shun, and Prefiguration: The Origins and Ideology of the Han Imperial Genealogy," *Early China* 30 (2005–2006): 141.

24 For the functions and location of these four buildings see Hans Bielenstein, "Lo-yang in Later Han Times," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 48 (1976): 61–71, 124–25. Translator's note.

of the interaction between the cosmic and human worlds and oversaw the ritualized meeting of heaven and earth and the regulation of human affairs. “Fu on the Royal Academy” takes these resonances between the cosmic and human domain – which are likely to have originated from *chenwei* concepts – and uses them to glorify Eastern Han institutions and celebrate the Liu clan’s attainment of the Mandate of Heaven. Another important *fu* praising the rites of the Han dynasty is Deng Dan’s 鄧琬 [fl. 114] “Suburban Sacrifices [*Jiaosi fu* 郊祀賦]”, a composition on the meaning and magnificence of the important suburban sacrifices²⁵ – the primary purpose of which was for the emperor to support the order of heaven as a means of governing the empire.²⁶ These sacrifices were rooted in *chenwei* concepts of *yin-yang* and the resonance between the cosmic and human realms. This is reflected in the *fu*, which tells of the emperor following in the path of ancient rulers, observing the signs of Heaven and complying with auspicious signs and portents. Deng Dan’s work, while only existing today as a short fragment, was evidently a eulogy on the power and fortune of the Han and the auspicious blessings and portents that the Liu clan had received from Heaven. In addition to these two *fu*, Cui Shi’s 崔寔 [ca. 103–170] “The General Amnesty [*Da she fu* 大赦賦]”, while ostensibly praising the pardon issued by Emperor Huan 桓帝 [r. 146–168] in 157, can also belong to this category. The *fu* employs a wide range of *chenwei* related themes – from *qilin* and phoenixes to stars of fortune [*jing xing* 景星] and auspicious grain [*jia he* 嘉禾] – in combination with an emphasis on continuing the mandate of past sage rulers and adhering to heaven and earth in the establishment of laws and regulations (concepts based on *chenwei* understandings of receiving the mandate). In a similar manner to the use of *chenwei* in “Fu on the Royal Academy” and “Suburban Sacrifices”, Cui Shi’s use of *chenwei* elements in “The General Amnesty” serves to extol the mandate of the Liu clan and celebrate the many auspicious omens and portents that they have received as a result of their benevolent rule.

25 While commonly used, the translation “suburban sacrifices” is somewhat problematic given that *jiaosi* sacrifices in the early Western Han were conducted far from the capital. For a general outline of the term’s changing meaning see Michael Loewe, *Problems of Han Administration: Ancestral Rites, Weights and Measures, and the Means of Protest* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 24–26. Translator’s note.

26 This interpretation is found in the memorial submitted to Emperor Cheng at the beginning of his reign by his ministers Kuang Heng 匡衡 [d. 30 BCE] and Zhang Tan 張譚 [fl. 40 BCE] – as recorded in the “Treatise on the Suburban Sacrifices [*Jiaosi zhi* 郊祀志]” in the *Hanshu*. Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 [*History of the Han*], comm. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 1253–54.

1.7 *Fu on Natural Scenery and Imperial Buildings*

Another characteristic of *fu* during the post-Emperor Ming era is a tendency to apply *chenwei* concepts to descriptions of the natural world and palace and temple buildings. Representative *fu* in this category include Li You's "The Hangu Pass [*Hangu guan fu* 函谷關賦]", Wang Yanshou's 王延壽 [ca. 143–ca. 165] "Hall of Numinous Brilliance [*Lu Lingguang dian fu* 魯靈光殿賦]", Ban Gu's "Zhongnan Mountain [*Zhongnan shan fu* 終南山賦]" and Zhang Heng's "The Hot Springs [*Wenquan fu* 溫泉賦]". Li You's *fu* on the Hangu Pass – a key mountain pass situated between Chang'an and Luoyang – is a poignant example of the way in which *chenwei* elements were integrated into the celebration of building structures and their restoration. Introducing the pass through associated historical anecdotes from the Zhou through to the Western Han, Li You goes on to describe the gradual deterioration of the pass in the later stages of the Western Han before alluding to its restoration during the reign of Emperor Guangwu. This latter section of the text draws heavily on *chenwei* symbolism with Li You praising the emperor for fulfilling the prophecies and portents that predicted his rise and the restoration of the Han dynasty. Li You then celebrates the longevity of Han dynasty comparing the achievements of Emperor Guangwu with those of the Han dynasty founder Liu Bang. Wang Yanshou's "Hall of Numinous Brilliance"²⁷ is another example of the use of *chenwei* in the depiction of imperial buildings. Connecting the design of the physical hall to corresponding constellations, Wang Yanshou celebrates the grandeur of the hall through an array of auspicious signs and portents that glorify the Han as the heir to the virtue of ancient sage rulers. The poem ends with *chenwei* inspired lines that extol the longevity of the dynasty: "It was spirits who built her, to bless our house of Han, that it never decay."²⁸

In a similar vein, *chenwei* themes describing natural scenery were also used to celebrate the Han. This is evident in Ban Gu's "Zhongnan Mountain", in which auspicious signs – such as the call of the phoenix and numerous rare objects – assemble on the mountain and are used by the author to honor the magnificence of the Han. Ban Gu explicitly writes that it is only with the perfect virtue of the emperor that such auspicious signs can appear. The natural world in Zhang Heng's "The Hot Springs" is also heavily imbued with *chenwei* concepts glorifying the empire. Written during his younger years while traveling

27 This *fu* was written during the author's stay in the former state of Lu 魯. The hall in question was constructed by King Gong of Lu 魯恭王 [d. 128 BCE] to the southeast of the Confucian Temple in Qufu 曲阜. For a full English translation see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 2:262–79.

28 Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 2:279.

between Chang'an and Luoyang, Zhang Heng's description of the hot springs at Lishan 驪山 (which would later become the site of the famous Huaqing Pool 華清池 during the Tang) compares the springs to the mythical Dawn Valley [*Yanggu* 暘谷] in Yingzhou 瀛州, a fabled island in the eastern sea from which the sun and moon rose each day. This cosmologically inspired *chenwei* connection is furthered with a reference to the sun and moon bathing in the *Yingshi* 營室 constellation, which is interpreted in Zhang Qiao's commentary as the reason why the springs were heated.²⁹ Zhang Heng then employs *chenwei* concepts to compare the spring with the Han dynasty itself, celebrating the benefit they both bestow to the populace with the washing of the waters metamorphizing into the purification of evil and the implementation of the correct way.

1.8 *Fu* Expressing Personal Feelings and Aspirations

Expression of personal sentiment in *fu* composition during this period would also regularly incorporate elements of *chenwei*, with prominent examples found in Ban Gu's "Communicating with the Hidden [*Youtong fu* 幽通賦]", Zhang Heng's "Responding to Criticism [*Yingjian* 應間]" and Cai Yong's 蔡邕 [133–192] "Defense Against Admonition [*Shi hui* 釋誨]". Written in his early twenties during an intense period of contemplation and introspection following the death of his father, Ban Gu's "Communicating with the Hidden" taps into a deep sense of ennui that consumed him as a young man as he struggled to find his purpose and make his own way in the world. The *fu* takes place in a land of dreams that feels at once both real and surreal, and in an environment that, like the dream, is both realistic and fantastical. *Chenwei* concepts abound throughout the *fu*, with Ban Gu conveying his feelings through references to historical events and stories, many of them relating to *chen* practices such as divination, dream predictions and oracle consulting.³⁰ The other two *fu* in this category, "Responding

29 Quoting from the Classic of Mountains and Seas [*Shanhajing* 山海經], Zhang Qiao states that the Dawn Valley has a tree known as the *fusang* 扶桑 on which ten suns bathe. He then provides his own interpretation noting that the feminine and masculine essences of the sun and moon are washed into the waters thereby causing the springs to be slightly warm. [日月坎離之精濯乎其中，故液泉微溫。] See Zhang Qiao, *Gu wen yuan*, vol. 5. It is interesting to note that the characters used for the Dawn Valley by Zhang Heng, Zhang Qiao and the *Shanhajing* are not *Yanggu* 暘谷 but *Tanggu* 湯谷, literally: Hot Water Valley. The idea that the valley was understood as containing hot water is also found in Guo Pu's 郭璞 [276–324] commentary to the *Tanggu* in the *Shanhajing* where he notes that the "valley contains hot water." [谷中水熱也。] See Yuan Ke 袁珂, ed., *Shanhajing jiaozhu* 山海經校注 [*Collation and Annotation of the Classic of Mountains and Seas*] (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1992), 308.

30 See especially the beginning of the fifth verse: "The Way is long and far, human life is short; The course of things is distant and dark – one cannot fully comprehend it. Thus, one must rely on divination and consult with the gods; then he may explore time and

to Criticism” and “Defense Against Admonition”, appear as appropriations of Dongfang Shuo’s 東方朔 [ca. 161–93 BCE] “Replying to a Guest’s Objections [*Da ke nan* 答客難]” in which Dongfang Shuo explains why he has not attained a high ministerial position in spite of his vast learning. Yet while Zhang Heng and Cai Yong’s *fu* do not display original expressions of personal sentiment, they nevertheless express the intellectual spirit of their times with each incorporating a considerable number of lines dealing with *chenwei* knowledge and concepts. Accordingly, Zhang Heng’s defense of his relatively low official position is supported through references to mythological figures such as Fenghou 風后, Chong 重 and Li 黎 who had met opportune times and been able to put their services into practical use.³¹ Cai Yong’s argument in “Defense Against Admonition”, namely that it is important to know when to act and when to withdraw – an allusion to the dangers of seeking office during a time of factional struggles between powerful families – is similarly given through a range of *chenwei* inspired analogies that describe resonances between man and the cosmos.

A number of *fu* written from the reign of Emperor Ming to the end of the Eastern Han that do not fall into the above four categories also make frequent use of *chenwei* themes. Ma Rong’s 馬融 [79–166] “The Zither [*Qin fu* 琴賦]”, for instance, celebrates the power and virtue of the instrument through an allusion to an anecdote from the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 that describes the way in which music was thought to influence the workings of the cosmos.³² Huang Xiang’s 黃香 [ca. 68–122] use of *chenwei* in “The Nine Chambers [*Jiu gong fu* 九宮賦]” is also clearly apparent. One of the earliest works on the ancient Chinese magical square, “The Nine Chambers” is the earliest *fu* that is dedicated to a description of the two cosmological diagrams commonly used in divination practices and explanations of the *Book of Changes* [*Yijing* 易經] – the *Yellow River Map* [*Hetu* 河圖] and the *Luoshu Square* [*Luoshu* 洛書].³³ *Chenwei* tropes also abound in

communicate with the hidden. That Gui would live with the Jiang was divined in infancy; Dan calculated the years from a notched tortoise shell.” See Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 3:95.

31 Zhang Heng contrasts references to Fenghou (a minister of the Yellow Emperor) and Chong and Li (ministers of the ruler Zhuangxi 顛頊) – all three of whom were able to put their services into practical use – with a reference to Confucius, who did not meet with the opportune time and could only wait for later generations to put his ideas into practice. For an English translation of this section of the *fu* see Yeong-Chung E. Lien, “Zhang Heng, Eastern Han Polymath, His Life and Works,” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2011), 185–87.

32 See Burton Watson, trans., *Han Feizi: Basic Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 53–55. For Ma Rong’s *fu* see Ouyang Xun, *Songben yiywen leiju*, 44.1201.

33 As noted in the commentary attached to “The Nine Chambers” in the *Quan Hanfu pingzhu*, the *Yellow River Map* and *Luoshu Square* had not, prior to Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 [127–200], been described in such detail as they are in this *fu*.

