CONFUCIAN CLASSICAL STUDIES

The most dramatic turning point in traditional Chinese history was probably the reunification of the empire by the Ch’in state in 221 BCE, after over half a millennium of political fragmentation. During the era of disunity, the disorderly diversity of society had contributed to a view of certain texts as anchors of value: guideposts from a unified past that could serve the uncertain present to find its way back to stability. In pre-Ch’in historical texts and the texts of the early philosophical masters (referred to as chu-tzu 諸子) we see two such texts repeatedly cited as authoritative: the Shih ching 詩經 (Book of poetry) and Shang shu 尚書 (Documents). Many variant citations tell us that the specific contents of these two texts were not yet fully fixed, but it is clear that they enjoyed the type of authoritative status we call “canonical.” By the end of the “Classical” pre-Ch’in era, some works, particularly those associated with the rising movement of Confucianism (such as the Hsun Tzu 荀子), sometimes refer to (but not specifically cite) other texts in similar ways, for example, the Chou yi 周易 (Chou book of changes), and the Chun-ch’iu 春秋 (Spring and Autumn annals).

The policy of the Ch’in towards intellectual texts seems to have had two somewhat contradictory elements. On one hand, the government appointed “erudites” (po-shih 博士) of many intellectual persuasions, including Confucians, to be stewards of all knowledge on behalf of the court. They were apparently charged to collect and classify all written works so that the Ch’in rulers would have unparalleled access to wisdom. However, in 213 BCE, as the result of a court debate in which Confucians proposed a return to the Chou system of government, the Confucian-trained Legalist Prime Minister, Li Ssu 李斯, recommended the confiscation of virtually all books in private hands, complementing the court’s encyclopaedic possession of written knowledge with a policy of proscription against text possession by anyone else. The unfortunate consequence was that when the Ch’in fell in 208 and Hsiang Yü 項羽, the leading contender to establish a new dynasty, ordered his armies to set fire to the Imperial archives, many – perhaps most – of the revered texts of the past went up in smoke.

The dynasty that ultimately succeeded the Ch’in, the Han, was established by Liu Pang 劉邦, a man who held Confucians in contempt, and the book proscription was not lifted until after his death in 195 BCE. As a consequence, there existed a sharp two-decade gap in the free circulation of ancient texts. Confucians, largely excluded from early Han governance, set to work on project to recover those lost texts of the past that had been revered by their Warring States predecessors, a task they pursued through a combination of careful reconstruction and imaginative forgery. What emerged was the growth of teaching lineages focused on five canonical texts. These became “The Five Confucian Classics”: the Wu ching 五經 (a sixth, the Yueh ching 樂經, or “Classic of Music,” is named in some early sources, but may never have had a text associated with it, and dropped out of later lists of classics). In the mid-second century BCE the Han court restored the position of erudites and included Confucians among them. By 135, these positions had been reserved for Confucians alone, and erudite positions were exclusively allocated to masters of major,
authorized *Wu jing* teaching traditions. In this sense, the Confucianism of the midpoint of the Former Han Dynasty was very much a school of the Five Classics.

Over the remainder of the Han era, debates over which specific text editions and interpretations of these books should be authorized by the court preoccupied Confucian intellectual work and launched a branch of intellectual endeavor that came to be known as *ching-hsueh* 經學: classical studies. In later eras, Confucians augmented the canon by including other texts viewed as authoritative: T’ang era scholars formulated a body of nine classics, Sung Neo-Confucians included a list of thirteen. The great Neo-Confucian Chu Hsi 朱熹 added a distinct list, combining two of the Thirteen Classics with two chapters of extracted from the *Li-chi* 禮記 to create a sub-canon known as the *ssu-shu* 四書: “The Four Books.” The term *ching-hsueh* may include all of the texts in all these lists.

This reading includes the following sections:

I. Canon formulations
II. The Thirteen Classics and Four Books
III. Index and Concordance Editions
IV. The “New Text” and “Old Text” School Controversies
V. Online Searchable Databases for the Classics

### I. Canon formulations

Here is an inventory of the major formulations of the Classical canon:

#### a. *Wu ching* 五經 (Five Classics):

- *Shih ching* 詩經 (Book of Poetry)
- *Shu ching* 書經 (Book of Documents / Book of History)
- *Yi ching* 易經 (Book of Changes)
- *Li-chi* 禮記 (Book of Rites)
- *Ch’un-ch’iu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals)

The *Poetry* is also known as the *Mao shih* 毛詩, or simply as the *Shih*; the *Documents* as the *Shang-shu* 尚書 or as the *Shu*; the *Changes* as the *Chou yi* 周易 or the *Yi*; and the *Rites* as the *Hstiao-Tai Li-chi* 小戴禮記.

#### b. *Liu yi* 六藝 (Six Arts):

This formulation adds the *Yueh* 樂 (Music), now lost. It is unknown whether the *Yueh* was a written classic or simply a musical tradition.
c. Chiu ching 九經 (Nine Classics):

These include the Shih, Shu, and Yi, plus:

the “San li” 三禮:

Li-chi 禮記
Chou li 周禮 (“Rituals of the Chou”; originally titled Chou kuan 周官: “Offices of the Chou”; the name change was initiated by Liu Hsin 劉歆)
Yi-li 儀禮 (“Book of Ceremonials”)

and the “San chuan” 三傳, the Ch‘un-ch‘iu in three commentary presentations:

Kung-yang chuan 公羊傳 (“Mr. Kung-yang’s Tradition”)
Ku-liang chuan 穀梁傳 (“Mr. Ku-liang’s Tradition”)
Tso chuan 左傳 (“Mr. Tso’s Tradition”)

d. Shih-san ching 十三經 (Thirteen Classics):

Including the “Nine Classics” plus:

Hsiao ching 孝經 (“Classic of Filial Piety”)
Erh-ya 尔雅 (an early Han word book)
Lun-yü 論語 (“The Analects of Confucius”)
Meng Tzu 孟子 (“The Mencius”)

e. Ssu shu 四書 (The Four Books):

Includes the Lun-yü and Meng Tzu, plus:

Ta hsueh 大學 (“The Great Learning”)
Chung- yung 中庸 (“The Doctrine of the Mean”)

[These last two are chapters of the Li-chi extracted by Chu Hsi 朱熹 during the twelfth century in order to stress their importance.]
Editions, commentaries, translations, indexes, and studies (a very short list)

Classical studies in China is an enormous field. The most extensive single bibliography, covering Chinese language materials 1912-87, is Lin Ch’ing-chang 林慶彰, ed., Ching-hsueh yen-chiu lun-chu mu-lu 經學研究論著目錄, 2 vols., Taipei: Han-hsueh yen-chiu chung-hsin, 1989. During the Ch’ing period, the finest Classical scholarship from the Han-hsueh movement was collected in the Huang-Ch’ing ching-chieh 皇清經解 series [O.C. PL 2461 Z6 J8 20 vols.; the Hsu-pien 續編, another 20 vols., share the same call number, plus “Suppl.”]. The most important traditional commentaries are listed in Morohashi and Chung-wen ta tzu-tien ts’an-k’ao sections of the relevant entries (the Morohashi page numbers are given below). In addition, Harvard-Yenching and Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) Concordance Series numbers are noted.

The best English language overview of the Classics is:


II. The Thirteen Classics and Four Books

A. The Thirteen Classics

1. Shih ching 詩經

The Shih is a collection of poems probably compiled about the seventh century BCE. Many of the poems were most likely written much earlier, but some clearly were not. The 305 poems are divided into four sections:

Kuo-feng 國風 (Odes of