Wang Yanshou's "A Dream [*Meng fu* 夢賦]" in which he recounts a nightmare where he battles with an imaginary host of "devils and demons, four-horned, serpent-necked, fishes with bird-tails, three-legged bogies from six eyes staring; dragons hideous, yet three-part human."³⁴ The *fu* ends with an epilogue in which Wang Yanshou references a number of *chenwei* themed stories where the nightmares and visions of others turned out to be auspicious portents. The stories reveal Wang Yanshou's determination not to cower in the face of evil and misfortune. Ban Zhao's 班昭 [ca. 49–ca. 120] "The Great Bird [*Daque fu* 大雀賦]", written to memorialize the presentation of ostriches as a tribute gift to the court, also veers into *chenwei* territory with the *fu* comparing the birds to auspicious beasts before ending with a celebration of the Han:

嘉大雀之所集，	How I admire the place where these "big sparrows" roost,
生昆侖之靈丘。	They live on the numinous peaks of the Kunlun Mountains.
同小名而大異，	Although they share the small sparrow's name, they differ in size,
乃鳳皇之匹疇。	And as such they are comparable to the phoenix and <i>luan</i> .
懷有德而歸義，	Longing for the One with Virtue they submitted to duty,
故翔萬里而來遊。	Winging ten thousand miles they traveled and came.
集帝庭而止息，	Roosting in the royal courtyard they rest and repose,
樂和氣而優遊。	Enjoying its stately harmony they feel at ease.
上下協而相親，	High and low are unified and linked in love,
聽《雅》《頌》之雍雍。	One hears the majestic tones of the Odes and Hymns.
自東西與南北，	From East to West, from South to North,
咸思服而來同。 ³⁵	All wish to join and come and share!

34 Arthur Waley, *The Temple and Other Poems* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923), 91–94. See Ouyang Xun, *Songben yiwén leiju*, 79.2034.

35 Translation taken from Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 27–28. See Ouyang Xun, *Songben yiwén leiju*, 92.2366. Translator's note.

Before drawing this section on Han *fu* to an end, it is also worth mentioning Ban Gu's "Elaboration on the Canon [*Dian yin* 典引]" written in 74. Over the course of history, this essay has not generally been regarded as a *fu*, and during its inclusion in the *Selections of Refined Literature* [*Wen Xuan* 文選] anthology under the direction of Xiao Tong 蕭統 [501–531], it was placed within the *fuming* 符命 genre (alongside Sima Xiangru's "Essay on the Feng and Shan Sacrifices [*Feng shan wen* 封禪文]" and Yang Xiong's "Denigrating Qin and Praising Xin [*Ju Qin mei Xin* 劇秦美新]"). However, when considered in light of Han dynasty literary genres, "Elaboration on the Canon" (as well as the other two works by Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong), can be classified as *fu*. The lengthy text, which describes the virtue of the Eastern Han imperial house as well as numerous prophetic signs and auspicious omens, can rightly be regarded as an almost exhaustive collection of prognostication records for the Eastern Han.

To summarize, *fu* composed during the period from Emperor Ming to the end of the Eastern Han reflect the profound influence wielded by *chenwei* concepts during this time. This influence was closely bound up with the development of *chenwei* as a political ideology and popular movement and with the way in which it was incorporated into official classical studies.

2 *Chenwei* Influences on Han Lyrical Poetry and Songs

While the lyrical poetry [*shi* 詩] of the Han dynasty never achieved the same fame as the *fu*, the number of lyrical poems and songs composed during the period was, nevertheless, comparatively high. "The Book Catalogue [*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志]" chapter in the *Hanshu* records 316 works across 28 categories and authors under the *geshi* 歌詩 [song-verse] genre,³⁶ though unfortunately many of these have been lost throughout history and only a few remain.³⁷ Of course, the "Book Catalogue" should not be seen as an exhaustive list of the lyrical poems and songs composed during the Western Han. There are many examples of recorded works which were not entered into the *Yiwen zhi*. To date, one of the more comprehensive anthologies of Han dynasty poetry is Lu Qinli's 逯欽立

36 The genre referred to as *geshi* in the Han dynasty is today known as *yuefu*. See Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature*, 3:2091. Translator's note.

37 Lyrical poetry and songs extant today include the "Song of the Great Wind [*Da feng ge* 大風歌]" and "Song of the Swan [*Honghu ge* 鴻鵠歌]" which are attributed to Liu Bang and may reflect the two pieces by Liu Bang recorded in the *Yiwen zhi*. It is also possible that some of the Western Han poetry in which the author is named may have been listed in the *Yiwen zhi* under the category "Miscellaneous Lyrical Poems And Songs that Have Named Authors: 10 Works [*Za ge you zhuming ge shi shi pian* 雜各有主名歌詩十篇]".

section on Han dynasty poetry in *The Poetry of the Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties* [*Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩].³⁸ The anthology includes 174 lyrical poems and songs from the Western Han period. As the *History of the Later Han* [*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書] does not include a separate treatise cataloging poetry in the Eastern Han, it is difficult to guess the number of lyrical poems and songs composed during this time. From records in the *History of the Later Han* found throughout the “Biographies of Literary Men [*Wenyuan zhuan* 文苑傳]” chapter as well as the numerous other individual biographies of scholars and literati, it is clear that most learned scholars during this time were composing lyrical poetry and songs. Scholars who produced a large volume of work in these genres include Wang Yi 王逸 [fl. 120], who is credited with 123 lyrical poems included in a work titled “Poems on the Han [*Han shi* 漢詩]”; Ying Feng 應奉 [fl. 144], who composed “Moved by the Sao [*Gan sao* 感騷]” in thirty *pian* 篇; and Zhao Qi 趙岐 [d. 201], who is recorded as writing “Song of Troubles and Travails [*E tun ge* 厄屯歌]” in twenty-three stanzas. (All three scholars have individual biographies in the *History of the Later Han*.) None of these works are extant today. Lu Qinli’s anthology includes 464 lyrical poems and songs from the Eastern Han period, though this number certainly does not represent the total number of lyrical poems and songs composed during this period.

In total, Lu Qinli’s anthology records 638 Han dynasty lyrical poems and songs. This is the basic body of literature through which scholars today can understand the lyrical poetry landscape during this period. Of these six hundred or so poems, there are roughly one hundred that clearly incorporate *chenwei* related themes.

2.1 *Chenwei Themes in Western Han Lyrical Poems and Songs*

Around fifty *yuefu* 樂府 poems and authored lyrical poems and songs from the Western Han explicitly touch upon *chenwei* elements and concepts.

One of the major sources of these poems and songs was Emperor Wu himself, with *chenwei* themes found in many of his surviving works. These include the two-part “Song of the Huzi Dike [*Huzi ge* 瓠子歌]”, five songs attributed to him from the ritual hymns in the “Songs for Suburban Sacrifices [*Jiaosi ge* 郊祀歌]”, as well as the “Song of Lady Li [*Li Furen ge* 李夫人歌]” and “Song of Yearning for the Commandant of Imperial Carriages Zihou [*Si Fengche Zihou ge* 思奉車子侯歌]”. These songs are all deeply steeped in

38 Lu Qinli 逯欽立, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 先秦漢魏晉南北朝詩 [*The Poetry of the Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983).

chenwei concepts that include calling for blessings in the wake of a natural disaster, celebrating the virtue of empire through the portrayal of auspicious omens, and embodying ideas of the resonance between the cosmos and the world of man in his longing for others.

“Song of the Huzi Dike”: Composed in the second year of the Yuanfeng 元封 period [110–105 BCE] as repairs were being made to a breach in the Yellow River,³⁹ this two-part song is not only a lament on the destructive power of the flooding waters and the difficulties involved in the repair work, but also a invocation to the deity of the river that epitomizes the resonance between cosmic and human order. The song expresses the emperor’s complaints and supplication to the river spirit, “Ask the Lord of the River for me, ‘Why are you so cruel? Your surging inundations will not cease; you grieve my people ...’” which is then followed by a sacrifice to the spirit of a white horse and jade to obtain their favor, “and cast the precious jade. The Lord of the River hears our plea.” The song then concludes with a prayer that the raging waters will be calmed and that fortune will descend on the empire, “We will stem the break at Xuanfang 宣防 and bring ten thousand blessings!”⁴⁰

“Songs for Suburban Sacrifices”: Five of these nineteen ritual hymns deal directly with auspicious omens and portents that occurred during the reign of Emperor Wu. The two-part “Song of the Heavenly Horse [*Tian ma ge* 天馬歌]” – composed upon the acquisition of the blood sweating horses from Ferghana in 101 BCE⁴¹ – is recorded in both the “Book on Music [*Yueshu* 樂書]” in the *Records of the Grand Historian* [*Shiji* 史記] and the “Treatise on Ritual and Music [*Li yue zhi* 禮樂志]” in the *Hanshu*, though the two versions vary quite significantly.⁴² Yet despite these differences, the central idea behind the two versions is the

39 As recorded in the “Annals of Emperor Wu [*Wudi ji* 武帝紀]” in the *Hanshu*: “In the second year, in the winter, the tenth month, the Emperor traveled, and favored Yong 雍 with a visit, where he sacrificed at the altars to the Five Lords on High. In the spring, he favored Goushi 緄氏 with a visit, and thereupon went to Donglai 東萊 Commandery. In the summer, the fourth month, he returned and sacrificed at Mount Tai. He went to Huzi and visited the breach in the dikes of the Yellow River. He commanded those courtiers who had followed him, from the rank of general on down, all to bear brush to stop up the breach in the dike of the Yellow River. He made ‘Song of Huzi.’” See Homer Dubs, trans., *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1944), 2:89–91.

40 Translation taken from Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II* (Hong Kong: Columbia University Press, 1993), 59.

41 For an English translation and summary of the circumstances in which “Song of the Heavenly Horse” was written, see Anne Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), 13–16.

42 For an outline of the textual revision and changes of the two versions, see Zhang Fengyi, *Liang Han jingxue yu wenxue sixiang*, 399–401.

same, with both abounding in *chenwei* concepts of the auspicious connection between humans and the natural world. The first part highlights the virtue of Emperor Wu in attracting such auspicious beasts to his empire, while the second emphasizes the might of the emperor in subjugating the barbarian tribes. Four other hymns explicitly celebrating the occurrence of auspicious omens are also included in the “Songs for Suburban Sacrifices”. Hymn seventeen, “Turning to the Top of Mount Long [*Chao Long shou* 朝隴首]”, was composed upon the capture of a white unicorn [*bai lin* 白麟] around 122/123 BCE, and interweaves this auspicious omen with a celebration of the emperor’s rule and military achievements on a cosmic scale.⁴³ Hymn twelve, “The Auspicious Star [*Jing xing* 景星]”, was written to celebrate the acquisition of a precious tripod [*bao ding* 寶鼎] in 113 BCE, an auspicious omen symbolizing the legitimacy of Emperor Wu’s reign.⁴⁴ Hymn eighteen, “The Beautiful Chariot [*Xiangzai yu* 象載瑜]”, eulogizes the capture of six red wild geese at Donghai 東海 in 94 BCE. Hymn thirteen, “The Abstemious Room [*Qi fang* 齊房]” (also known as the “Song of the Fungus of Immortality Room [*Zhi fang zhi ge* 芝房之歌]”), celebrates the growth of a magical fungus [*zhi* 芝] at the sacrificial center of Ganquan in 109 BCE. The hymn’s origins are recorded in the “Annal of Emperor Wu [*Wudi ji* 武帝紀]” in the *Hanshu* which states:

In the sixth month, an imperial edict said, “In an inner chamber of Ganquan Palace, there has sprung up a fungus of immortality with nine stalks and interconnected leaves. The Lords on High visit widely and do not disdain the inferior rooms; they have granted Us an eminent favor. Let an amnesty be granted to the empire. Let an ox and wine be granted to every hundred households in the Yunyang capital.” The “Song of the Fungus of Immortality Room” was made.⁴⁵

Through singing of auspicious omens that occurred during the reign of Emperor Wu, these four hymns glorified the benevolent rule of the emperor and the

43 The “Annals of Emperor Wu” in the *Hanshu* records that, “In the period Yuanshou 元狩, the first year, in the winter, the tenth month, the Emperor travelled and favored Yong 雍 by a visit, where he sacrificed at the altars to the Five Lords on High [*wuzhi* 五時] and a white unicorn was captured. The ‘White Unicorn’ song was composed.” See Dubs, *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 2:57. For a complete translation and analysis of the ritual hymn see Martin Kern, “Religious Anxiety and Political Interest in Western Han Omen Interpretation: The Case of the Han Wudi Period (141–87 B.C.),” *Studies in Chinese History* 10 (2000): 16–21.

44 This event is also recorded in the “Annals of Emperor Wu” in the *Hanshu*. See Dubs, *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 2:75.

45 See Dubs, *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 2:91–92.

harmony between heaven and earth. Manifestations of the divine protection bestowed on the Han, the hymns represent the desire for a prosperous empire that would be forever blessed.

“Song of Lady Li” and “Song of Yearning for the Commandant of Imperial Carriages Zihou”: Emperor Wu’s “Song of Lady Li” was written as a lament for his deceased concubine of the same name who had died young not long after giving birth to a son. His “Song of Yearning for the Commandant of Imperial Carriages Zihou” was, in a similar fashion, composed in memory of Huo Shan 霍嬭 [120–110 BCE] (style name Zihou 子侯), Commandant of Imperial Carriages and son of his most esteemed military leader Huo Qubing 霍去病 [140–117 BCE]. While the sentiment expressed in both songs is obviously sincere and deep, it is the context in which these feelings arose which is of interest here. With the “Song of Lady Li”, Emperor Wu’s passionate longing for his dead concubine was elicited by the wizardry of Shao Weng 少翁 [d. 117 BCE], who, with the help of wine, dim candles and curtains, was able to have the emperor believe that he had brought back Lady Li’s spirit from the dead. Although this was clearly a setup, the fact that Emperor Wu actually believed he was seeing Lady Li – even taking into account the irrational state of mind that his emotions had left him in – suggests that in his mind he believed in such supernatural occurrences. In the case of his song for Huo Shan, Emperor Wu was moved to passion by Huo Shan’s ascendancy into the immortal realm. This is described in an introduction to the poem recorded in Huo Shan’s biography in *Biographies of Cave Immortals* [*Dongxian zhuan* 洞仙傳] which states:

[Commandant of Imperial Carriages] Zihou was a man of Fufeng. Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty loved him for his purity and youth and transferred his position to that of Palace Attendant. One morning he announced to his family, “Now I will fill an immortal post. I shall depart this spring, but in midsummer I will return briefly.” He returned for a while and departed again, just as he had said. Missing him, Emperor Wu then composed a song: ...

車子侯者，扶風人也。漢武帝愛其清淨，稍遷其位至侍中。一朝語家云：“我今補仙官，此春應去，至夏中當暫還，還少時復去。”如其言。武帝思之，乃作歌。⁴⁶

46 See Zhang Junfang 張君房, comp., *Yunji qi qian* 雲笈七籤 [*Seven Lots from the Book-bag of the Clouds*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 110:2404. English translation taken from Thomas E. Smith, *Ritual and the Shaping of Narrative: The Legend of the Han Emperor Wu* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1992), 140. The entry in the *Biographies of Cave*

Always wanting to become an immortal himself, Emperor Wu's song is filled with both longing for his friend and envy as he mourns not only the loss of a friend but his own inevitable fate. As there was no religious Daoism during the Western Han, the desire to become immortal and roam the immortal realm reflected in this song should be seen in terms of *chenwei* mysticism.

Another song attributed to a Western Han emperor is the "Song of the Yellow Swan [*Huang hu ge* 黃鵠歌]", which has, throughout history, been attributed to Emperor Zhao. The song narrates the appearance of a swan at the Jianzhang Palace 建章宮 in Chang'an, with the "Diverse Notes on the Western Capital [*Xijing zaji* 西京雜記]" recording that during the first year of the Shiyuan 始元 period [86–80 BCE] a swan came down to the Taiye Pool 太液池 after which Emperor Zhao composed a song. The sighting of the swan is also recorded in the "Annal of Emperor Zhao [*Zhaodiji* 昭帝紀]" in the *Hanshu* (though the text does not mention the song), with Fu Zan's 傳瓚 [fl. 280] commentary of this passage stating: "during the Han dynasty the ruling element was the virtue of earth [*tude* 土德] while the favored color for robes was yellow [note that in the theory of five elements, earth is associated with yellow]. As all swans are white, the fact that this one had become yellow was seen as an auspicious omen and thus recorded. It is said that the Taiye Pool is made up through a gathering of the liquid essence of *yin* and *yang*." Ru Chun's 如淳 [fl. 198–265] commentary on this section in the *Hanshu* notes that the pool's liquid was formed through a combination of the liquids of heaven and earth. Given the propitious nature of the yellow swan and the symbolism behind the Taiye Pool this event would have been seen as doubly auspicious and hence led to the creation of a song to celebrate these fortuitous omens.⁴⁷

The Western Han belief in the resonance between cosmic forces and the human world was already firmly in place from the reign of Emperor Wen and all subsequent Emperors continued to hold to this understanding of the world. They may well have all composed lyrical poems and songs touching on this idea that have since been lost to time. There are even fewer surviving works on this theme by ministers and courtiers, with the only traces of *chenwei* influenced lyrical poetry found in Wei Meng's 韋孟 [ca. 228–156 BCE] "Poem of Admonition [*Fengjian shi* 諷諫詩]". According to his biography in the *Hanshu*, this poem was made to criticize the wantonness of Liu Wu 劉戊

Immortals erroneously omits part of Huo Shan's title and lists this entry under Fengche Zihou.

47 Fu Zan's commentary, Ru Chun's commentary and the line from the "Diverse Notes on the Western Capital" are all cited by Yan Shigu in his commentary of the "Annal of Emperor Zhao" in the *Hanshu*. See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 218.

(King of Chu 楚王, r. 174–153 BCE) who was under his tutelage at that time. The poem reads like an historical epic, starting in remote antiquity and then proceeding through the Shang, Zhou and Qin dynasties before singing of the passing of the mandate to the Han and finishing with a blunt and scathing rebuke of Liu Wu. Wei Meng celebrates the legitimacy of Han rule through the receiving the mandate from a personified heaven:

悠悠嫚秦，	But lo the wanton Qin –
上天不寧。	Heaven on high was not appeased.
乃眷南顧，	And thence cast Its eye southward,
授漢於京。 ⁴⁸	And presented [the mandate] to the Han in the [Qin] capital.

2.2 *Western Han Sacrificial and Ceremonial Hymns*

Western Han sacrificial and ceremonial hymns have survived relatively intact to the present within the “Treatise on Ritual and Music” in the *Hanshu*. The treatise records two genres of ritual hymns: songs of the temple – made up of seventeen songs under the title “Songs to Pacify the World for Inside the Palace [*Anshi fangzhong ge* 安世房中歌]”; and songs for suburban sacrifices, which today exist as a collection of nineteen short songs – “Songs for Suburban Sacrifices”. According to traditional sources, the temple songs were composed by Lady Tangshan 唐山夫人,⁴⁹ the wife of Liu Bang, while the suburban sacrifice songs were said to have been written by Emperor Wu with Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 [179–118 BCE] and other learned scholars. As the primary function of temple and sacrifice songs was to celebrate virtue through following the will of

48 Yan Shigu’s commentary notes that Liu Bang’s home in Pei 沛 was far to the south of the Qin capital Xianyan 咸陽, hence the reference to looking southward. He then notes that the following line refers to Liu Bang assuming the mandate at the Qin capital. Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 3102. For the English translation see Zeb Raft, “The Beginning of Literati Poetry: Four Poems from First-century BCE China,” *T’oung Pao* 96 (2010): 94.

49 The “Treatise on Ritual and Music” records that Lady Tangshan composed the “Music for the Sacrifice in the Inner Chamber [*Fangzhong ci yue* 房中祠樂]” modelled on the “Music for the Inner Chamber [*Fangzhong yue* 房中樂]” of the Zhou times. The songs for *Music for the Inner Chamber* were said to be composed to the music of Chu 楚 which Liu Bang, whose hometown was in the Chu area, was known to be fond of. In 193 BCE the Director of the Office of Music [*yuefu ling* 樂府令], Xiahou Kuan 夏侯寬 [fl. 193 BCE], was ordered to arrange the songs for flute accompaniment. The name of this set of songs was then changed to “Songs to Pacify the World for Inside the Palace”. See Martin Kern, “In Praise of Political Legitimacy: The *Miao* and *Jiao* Hymns of the Western Han,” *Oriens Extremus* 39, no. 1 (1996): 36; and Zong-qi Cai, ed., *How to Read Chinese Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 85. See also Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1043.

heaven and honoring the ancestors, these songs employed more frequent and in-depth use of *chenwei* concepts. In the case of the “Songs to Pacify the World for Inside the Palace”, which in essence were songs that worshipped and revered the ancestors and past generations as a means of glorifying the Han and establishing temple music standards for later generations, *chenwei* concepts were interwoven with concepts of family reverence and filial piety. This connection between *chenwei* and family reverence can be seen in passages of the *Classic of Family Reverence* [*Xiaojing* 孝經] in which Confucius is recorded as saying:

Indeed, family reverence is the constancy of the heavenly cycles, the appropriate responsiveness of the earth, and the proper conduct of the people. It is the constant workings of the heavens and the earth that the people model themselves upon.⁵⁰

It is evident that the concept of family reverence is not just limited to respecting one’s parents but is extended out into respecting and adhering to cosmic principles. This line of thought is continued by Confucius:

In such a world, the parents while living enjoyed the comforts that parents deserve, and as spirits after death took pleasure in the sacrificial offerings made to them. Hence, the empire was peaceful and free of strife, natural disasters did not occur, and man-made calamities were averted.⁵¹

Just as understandings of *chenwei* were closely connected with the concept of a resonance between the cosmic and human order, the above passage from the *Classic of Family Reverence* reveals that family reverence also takes on this resonance. Indeed, chapter sixteen of the *Classic of Family Reverence* is entitled “Resonance [*Ganying* 感應]” and contains the following lines:

The Master said, “Of old the enlightened kings served their fathers with family reverence, and in so doing, served the heavens with acuity; they served their mothers with family reverence, and in so doing, served the earth judiciously ... With the enlightened kings being acute and judicious in their service to the heavens and to the earth, the gods and spirits sent

50 English translation taken from Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Roger T. Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2009), 108. Translator’s note.

51 See Rosemont and Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence*, 109. Translator’s note.

down their blessings upon them ... When at the ancestral temple the Emperor offers his respects, the ghosts and spirits acknowledge him with appreciation. When familial and fraternal deference reaches this level, the feeling resonates with the gods and spirits, shines throughout the four corners of the world, and affects everything everywhere.”⁵²

The idea that extending family reverence from one's parents to the earth and the greater cosmos at large could lead to a prosperous empire that is blessed by the heavens is found throughout the “Songs to Pacify the World for Inside the Palace”, with many lines celebrating the blessings that have been received by the empire through its reverence to both man and cosmos: “We receive and maintain the blessings of Heaven”.⁵³ These blessings are often described in terms of light and radiance: “The great filial piety is truly completed: the splendid virtuous power radiant and clear.” “We receive the shining of the Heavenly Emperor ... We obtain the brilliance of the Heavenly Emperor!”⁵⁴

In contrast to the focus on extensions of family reverence found in the hymns of the temple, the hymns written for the suburban sacrifices – sacrifices made to heaven and earth as prayers for good fortune – focus on celebrating the empire's virtue and fortune through lines that praise the heavens and earth and depict man both in adherence to and in harmony with the heavens. Examples include the second hymn, “The Sovereign Approaches [*Di lin* 帝臨]”, which describes how the Han imperial house maintained harmony with the cosmos (“Clear and harmonious the sixfold united universe”) and used the theory of the five elements to establish standards across music, the calendar and the color of imperial garments as a means of achieving peace, prosperity and order (“We regulate the numbers after the five ... In auspicious vestments We raise the colour yellow!”).⁵⁵ Examples celebrating the empire's virtue and fortune are found in the first hymn, “We Have Chosen a Timely Day [*Lian shi ri* 練時日]”, which sings of the blessings the Han imperial house had received from the heavens (“For the Gods journey forth, they send down sweet grace, bounteous good fortune”);⁵⁶ and in the seventh hymn, “Behold, the Grand Unity [*Wei Taiyuan* 惟泰元]”, in which by “following the virtue of august heaven”, the Han imperial house is blessed with “sweet dew and rain,” numerous auspicious

52 See Rosemont and Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence*, 114–15. Translator's note.

53 承保天休。See Kern, “In Praise of Political Legitimacy,” 44.

54 大孝備矣，休德昭清。承帝之明 ... 受帝之光。See Kern, “In Praise of Political Legitimacy,” 43.

55 See Kern, “In Praise of Political Legitimacy,” 51. Translator's note.

56 See Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 6–8.

omens and success in their military campaigns (“the Nine Yi tribes shall come to pay tribute in obedience”).⁵⁷ The final hymn “The Red Water Dragon [*Chi jiao* 赤蛟]” also sings of heaven blessing the Han with prosperity and fortune and ensuring the eternal reign of the imperial household. These examples are representative of the majority of the nineteen hymns that make up “Songs for Suburban Sacrifices”.

2.3 *Songs for the Nao-Bell*

Another important genre of Western Han songs were the *nao*-bell 饒 songs recorded in Shen Yue’s 沈約 [441–513] “Treatise of Music [*Yue zhi* 樂志]” in the *History of the Southern Song* [*Songshu* 宋書]. The treatise lists eighteen songs under the title “Songs for the Nao-bell [*Nao ge* 饒歌]”, though many are not completely intelligible due to the numerous corruptions of the text as characters were added and deleted. These eighteen songs are unique for their wide breadth of thematic content that incorporates both popular folk songs and high culture literati compositions – a peculiarity that the literary scholar Xiao Difei 蕭滌非 [1906–1991] believed was a result of the diverse ways in which the songs were used during the Han.⁵⁸ Of the eighteen songs, there is only one complete song that can be seen as clearly influenced by *chenwei* concepts: “Up the Mound [*Shang ling* 上陵].”⁵⁹ From the line in the poem noting the Ganlu 甘露 [53–50 BCE] era name – “Early in Ganlu’s second year, fungus appeared in Bronze Pool”⁶⁰ – the song can be dated to the second year of the Ganlu period during the reign of Emperor Xuan 宣帝 [r. 74–48 BCE]. In a similar vein to his predecessor Emperor Wu, Emperor Xuan had a penchant for great deeds, a tendency to present an image of false peace and prosperity, and a desire to pursue immortality. This is reflected in the number of auspicious signs and omens that occurred over the twenty-five-year period of his reign as recorded in his annal in the *Hanshu*, which is full of portents ranging from sightings of supernatural birds and sweet dew to the discovery of precious tripods and mythical beasts. Many of these events led to changes in the era names used by Emperor Xuan, with his last four era names – Shenjue 神爵 [61–58 BCE], Wufeng 五鳳

57 See Zong-qi Cai, *How to Read Chinese Poetry*, 88–89. Translator’s note.

58 See Xiao Difei 蕭滌非, *Han Wei Liuchao yuefu wenxue shi* 漢魏六朝樂府文學史 [*The Literary History of Yuefu in the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties*] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1984), 49–50.

59 *Chenwei* concepts do however appear in several stanzas of the other eighteen songs. Examples include *A Sage Emerges* [*Shengren chu* 聖人出], where the emergence of a sage is connected with the harmonization of *yin* and *yang*, the six flying dragons and the accord of the four seasons.

60 See Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 43–45. Translator’s note.

[57–54 BCE], Ganlu, and Huanglong 黃龍 [49–48 BCE] – all changed to commemorate some auspicious sign or portent.⁶¹ Composed in this context, “Up the Mound” contains numerous references to similar auspicious signs. Lines describing “the waters of nectar springs”, the magical fungus that appeared by Bronze Pool and the “sparrows of the vast seas” with “vermilion wild swans winging” are clearly celebrations of similar propitious occurrences.⁶² An entry in the “Treatise on the Suburban Sacrifices [*Jiaosi zhi* 郊祀志]” in the *Hanshu* recording Emperor Xuan’s reinstatement of the cult sacrifices to Taiyi at Ganquan in 61 BCE notes that he composed many songs inspired by these rituals.⁶³ It would have been likely that many of the songs that he wrote during this occasion would have concerned the harmony between man and the cosmos as well as numerous auspicious portents. Unfortunately, none of these songs are extant today.

2.4 *Chenwei Influences on Songs, Lyrical Poetry and Yuefu Poetry in the Eastern Han*

Existing records of lyrical poems and *yuefu* poems from the Eastern Han include around twenty pieces that incorporate content related to *chenwei* concepts.⁶⁴

The tendency for Eastern Han emperors to favor *chenwei* texts is clearly evident with Emperor Ming, who in addition to being described by traditional histories as a hard working and just ruler, was also an ardent believer in *chenwei* concepts. This can be seen from the multiple allusions to *chenwei* predictions in his edicts and the many auspicious signs and portents that are recorded in his annal in the *History of the Later Han*. Further evidence of Emperor Ming’s

61 For a condensed account of the occurrences behind these era names see the “Treatise on the Suburban Sacrifices” in the Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1248–53.

62 Shen Yue 沈約, *Songshu* 宋書 [*History of the Liu Song Dynasty*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 641.

63 The *Hanshu* reads “In the first month of the next year, the emperor visited the palace at Ganquan and performed the suburban sacrifices at the Taizhi altar, during which there appeared several auspicious omens. Imitating the example set previously by Emperor Wu, [the emperor arranged for] stately chariots and splendid imperial robes, fasted to show his respect, and composed many songs.” [明年正月，上始幸甘泉，郊見泰畤，數有美祥。修武帝故事，盛車服，敬齊祠之禮，頗作詩歌。] See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1249.

64 It is interesting to note that current records of Han lyrical poetry where the author is known are all dated either prior to the reigns of Emperor Xuan and Emperor Yuan 元帝 [r. 49–33 BCE] or after the reign of Emperor Ming (but prior the period of Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling 靈帝), with no works surviving from the end of the Western Han to the beginning of the Eastern Han. That is to say, these works were all composed during the first and third stages of *chenwei* development during the Han dynasty.

fondness for *chenwei* writings can be found in the change he made to the title of the imperial officer of music based on an apocryphal *wei* text at the suggestion of Cao Chong 曹充 [fl. 56–60].⁶⁵ With such enthusiasm for *chenwei* coming from the emperor himself, it is only natural that the lyrical poems and songs composed during this period contain traces of *chenwei* concepts. An example of such a work extant today is the “Song-verse for Military Virtue [*Wude wu ge shi* 武德舞歌詩]” composed by Emperor Ming’s brother, Liu Cang 劉蒼 [d. 83], King of Dongping 東平. As recorded in the “Treatise on the Suburban Sacrifices” in the *Han Records on the Eastern Institute* [*Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記], on the fourth day of the eighth month in the third year of the Yongping 永平 period [58–75], court discussions were held concerning the songs and dances that should be used in the temple ceremony to honor Emperor Guangwu. Liu Cang suggested that dances should consist of the *Wenshi* 文始 [Civil Beginning], *Wuxing* 五行 [Five Elements], and *Wude* 武德 [Military Virtue] and thereupon submitted a lyrical poem regarding this matter to the Emperor. The poem celebrates the great achievements of Emperor Guangwu in restoring the Han imperial house and bringing the empire into order and ends with an invocation for the empire to be blessed with eternal fortune. References to *chenwei* influences can be seen in lines that talk of the Han as manifesting the meaning of the prophecies and emulating the virtue of the sage ruler Yao. Another example of a *chenwei* influenced work in this period is Wang Ji’s 王吉 [fl. 72] “Song on Shooting the Crow [*She wu ci* 射烏辭]”. As recorded in both the *A Primer for Beginners* [*Chuxue ji* 初學記] and the *Universal Geography of the Taiping era* [*Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記],⁶⁶ Wang Ji was acting as a guard during Emperor Ming’s eastern inspection to Mount Tai 泰山 when, as they arrived in Xingyang 滎陽, a cawing crow flew over the emperor’s carriage. Wang Ji immediately

65 During questioning from the emperor in relation to a memorial that he had written arguing that the Han needed to establish its own ceremonial code, Cao Chong cited a prediction from a *wei* text based on the *Shangshu* entitled *The Book of Documents: The Big Dipper Key* [*Shangshu xuan ji qian* 尚書璇機鈴] which stated that a Han dynasty emperor with harmonious virtue would create music entitled *yu* 予. This pleased Emperor Ming and he thereupon changed the title of the imperial officer of music from *Tai yue* 太樂 [Grand Musician] to *Tai yu yue* 太子樂 [Grand Yu Musician]. See the biography of Cao Chong’s son Cao Bao in the *History of the Later Han*.

66 See Xu Jian 徐堅, ed., *Chuxue ji* 初學記 [*A Primer for Beginners*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 30.732; and Yue Shi 樂史, *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 [*Universal Geography of the Taiping Era*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 168. The entry in the *Chuxue ji* was taken from a line in the now lost “Collected Statements [*Ji shi* 輯事]” chapter of the *Comprehensive Meanings of Popular Customs* [*Fengsu tong* 風俗通], which itself was taken from another lost text, the *Imperial Diary of Emperor Ming* [*Mingdi qiju zhu* 明帝起居註].

shot down the bird and composed the following song: “Caw the crow cries. I have drawn the bow and fired, piercing it under the left wing. Your majesty will live for ten thousand years, and I will become a 2000-bushel official.”⁶⁷ The emperor then rewarded him with 2.4 million cash and ordered that pictures of the crow should be painted on the walls of a pavilion. While the lyrics of the song are vulgar and crude, the large reward given to Wang Ji was a result of *chenwei* symbolism that saw the crow as a symbol for the sun and the sun as a symbol for the emperor.⁶⁸ In light of this interpretation, Wang Ji’s shooting of the crow over the carriage of Emperor Ming was an auspicious portent implying that Emperor Ming had obtained the sun and that his virtue was in harmony with the cosmos.⁶⁹ The three “Songs of the Zuodu People [Zuodu yi ge 荅都夷歌]” by King Tangzou of the White Wolf tribe 白狼王唐叟 [fl. 74] are also examples of Eastern Han songs influenced by *chenwei* concepts. The songs, which are recorded in the “Treatise on the Southwest Barbarian Tribes [Xinan yi zhuan 西南夷傳]” of the *History of the Later Han* were originally sung in the dialect of the Zuodu people and were translated by the clerical officer Tian Gong 田恭 [fl. 74] under the direction of Zhu Fu 朱輔 [fl. 70s], inspector of Yi province 益州, before being presented to Emperor Ming. The highly stylized songs liken the emperor to the rising sun and celebrate the Han imperial house for its virtue, benevolence and harmonious accord with the cosmos.⁷⁰

67 烏鳥啞啞，引弓射左腋。陛下壽萬歲，臣為二千石。Officials in the Han were ranked according to their salaries which were paid in both grain and cash. Only high ranking officials such as ministers would earn 2000 bushels [*dan* 石] or more. See Rafe de Crespigny, *A Biographical Dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23–220 AD)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 817, 1221.

68 Crows have been used as a symbol for the sun since ancient times with many old texts referring to this association. As recorded in the “Great Wilderness: East [*Da huang dong jing* 大荒東經]” chapter of the *Shanhaijing*, “Above the Tang Valley [*Tanggu*] is the Fu Tree [*Fu mu* 扶木]. When one sun reaches it, another sun goes out; all of them carried by birds.” Guo Pu’s commentary notes that in the sun there is a three-legged crow. See Yuan Ke, *Shanhaijing*, 408–9. For the English translation of the quoted passage in the *Shanhaijing* and an analysis of the three-legged crow see Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 28–34. Translator’s note.

69 The apocryphal *wei* text *Spring and Autumn Annals: Movement of the Big Dipper* [*Chunqiu yundou shu* 春秋運斗樞] contains a line stating: “When the *Wei* star is seen then the sun and moon shine, the crow has three legs, people practice the rites and are righteous, and all things are in accord.” [維星得，則日月光，烏三足，禮義循，物類合。] See Li Fang 李昉, ed., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 [*Taiping Reign Period Imperial Encyclopedia*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 4083.

70 See Nathan Wayne Hill, “Songs of the Bailang: A New Transcription with Etymological Commentary,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême Orient* 103 (2017): 389–91.

Any analysis of *chenwei* related lyrical poems and songs during the reign of Emperor Ming must also take into account the five lyrical poems listed at the end of Ban Gu's "The Two Capitals", namely "The Luminous Hall [*Ming tang* 明堂]", "Fu on the Royal Academy", "The Divine Tower", "The Precious Tripods [*Bao ding* 寶鼎]", and "The White Pheasant [*Bai zhi* 白雉]"; all of which have pronounced *chenwei* influences. The first three pieces take their titles from the names of buildings which, since ancient times, had been used as eminent seats of education, governance and sacrifice. Through their associated institutions and practices, these buildings played an important role in realizing the political need to communicate with the heavens and cultivate men of talent and were thus imbued with the idea of divine instruction. These *chenwei* influences are furthered by the precious tripod in the fourth piece (an auspicious vessel that was associated with conquering and obtaining all under heaven) and the white pheasant in the fifth (a powerful symbol that was considered a divine omen), both of which had overt political connotations of receiving the Mandate of Heaven. Ban Gu's glorification of the Han through songs on the auspicious nature of the empire's institutions highlight the profound *chenwei* influences on his understanding of the world. In addition to these five pieces, the *Taiping Reign Period Imperial Encyclopedia* [*Taiping yulan* 太平御覽] contains fragments of two other songs written by Ban Gu that contain elements associated with *chenwei* themes. The first of these, "Song of Auspicious Grain [*Jiahe ge* 嘉禾歌]", sings of timely springs rains and the sprouting of auspicious grain as signs of a bountiful harvest. This celebration of the cosmic world is also a celebration of the Han in which the benevolent and virtuous rule of the dynasty is manifest through the proper timing of the seasons and the blessings of nature. The second, "Song of the Magic Fungus [*Lingzhi ge* 靈芝歌]", praises the virtue of the Han as matching that of the heavens through a description of the auspicious magic fungus [*Lingzhi* 靈芝].⁷¹

Apart from Ban Gu's works above, other writers in the mid to late Eastern Han using *chenwei* elements in lyrical poems and songs include Cui Yin, Zhang Heng and Hou Jin 侯瑾 [fl. 190]. Cui Yin's "Panegyric for the Northern Tour [*Beixun song* 北巡頌]" – one of four panegyrics written to celebrate the

71 The songs are recorded as being part of a set in Ban Gu's (no longer extant) "Song-verses on Appraising Merit [*Lungong geshi* 論功歌詩]" which was said to have been included in his *Eulogies of Han* [*Han song* 漢頌] (also no longer extant). *Song of Auspicious Grain* appears without a title in volume 1 of the *Taiping yulan* (the title was added by Lu Qinli in his *Poetry of the Pre-Qin, Han, Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties*) while "Song of the Magic Fungus" is listed under volume 570. See Li Fang, *Taiping yulan*, 2578.

inspection tours of Emperor Zhang – contains elements of *chenwei* omens and signs that are highlighted in his preface to the poem:

In the first month of the third year of the Yuanhe period the emperor had completed the suburban sacrifices.⁷² Thereafter, he headed east on a tour of inspection. He went out of Henei, passed through the outskirts of Qingzhou and Yanzhou, turned the carriages back to Jizhou, and then performed the rites for the Northern Summit [Mount Heng 恒山]. The emperor's benevolence spread throughout the land to all his subjects and a number of auspicious omens and signs appeared. Thereafter, a panegyric was composed [in praise of the tour].

元和三年正月，上既畢郊祀之事，乃東巡，出於河內，納青、兗之郊；回冀州，禮北嶽。聖澤流浹，黎元被德，嘉瑞並集，乃作頌。⁷³

Cui Yin's "Seven-syllable Line Poem [*Qi yan shi* 七言詩]"; which today only exists in fragments, shows further examples of *chenwei* influences with references to the mythical *luan* 鸞 bird symbolizing that the virtuous governance of the empire was in line with the wishes of the cosmos. Zhang Heng's use of *chenwei* themes in his "Pronouncements for the Eastern Tour [*Dongxun gao* 東巡誥]" is also given in the form of mythological birds.⁷⁴

On the auspicious first day of the second month, the emperor made an inspection to Mount Tai ... on that day, a pair of phoenixes alighted on

72 According to records in the "Annal of Emperor Zhang [*Zhangdi ji* 章帝紀]" in the *History of the Later Han*, the *Records of the Later Han* [*Hou Han ji* 後漢紀] and the *Han Records on the Eastern Institute* the Eastern Tour took place at the beginning of the second year of the Yuanhe 元和 period [84–87] during the reign of Emperor Zhang. The date given above is probably the result of a printing error in the *Grove of Writing from the Academy of Culture* [*Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林].

73 Once thought to be lost, Cui Yin's panegyrics were rediscovered in Japan at the end of the 19th century as part of the 7th century collection, *Grove of Writing from the Academy of Culture*, volume 346. The second half of the panegyric quotes a large section from a song and hence can be seen as an example of the use of *chenwei* in Eastern Han songs. For an analysis of Cui Yin's four inspection tour panegyrics see Sharon Sanderovitch, *Presence and Praise: Writing the Imperial Body in Han China* (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2017), 68–101. Parts of the above translation have been drawn from this study. Translator's note.

74 Zhang Zhenze 張震澤 believes that this text was composed during the third year of the Yanguang 延光 period [122–125] of Emperor An 安帝 [r. 106–125]. See Zhang Zhenze 張震澤, *Zhang Heng shiwen ji jiaozhu* 張衡詩文集校注 [*Poetry and Literary Collection of Zhang Heng with Collated Commentaries*] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 318.

the tower ... upon reflecting on this auspicious occurrence, a member of the retinue accompanying the inspection and assisting with the sacrifices made the following song ...

惟二月初吉，帝將狩於岱嶽。.....是日也，有鳳雙集於臺。.....從巡助祭者，茲惟嘉瑞，乃歌曰.....⁷⁵

Writing towards the end of the Eastern Han, Hou Jin's use of *chenwei* elements also show a similar tendency to celebrate auspicious omens and signs in the form of animals. An example is his reference to the omen of the white fish jumping into King Wu's boat which appears in a fragment of a surviving poem recorded in *juan* 51 of the Tang dynasty encyclopedia *Transcribed Texts from the Northern Hall* [*Bei tang shu chao* 北堂書鈔] compiled by Yu Shinan 虞世南 [558–638].

2.5 *Lyrics for Zither Songs*

The Eastern Han also saw the integration of *chenwei* content with the *yuefu* genre known as “Lyrics for Zither Songs [*Qin qu ge ci* 琴曲歌辭]”. Numerous examples of this integration can be found in *Zither Tunes* [*Qin cao* 琴操], a collection of melodies and songs for the zither attributed to Cai Yong. Entries in *Zither Tunes* commonly begin with prefaces that give a brief background on the context in which the songs were written, and it is through these that the powerful influence of *chenwei* on this genre can be seen. “King Wen Receives the Mandate [*Wenwang shou ming* 文王受命]” is one such example, with the preface to the song describing the virtuous conduct of King Wen in contrast with the corrupt behaviour of King Zhou 紂王, whose tyranny and brutality had driven away his ministers and officials to the court of King Wen. The preface then recounts the *chenwei* inspired story in which King Wen received the Mandate of Heaven, namely in the form of a prophetic message held in the mouth of a phoenix, an auspicious occurrence that inspired him to compose the song. The song's lyrics, which are given after the preface, continue to reflect these *chenwei* themes. Another example from the *Zither Tunes* collection is “Song of the Attending Phoenix [*Yifeng ge* 儀鳳歌]”, which the preface attributes to King Cheng of Zhou 周成王 [r. 1043–1021 BCE]. The preface begins by highlighting the virtuous rule of King Cheng before recounting the many auspicious omens and signs that symbolized the peace and prosperity the king had achieved. These include *qilin* roaming in the walled gardens, phoenixes flying in the courtyard, as well as the presentation of pheasants as a tribute gift from

75 Ouyang Xun, *Songben yiwén leiju*, 39.1080.

the Yuechang 越裳 people in the south. These *chenwei* elements continue in the song proper that follows the preface. The “Song on Capturing the Lin [*Huo lin ge* 獲麟歌]”, which is appended as an additional song at the end of *Zither Tunes*, is another example of the way in which *chenwei* stories and ideas are integrated into Eastern Han literature.⁷⁶ The preface associates the composition of the song with a famous *chenwei* story in which Confucius meets a woodcutter who has captured a *lin* 麟. Understanding the auspicious nature of such an occasion, Confucius was deeply moved by the sight of the beast and proceeded to weep and embrace the *lin*. The preface describes how, just as Confucius was holding the creature’s head between his hands, the *lin* suddenly spat out three prophecies that foretold the fall of the Zhou and the restoration of the Han by Emperor Guangwu. These three songs and their prefaces in *Zither Tunes*, while traditionally ascribed to sages and rulers of the Zhou, are in fact Eastern Han compositions, and reflect the profound influence of *chenwei* culture on song lyrics during this period.⁷⁷ Another Eastern Han zither song that echoes this trend is “Song of the Southern Winds [*Nan feng ge* 南風歌]” which survives in *juan* 57 of Guo Maoqian’s 郭茂倩 [ca. 1046–1099] *Collection of Yuefu Poetry* [*Yuefu shiji* 樂府詩集]. The song is ascribed to the sage ruler Shun 舜, who is recorded in the “Book on Music” chapter in the *Shiji* as using a five-stringed zither to play “Southern Winds”. Shun’s playing of this song was, according to Sima Qian 司馬遷 [145–90 BCE], full of life-giving energy and in accord with the cosmos. This harmony is reflected in the lyrics of “Song of the Southern Winds”, which record the coming of phoenixes and the emergence of the Yellow Dragon from the Yellow River bearing auspicious signs and portents on its back, yet another example of the incorporation of *chenwei* concepts into Eastern Han literature.

2.6 Folk Songs and Ditties

While the brief examples given above show the close connection between *chenwei* concepts and Han lyrical poetry and songs, popular forms of literature such as folk songs and ditties also have strong associations with *chenwei* culture, further highlighting the profound influence that *chenwei* ideas and beliefs held over society during the Han dynasty. Today, there are around twenty Han folk ditties still extant which show elements of *chenwei* themes, with most of them taking the form of children’s songs.

76 The title for this song was not recorded in *Zither Tunes* and has been taken from *Record of Ancient Poetry* [*Gu shi ji* 古詩紀].

77 For a detailed examination on the dating of these songs see Zhang Fengyi, *Liang Han jingxue yu wenxue sixiang*, 414–16.

穎水清， While the waters of the Ying run bright
 灌氏寧。 It means the Guans are still all right;
 穎水濁， But when the waters run polluted
 灌氏族。⁷⁸ We'll know they've all been executed!

Children's song from Yingchuan 穎川 during the reign of Emperor Wu: This children's song foretells the death of Guan Fu 灌夫 [d. 131 BCE], a stalwart war hero famed for his absolute honesty, who, due to his obstinate behaviour, found himself in a dispute with Tian Fen 田蚡 [d. 130], the half-brother of the Empress Dowager Wang 王皇后 [d. 126]. Tian Fen's close relationship with the dowager resulted in Emperor Wu ordering the execution of Guan Fu and his family.⁷⁹

井水溢， Well-water overflows,
 滅竈煙， Extinguishing the hearth,
 灌玉堂， Pouring into jade halls,
 流金門。⁸⁰ Flowing through golden gates.

Children's ditty during the reign of Emperor Yuan 元帝 [r. 48–33]: This ditty was interpreted as foretelling the rise of Wang Mang who was seen by historians in the Eastern Han as representing the Power of Water [*shuide* 水德]. The metaphor of the hearth is a symbol of the Han, which, by the end of the Western Han period, was believed to be governed by the Power of Fire [*huode* 火德]. The water coming out of the well to extinguish the hearth, was, therefore, understood as a prophecy of Wang Mang's eventual overthrow of the Han.⁸¹

78 See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 52.2384.

79 See Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 [*The Grand Scribe's Records*] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 1465. See "The Biographies of the Marquises of Weiqi and Wuan" in Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty*, 2:89–106.

80 See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1395; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 84–85.

81 Ban Gu explained in the "Treatise on the Five Elements [*Wuxing zhi* 五行志]" chapter in the *Hanshu*: "This is a children's ditty from the reign of the Han Emperor Yuan. In the reign of Emperor Cheng, on the day *wuzi* 戊子 of the third month of the year 31 BCE, the well-springs in the north palace gradually rose and overflowed, streaming in a southerly direction. 'Well-water' is the power of *Yin*; 'the hearth' is the power of *Yang*; 'jade halls' and 'golden gates' refer to the residences of royalty. This symbolizes the flourishing of *Yin* and the extinction of *Yang*, and corresponds to the usurpation of the throne. Wang Mang was born in the fourth year of the reign-period Chuyuan 初元 [48–44 BCE] of Emperor Yuan. In Emperor Cheng's reign he was ennobled; he became assistant-in-government to the Three Ministers and then he usurped power." See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1395; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 85–86. Translator's note.

燕燕尾涎涎，	Swallow, swallow, sleek, sleek is your tail!
張公子，	Lord Chang
時相見。	Is always having audience.
木門倉瑯根，	At timbered gates with green bronze rings,
燕飛來，	Swallow flies in,
啄皇孫，	Pecks at princes,
皇孫死，	The princes die,
燕啄矢。 ⁸²	Swallow pecks their dung!

Children's ditty during the reign of Emperor Cheng: This ditty was said to predict the misfortune brought upon the empire by Zhao Feiyan 趙飛燕 [d. 1 BCE], the entertainer who rose to become empress. With her name Feiyan literally meaning "flying swallow", the ditty was seen as a prediction of her rise to power with the acts of regal infanticide that she would be accused of reflected in the lines "pecks at princes, the princes die".⁸³

邪徑敗良田，	Crooked paths ruin fine fields,
讒口亂善人。	Twisted words confuse good folk.
桂樹華不實，	Cassia blooms, but bears no fruit,
黃爵巢其顛。	A yellow sparrow nests in its crown.
故為人所羨，	Once the envy of others,
今為人所憐。 ⁸⁴	Now pitied by all.

Folk ballad during the reign of Emperor Cheng: Another example of folk prediction that Wang Mang would usurp the Han, this ballad was interpreted in

82 See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1395; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 87.

83 Ban Gu's explanation of the meaning behind the ditty given in the "The Treatise on the Five Elements" is translated by Birrell as follows: "This is a children's ditty from the period of Emperor Cheng, Later, when the emperor left the palace incognito on pleasure outings, he was always accompanied by the Marquis of Fuping 富平侯, Zhang Fang 張放, and pretended he was one of the marquis's household. He once called on Princess Yang-a 陽阿主 who used to hold musical performances, and there he saw Zhao Feiyan the dancer and favored her sexually. That is why the ditty says, 'Swallow, swallow, / Sleek, sleek is your tail!' as she was lovely in appearance. 'Lord Zhang' refers to the Marquis of Fuping. 'Timbered gates with green bronze rings' refers to the bronze metal rings on the palace gates, which indicates that Lord Zhang had been elevated to the peerage. Later on, when Zhao Feiyan was promoted to the rank of empress, she brought criminal harm to the imperial heirs. She conceded her guilt, which is alluded to in the lines, 'Swallow flies in, / Pecks at princes, / The princes die, / Swallow pecks their dung!'" See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1395; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 87.

84 See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1396; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 86.

terms of the Five Elements theory in which the cassia tree, which took on the color red and represented the imperial house of Han, was taken up by the yellow sparrow, an allusion to Wang Mang who was said to be governed by the virtue of earth [*tude* 土德] and hence associated with yellow.⁸⁵

出吳門，	Going out the Wu gate,
望緹群。	Gazing up at Mount Tiqun.
見一蹇人，	I see a cripple hobbling past,
言欲上天。	Who says he wants to go to heaven.
令天可上，	If the heavens could be reached,
地上安得人？ ⁸⁶	Why would people stay on earth?

Children's song from Tianshui 天水 during the final years of Wang Mang's rule: This song was interpreted as referring to the downfall of Wei Xiao 隗囂 [d. 33], a high minister under Wang Mang who later joined forces with Gongsun Shu 公孫述 [d. 36] before being defeated by Emperor Guangwu. Said to have suffered from a walking disorder in his youth, Wei Xiao was recorded in later commentaries as harboring thoughts of claiming the empire for himself – reflected above in the line stating that he “wants to go to heaven.”⁸⁷

諧不諧，	Peace or war?
在赤眉。	Red Eyebrows have the final say.
得不得，	Who will be emperor?
在河北。 ⁸⁸	The answer lies up in Hebei.

Children's song from the southern regions during the Gengshi 更始 period [23–25]: Quoted in Li Xian's 李賢 [655–684] commentary of the “Annal of

85 Birrell translates Ban Gu's interpretation of this ballad: “This is a ditty from the period of Emperor Cheng, which also says [text of the song]. The ‘cassia’ tree is red in colour, which is the symbol of the Han house; ‘blooms, but bears no fruit’ means to be without offspring. Wang Mang assumed the symbolic colour yellow, which is indicated by the ‘yellow sparrow’ which ‘nests’ on the ‘crown’ of the tree.” See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 1396; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 86.

86 Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 [*History of the Later Han Dynasty*], comm. Li Xian 李賢 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 53; Lü Zongli, *Rumor in the Early Chinese Empires*, trans. Kek Koon Wee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 222.

87 See the commentary of Li Xian et al in Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 531. Both Wu gate and Mount Tiqun refer to locations around Tianshui, in modern day Gansu. For another English translation and analysis see Lü Zongli, *Rumor in the Early Chinese Empires*, trans., Kek Koon Wee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 222. Translator's note.

88 See Ban Gu, *Hanshu*, 11.

Emperor Guangwu [*Guangwu ji* 光武紀] in the *History of the Later Han*, this song was interpreted as predicting the defeat of the Gengshi Emperor Liu Xuan 劉玄 by the Red Eyebrows and the ascendancy of Emperor Guangwu, who was appointed as a commissioner in Ji province north of the Yellow River during the Gengshi period.⁸⁹

2.7 *Eastern Han Songs and Ditties*

黃牛白腹， Yellow ox's belly's white;
五銖當復。⁹⁰ Restored Five-grainer'd make things right.

Children's song from Shuzhong 蜀中 (present day Sichuan): Traditionally dated to the sixth year of Emperor Guangwu's reign, this rhyme was interpreted as foretelling Emperor Guangwu's victory over Gongsun Shu. References to the colors reflect the Five Element theory with the white (Metal) seen as representing Gongsun Shu and the yellow (Earth) interpreted as alluding to Wang Mang (the succession between the two men thus symbolized as metal overcoming earth). As a coin of the Han imperial house, the "Five-grainer" [*wuzhu* 五銖] was interpreted as referring to Emperor Guangwu, with its return foretelling his victory over Gongsun Shu.⁹¹

直如弦， Straight as a bowstring
死道邊。 You'll die by the wayside!
曲如鉤， Crooked as a hook
反封侯。⁹² You'll be dubbed a duke!

Children's song from Luoyang during the latter stages of Emperor Shun's 漢順帝 [r. 125–144] reign: Interpreted as referring to the period of palace plots and succession schemes following the death of Emperor Shun, this song was seen as foretelling the death of Grand Commandant Li Gu 李固 [94–147], who had supported the candidacy of Liu Suan 劉蒜 [d. 147], and the enfeoffment of Zhao Jie 趙戒 [d. 154] and Hu Guang 胡廣 [91–172], ministers who had at first placed their support with Liu Suan but were eventually persuaded by the

89 Note that "Hebei" here should not be read anachronistically for the modern-day province but rather as a general term for the regions north of the Yellow River.

90 Peng Xinwei 彭信威, *A Monetary History of China, Volumes One and Two*, trans. Edward H. Kaplan (Bellingham: East Asian Studies Press, 1993), 114. Translator's note.

91 See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3281; Peng Xinwei, *A Monetary History of China, Volumes One and Two*, 114.

92 Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 91. Translator's note.

brother of the Empress Dowager Liang Ji 梁冀 [98–159] to support the accession of the future Emperor Huan. Li Gu's support for Liu Suan eventually led to his imprisonment and death, with his body placed by the roadside as a warning to others.⁹³

城上烏，	Crows on city walls,
尾畢逋。	Tails down in retreat.
公為吏，	Father became an officer,
子為徒。	Son became a conscript.
.....	...
梁下有懸鼓，	Under the rafter there is a hanging drum,
我欲擊之丞	I want to strike it, but the minister will be angry.
卿怒。 ⁹⁴	

Children's song during the early years of Emperor Huan's reign: Interpreted within the context of the social upheaval caused by war and the greed of Emperor Ling's 靈帝 [r. 168–189] mother, Dowager Dong 董太后 [d. 189], this song was said to predict many of the political events that occurred throughout the reigns of Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling.⁹⁵

白蓋小車何	Countless white carriages a-coming.
延延。	
河間來合諧，	Peace – He will come from Hejian,
河間來合諧。 ⁹⁶	Peace – He will come from Hejian.

Children's song from Luoyang during the last years of Emperor Huan's reign: This song was said to foretell the death of Emperor Huan and the factional struggles that followed the accession of his successor Emperor Ling.⁹⁷

93 The actions of Zhao Jie and Hu Guang were seen as “crooked” by later historians with Fan Ye likening them both to excrement [猶糞土也], See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3281.

94 Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 93. Translator's note.

95 See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3281–82; Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 93–94.

96 Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3283–84.

97 As Emperor Huan had left behind no heir, a conference was held to determine his successor by the then empress dowager Dou Miao 竇妙 [d. 172] with all participants eventually agreeing to the proposal of the imperial clerk Liu Shu 劉儵 [d. 168] to have Liu Hong 劉宏 [156–189], the marquis of Jiedu Village 解犢亭 in Hejian take the throne. The “white carriages” in the song were interpreted as the royal procession taking Liu Hong to the capital. In the year of factional struggles that followed Emperor Ling's accession, Liu Shu was driven to death by the eunuch Hou Lan 侯覽 [d. 172] who was jealous of his potential influence with the young emperor. Mourning the death of his friend, the emperor

承樂世，董逃。	Born into a happy world, Dong flees!
遊四郭，董逃。	Roving through the city's four quarters, Dong flees!
蒙天恩，董逃。	Enjoying blessings from Heaven, Dong flees!
帶金紫，董逃。	Girdled with gold dark red, Dong flees!
行謝恩，董逃。	Showing his gratitude, Dong flees!
整車騎，董逃。	Preparing carriage and riders, Dong flees!
垂欲發，董逃。	Soon to set off, Dong flees!
與中辭，董逃。	To the main house bids farewell, Dong flees!
出西門，董逃。	Leaving West Gate, Dong flees!
瞻宮殿，董逃。	Staring at the palace, Dong flees!
望京城，董逃。	Staring at the capital city, Dong flees!
日夜絕，董逃。	The sun dying at night, Dong flees!
心摧傷，董逃。 ⁹⁸	Heart broken with sorrow, Dong flees!

Dong Flees song from Luoyang during the reign of Emperor Ling: Interpreted in the context of Dong Zhuo's 董卓 [d. 192] palace coup in 189 and his tyrannical control over Luoyang and then Chang'an, this song was seen as a prediction of his death and the massacre of his family.

千里草，	Grass nurtured over dale,
何青青，	A sea of green.
十日卜，	Omens under horizon's zenith,
不得生。 ⁹⁹	Dead human being.

Children's song from Luoyang during the first years of Emperor Xian's 漢獻帝 [r. 189–220] reign: This short song was said to foretell the rise and fall of Dong Zhuo through a play on the characters of his name. Similar to the reverse acronym on Dong Zhuo's name given in lines one and three above, the Chinese characters used in these lines would, when placed on top of each other, form Dong Zhuo's name [Line one: 千里草 = 董; line three: 十日卜 = 卓]. While stroke order norms dictate that characters should be written from top to bottom and left to right, these two lines of split up characters were deliberately

arranged for Liu Shu's brother Liu He 劉郃 [d. 179] to come from Hejian to the capital and take on an official position as an Excellency. The line "Peace – He will come from Hejian" was said to allude to Liu He's arrival, with his name "He 郃" also punning with the word for "peace and harmony" [*hexie* 合諧/和諧]. See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3283–84.

98 See Birrell, *Popular Songs and Ballads of Han China*, 95.

99 See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3285.

given from bottom to top to reflect that Dong Zhuo, in usurping control from the emperor, would turn cosmic order on its head.¹⁰⁰

From this overview of *chenwei* content in lyrical poetry and songs during the Han dynasty, the use of *chenwei* concepts can be seen in lyrical poetry written by emperors, in *yuefu* poetry and zither songs, as well as in popular songs and ditties of the common populace. *Chenwei* themes in the poetry of emperors and extant *yuefu* and zither song lyrics tend to be rather homogenous in their universal glorification of the Han, using a range of omens, signs and portents to celebrate the receiving of the mandate and the virtuous accord between the dynasty and the cosmos. In contrast, popular songs and ditties were more likely to use *chenwei* concepts as expressions of satire and irony, with the genuine sentiment found in these songs closely associated with the social and lived realities of the times in which they were written.

3 *Chenwei* Resonances in Han Dynasty Literary Thought

Within the fragments of *chenwei* writings extant today, there are some lines and passages that can be seen as referring to ideas concerning literary thought. These fragments touch upon ideas around artistic modes of thought, theories surrounding the production and function of literature, the place of *xingqing* 性情 [feelings] in literature, as well as theories expounding the influence of geography and environment on art and culture. For a preliminary overview of the *chenwei* influences on these theories see this author's article on "Literary Theories in Extant *Chenwei* Writings [*Chenwei yiwen de wenyi guannian* 識緯佚文的文藝觀念]". This section will focus on theories regarding the generation and use of literature in an attempt to uncover the connections between Han literary thought and the literary theories implicit within Han dynasty *chenwei* texts.

3.1 *Orthodox and Apocryphal Theories regarding the Production of Poetry and Music*

Two of the earliest and most influential texts regarding the generation of literature and music are the "Great Preface" to the *Mao Tradition of the Shijing* [*Mao*

100 See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu*, 3285. A more faithful rendition of the translation is given by Timothy Wai Keung Chan: "A thousand *li* of grass – How green, so green. The divination on the tenth reads: It will not live." See Timothy Wai Keung Chan, "A New Reading of an Early Medieval Riddle: 'Utterly Wonderful, Lovely Words?'" *T'oung Pao* 99, 1–3 (2013): 68.

Shi da xu 毛詩大序] and the introduction to the “Record of Music [Yueji 樂記]” chapter in the *Book of Rites* [Liji 禮記]:

The poem is that to which what is intently on the mind [zhi 志] goes. In the mind [xin 心] it is “being intent” [zhi]; coming out in language [yan 言], it is a poem. The affections [qing 情] are stirred within and take on form [xing 形] in words [yan].¹⁰¹

From the “Great Preface”

All tones [yin 音] that arise are generated from the human mind [xin]. When the human mind is moved [dong 動], some external thing [wu 物] has caused it. Stirred [gan 感] by external things into movement, it takes on form [xing] in sound ... Music originates in tone. Its root [ben 本] lies in the human mind’s being stirred [gan] by external things.¹⁰²

From the “Record of Music”

Both the “Great Preface” and the “Record of Music” highlight the pivotal role played by the mind (affections and intent) in the relationship between the external world of things, the mind and poetry (or music). At the same time, these works also expound on the socio-political (or external world) causes behind these affections and intentions:

The tones of a well-managed age are at rest and happy; its government is balanced. The tones of an age of turmoil are bitter and full of anger; its government is perverse. The tones of a ruined state are filled with lament and brooding; its people are in difficulty.¹⁰³

Recorded in both the “Great Preface” and the “Record of Music”

When the royal Way declined rites and moral principles [yi 義] were abandoned; the power of government to teach failed; the government of the states changed; the customs of the family were altered. And at this point the mutated [bian 變] feng 風 [Airs of the States] and the mutated ya 雅 [Odes] were written.¹⁰⁴

From the “Great Preface”

101 Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese Literary Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, 1992), 40–41.

102 Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 51.

103 Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 43.

104 Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 47.

A human being is born calm: this is his innate nature [*xing* 性] endowed by Heaven. To be stirred by external things and set in motion is desire occurring within that innate nature. Only after things encounter conscious knowledge do likes and dislike take shape [*xing* 形].¹⁰⁵

From the “Record of Music”

The ideas in the “Great Preface” and the “Record of Music” have been summarized by many scholars as a manifestation of the theory that external things stir the mind [*wugan shuo* 物感說]. However, this article argues that, while these passages are certainly referring to the mind as being stirred by external things, their emphasis is not on the effect that external things have on the mind, but rather the role of the mind in being stirred by the external world. This can be seen in the “Great Preface”, in the lines directly after the section quoted above on the tones of the well-ordered and ruined state:

Thus to correct [*zheng* 正] (the presentation of) achievements [*de* 得] and failures, to move Heaven and Earth, to stir the gods and spirits, there is nothing more apposite than poetry. By it the former kings managed the relations between husbands and wives, perfected the respect due to parents and superiors, gave depth to human relations, beautifully taught and transformed the people, and changed local customs.¹⁰⁶

The focus of the “Great Preface” here is clearly to highlight the political, didactic and transformational role that poetry itself plays, with particular emphasis on the educational functions of the *Shijing*. This is the reason why the “Great Preface” states the principle that poems should “emerge from affections [*qing*], but go no further than rites and moral principles,” requiring that poetry, which is imbued with political and educational functions, must itself be proper and correct. This is expressed even more clearly in the “Record of Music”.

Music originates from tone. Its root [*ben*] lies in the human mind’s being stirred [*gan*] by external things. Thus, when a mind that is miserable is stirred, its sound is vexed and anxious. When a mind that is happy is stirred, its sound is relaxed and leisurely. When a mind that is delighted is stirred, its sound pours out and scatters. When a wrathful mind is stirred, its sound is crude and harsh. When a respectful mind is stirred, its sound

¹⁰⁵ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 53.

¹⁰⁶ Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 45.

is upright and pure. When a dotting mind is stirred, its sound is agreeable and yielding.¹⁰⁷

It is clear that what the “Record of Music” is emphasizing is not the act of an external thing moving the mind, but rather that the mind is being stirred by the external world. The nature and meaning of music are not determined by external things, but by one’s mind. It is through being stirred that the mind embodies music with form and meaning. This is why the “Record of Music” only acknowledges the music of the former kings and rejects all other rich and varied kinds of music (not just the “licentious” music of Zheng 鄭 and Wei 衛):

The airs of Zheng go to a wild excess, and debauch the mind; those of Song 宋 tell of slothful indulgence and women, and drown the mind; those of Wei are vehement and rapid, and perplex the mind; and those of Qi 齊 are violent and depraved, and make the mind arrogant. The airs of those four states all stimulate libidinous desire, and are injurious to virtue.¹⁰⁸

Chenwei passages dealing with the generation of literature and music also emphasize the importance of emotions and intent:

Poetry is the essence of Heaven and Earth, the orbit of the stars and planets and moral integrity of men. When it is about affairs it becomes poetry. When it is incipient, it is contemplation. When it is in equilibrium, it is the mind. When it is in thinking, it is intent. Therefore, poetry is that which articulates what is on the mind intently.¹⁰⁹

Chunqiu: Explications of Words in Titles [*Chunqiu shuo tici* 春秋說題辭]

After the poet is stirred, he begins to reflect. Reflecting, their thoughts are gathered. Their thoughts gathered, they become full to brimming.

107 Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 51.

108 Legge, *The Li Ki*, 118–19. For a detailed analysis see Zhang Fengyi 張峰屹, *Xi Han wenxue sixiang shi* 西漢文學思想史 [*History of Literary Thought During the Western Han*] (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 2013), 172–75.

109 This line and the following *chenwei* lines and passages have been taken from Yasui Kōzan 安居香 and Nakamura Shōhachi 中村璋八, ed., *Weishu jicheng* 緯書集成 [*Complete Collection of Wei Texts*] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1994), 856. It should be noted that some entries in this collection have been erroneously edited, given out of order or entered with typographical errors. This article has verified the original sources and changed these entries in instances where errors were made.

Brimming, they begin to compose. If words alone are inadequate, they speak them out in sighs. If sighing is inadequate, they sing them. If singing is inadequate, unconsciously their hands dance them and their feet tap them.¹¹⁰

The Classic of Music: Motion and Principles of Sound [Yue dong sheng yi 樂動聲儀]

Music is something that flourishes in harmony internally before finding expression externally. Responding to the age in which it is expressed, the ruler institutes ritual and composes music to perfect the age. For this reason, those who compose music must return to what first brought joy to the people of the world and take this as their root. In the time of Emperor Shun, the people rejoiced in the manner in which he continued [*shao* 紹] the undertakings of Yao. Therefore *Shao* 韶 means to continue. In the time of Emperor Yu 禹, the people greatly rejoiced in the mutual succession of the Three Sages. Therefore *Xia* 夏 means grand. In the time of Emperor Tang 湯, the people rejoiced in being rescued from distress and injury. Therefore *Hu* 濩 means to rescue. In the time of King Wen, the people rejoiced when he raised troops and carried out a punitive attack [against the Shang]. Therefore *Wu* 武 means to attack. These four rulers were the same in that the world uniformly rejoiced in them, but the reason why the people uniformly rejoiced in their rule differed.¹¹¹

Spring and Autumn Annals: Germ of the Primordial Mandate [Chunqiu yuan ming bao 春秋元命苞]

[Music is made through] examining the workings of the way of Heaven and Earth, bringing the sentiment of the living and spirits into accord, expressing it through the male and female pitchpipes, measuring it through the [harmony] of the *yin* and *yang*, displaying it through the order of all under Heaven, and releasing it through tones and sounds.¹¹²

The Classic of Music: Harmonization and Verification of Diagrams [Yue xie tu zheng 樂叶圖徵]

110 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 544. Second half of the translation taken from Owen, *Chinese Literary Thought*, 41.

111 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 617. The terms *Shao*, *Xia*, *Hu* and *Wu* refer to music composed during the reigns of the respective rulers. This paragraph is almost identical to a passage in the “King Zhuang of Chu [Chu Zhuang wang 楚莊王]” chapter in the *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* [Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露] and the majority of the above translation has, therefore, been taken from Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, trans., *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 77.

112 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 562.

In terms of the generation of poetry, the first two passages above both express an understanding that poetry is the sung expression of emotions and intent (seen in lines such as “poetry is that which articulates what is on the mind intently” in the *Chunqiu shuo tici* and in the description of poetry composition resulting from the gathering of reflections in the *Yue dong sheng yi*). The second two passages express similar ideas, namely that music is the expression of emotions and intent through tones (especially the lines “flourishes in harmony internally before finding expression externally” in the *Chunqiu yuan ming bao* and “bringing the sentiment of the living and spirits into accord, expressing it through the male and female pitchpipes” in the *Yue xie tu zheng*). From these lines it is apparent that *chenwei* texts understood emotions and intent to be one of the sources of poetry and music, or that emotion and intent were the direct source of poetry and music.

Yet, from where did such emotion and intent emerge? All four of the above passages suggest that this emotion and intent was brought about through being stirred by the external world. This can be seen in the definition of poetry in the *Chunqiu shuo tici*, which correlates “the essence of Heaven and Earth” with the “moral integrity of men”; in the first lines of the *Yue dong sheng yi* where it notes that “after the poet is stirred, he begins to reflect”; in the way that the *Chunqiu yuan ming bao* explains the music of ancient times as arising because people delighted in the governance of their sage rulers; and in the way the *Yue xie tu zheng* places “examining the workings of the way of Heaven and Earth” before “bringing the sentiment of the living and spirits into accord”. All four texts are, in essence, suggesting that the reflection which leads to poetry is brought about through being stirred by the external world. However, it would not be accurate to generalize these ideas under the umbrella of the *wugan shuo* theory that external things stir the mind. To fully understand the relationship between the mind and the external world expressed within *chenwei* texts, other important factors need to be taken into account:

All changes in the heavens are the result of being stirred by the affairs of men. Therefore, when a spirit of rebellion is manifest [in the actions of men], the baleful star appears.¹¹³

Chunqiu yuan ming bao

Man is in harmony with the cosmos, the five elements and the *yin* and *yang*. Extreme *yin* returns to *yang*, extreme *yang* returns to *yin*. Calamitous disasters occur in response to the actions of men, they are stirred by

113 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 654.

them. Emergence, response and change [in the cosmos] is either in compliance with, or in opposition to, the various minds of men.¹¹⁴

Spring and Autumn Annals: Tallies of Bestirred Essences [Chunqiu gan jing fu 春秋感精符]

Deviation in the *yang* is called up by the resentment of the people, it is stirred by them.¹¹⁵

Spring and Autumn Annals: Investigations of Deviations and Abnormalities [Chunqiu kao yi you 春秋考異郵]

Here it is clear that the concept of the resonance between the cosmic order and human affairs is first and foremost centered on the world of men. Describing changes in the heavens as “the result of being stirred by the affairs of men” illustrates that these *chenwei* texts understood human affairs to be the cause of both natural calamities and auspicious occurrences. The many *chenwei* passages expressing the idea that the authority and influence of a ruler is reflected in the disasters and auspicious events that occur during their reign is another example of this interpretation. When describing the resonance between the cosmic and terrestrial realms, *chenwei* texts are more likely to give priority to the stirring effect that man has on the cosmos, and then use this focus as their main method and approach to discussing politics and governance. When this interpretation is applied to theories surrounding the origin of poetry and music, *chenwei* discussions on the resonance between the mind and external things tend to emphasize the stirring role that the mind has on the external world. This is in keeping with both the “Great Preface” and the “Record of Music”.

3.2 *Chenwei Resonances in Theories on the Function of Literature and Music*

In regard to the function of literature and music, it is well known that Han dynasty literary thought, which was closely connected with classical

114 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 789.

115 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 744. Titles of apocryphal *wei* texts are notoriously difficult to make sense of. This translation has followed the reading by Sun Jue 孫穀 in the Ancient Mysterious Writings [*Gu weishu* 古微書] which reads *you* 郵 as referring to *you* 尤. As Liu Ming 劉明 notes, this corresponds with the *Discussing Writing and Explaining Characters* [*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字] interpretation of *you* 尤 as *yi* 異 [abnormality, deviation]. See Liu Ming 劉明, “Handai Chunqiu wei yanjiu 漢代初秋緯研究 [Research on Han dynasty *Wei* Texts Associated with the Spring and Autumn Annals]” (PhD. diss., Hebei Normal University, 2010), 53.

scholarship, emphasized their didactic nature. This understanding is also upheld in *chenwei* texts, with lines describing the function of poetry similarly focusing on moral instruction:

Poetry means “to hold”. To use one’s hands to support. It has the meaning of carrying and bearing [*chengfu* 承負],¹¹⁶ that is, to support with hands from below and carry in the arms.

When used to teach goodness and sincerity, [poetry can] hold up one’s own mind. When used as a means of criticism and moral suasion, [poetry] can support the state.¹¹⁷

Shijing: The Engulfing Holy Mist [*Shi han shen wu* 詩含神霧]

The Odes are used to govern while social morals are brought about through the Eulogies [*Song* 頌].¹¹⁸

Yue dong sheng yi

The ruler was not upright and neglected the affairs of the state, thus the “Crying Ospreys [*Guanju* 關雎]” was sung to stir them.¹¹⁹

Spring and Autumn Annals: Movement of the Big Dipper [*Chunqiu yundou shu* 春秋運斗樞]

The Jade Transverse [*Yuheng xing* 玉衡星] falls to become a corus [*changpu* 菖蒲]. When the ruler is far from the Odes and Eulogies and prefers vulgar music and entertainment then the Jade Transverse darkens and the crown of the corus forms into the shape of a ring.

The Jade Transverse falls to become a black kite [*chi* 鴟]. When the ruler is far from the Odes and Eulogies and prefers vulgar music and

116 In later texts such as the *Scripture of Great Peace* [*Taiping jing* 太平經], *chengfu* is an important concept that takes on a meaning of something akin to inherited evil. As the above quote is the first usage of this term known to exist, it is difficult to determine if such meanings are meant here. Given that, as noted by Hendrichske, Kamitsuka Yoshiko has argued that *chengfu* should be understood in relation to theories regarding the origin of disasters, it seems likely that some of the term’s later meanings are intended here. See Barbara Hendrichske, “The Concept of Inherited Evil in the *Taiping Jing*,” *East Asian History* 2 (1991): 25; and Yuet-Keung Lo, “Destiny and Retribution in Early Medieval China,” in *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*, eds. Alan K.L. Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 322.

117 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 464.

118 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 543.

119 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 857.

entertainment then roosters grow five legs and are transformed into rabbits.¹²⁰

Chunqiu yundou shu

The didactic nature of poetry is clearly seen throughout these passages. In defining the meaning of poetry as “to hold”, the *Shi han shen wu* expresses poetry as a vehicle that “carries” the praise and criticism of moral instruction at both an individual and political level. The lines in the *Yue dong sheng yi* and *Shi han shen wu* expound further on the political role of poetry with the former highlighting poetry’s role in good governance and the latter interpreting the “Guanju” as a poem to criticize an immoral ruler. The connection between good governance and poetry is again seen in the *Chunqiu yundou shu* example, a warning to rulers that forsaking the *Shijing* for “vulgar music and entertainment” will lead to numerous inauspicious and unusual occurrences.

This didactic function is seen even more clearly in *chenwei* understandings of music.

King Wen saw that the rites were in disarray, that music had collapsed and that no one was following the way. Thus he established the three hundred rules of the *Classic of Rites* [*Lijing* 禮經] and the three thousand rules of demeanor.

Confucius said to Zixia 子夏: “Music is used for internal cultivation; the rites are used for external cultivation.”¹²¹

The Rites: Examinations of the Omens of the Mandate [*Li ji ming zheng* 禮稽命徵]

[The ancient sage rulers] established rites and music to transform mores and customs and to bring about auspicious winds and timely rain and dew so that their people may receive the blessings of the lord in heaven. When the sages composed music they were guided by the five *yuan* 元¹²² and the five planets. They took virtue as what was proper and rules and regulations as a means of leading the people. They appointed the worthy and dismissed the clever talkers.

Music transforms mores and changes customs.¹²³

Yue dong sheng yi

120 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 716.

121 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 507.

122 These are recorded in the *Taiping yulan* as the *shang yuan zhe* 上元者 [related to the celestial realm], *xia yuan zhe* 下元者 [related to the earthly realm], *zhong yuan zhe* 中元者 [related to the realm of men], *shi yuan zhe* 時元者 [related to the seasons], *feng yuan zhe* 風元者 [related to the wind/customs]. See Li Fang, *Taiping yulan*, 565:2552.

123 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 538.

Music was established to prevent excess and regulate excessive expressions of emotions.¹²⁴

The Classic of Music: Examination of Glorious Blessings [Yue ji yao jia 樂稽耀嘉]

The former kings established music to regulate all matters and affairs.¹²⁵

Ye xie tu zheng

When discussing the primary purpose and rationale behind the establishment of music and rites, these *chenwei* passages highlight their didactic functions. The also relate the way in which music reflected the political reality of a state:

When *gong* 宮 takes the lead melody and *shang* 商 is the harmony, this is called goodness. It is the music of a state in great peace. When *jue* 角 takes the lead and *gong* follows, this is called sorrow. It is the music of a decaying state. When *yu* 羽 takes the lead and *gong* follows, this is called anguish. It is the music of a ruined state.¹²⁶

Yue dong sheng yi

When tones lose their proper sound, the state is led to ruin. When the *shang* tone is off key, it is because immoral officials have not been managed. When the *jue* tone rings with melancholy, it is because the ruler has abused his people and they hold resentment. When the *zhi* 徵 tone is sorrowful and bitter, it is because the ruler is debauched and many decrees have been issued which have left the people feeling weary. When the *yu* tone is unstable, it is because the state is falling into crisis.¹²⁷

The Apocrypha of Music [Yue wei 樂緯]

However, if a ruler is to rule with benevolence and if their state abounds in peace and harmony, then rites and music are established to praise their deeds.

Confucius said: The “Xiaoshao 箫韶” music has been passed down from the time of Shun. It is mild and gentle in its harmony, as if it was a warm southern breeze.¹²⁸

Yue dong sheng yi

124 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 548.

125 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 558.

126 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 543.

127 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 566.

128 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 540.

Duke Wen of Zhou 周公 handed over power of the state to King Cheng when all under heaven was at peace and proceeded to establish rites and music, which led to phoenixes flying in the courtyard. King Cheng picked up his zither and began to sing, “Phoenixes fly in the royal courtyard, what is the virtue that I possess to attract such auspicious spirits? By the grace of the benevolence of former kings, all rejoice and the people are at peace.”¹²⁹

Book of Documents: Accurate Observations [Shangshu zhong hou 尚書中候]

These examples of *chenwei* understandings regarding poetry and music are, in essence, all pointing to the didactic way in which they were used. This is consistent with popular conceptions of the didactic nature of art and literature during the Han dynasty.

This article has given an overview of the influence that *chenwei* ideas and beliefs had on Han dynasty literature and the way in which these ideas and beliefs integrated with Han literary thought. Why did *chenwei* have such a powerful influence on Han dynasty literature? Simply stated, such influence was brought about by the very nature of *chenwei* in combination with the status of literature during the Han dynasty. As a political cultural movement associated with classical scholarship, *chenwei* would inevitably become highly integrated with Han dynasty literature and literary thought which themselves were also used in the service of politics and classical scholarship. At the same time, concepts inherent to *chenwei* ideas such as the resonance between the cosmic and terrestrial realms – in addition to its propensity for imaginative thinking – were, in their very nature, highly conducive to literature and art. This, coupled with a Han dynasty intellectual environment in which history, culture and philosophy were not differentiated, provided the important framework for the seamless integration between *chenwei* ideas and literature.

Translated by Michael Broughton

129 Yasui Kōzan and Nakamura Shōhachi, *Weishu jicheng*, 540. Zhang Jiazi 張甲子 argues that the *zhong hou* 中候 in the title of this text does not refer to the official government position sometimes translated as “Watch Officer” and that this term should be read as two separate words. See Zhang Jiazi 張甲子, “Shangshu zhong hou tiyi kao 尚書中候題意考 [On the title of the Shangshu zhong hou],” *Henan keji daxue xuebao* 河南科技大學學報, no. 3 (2010): 14–17. This translation of *zhong hou* has been taken from Grégoire Espeset, “Epiphanies of Sovereignty and the Rite of Jade Disc Immersion in Weft Narratives,” *Early China* 37 (2014): 413.

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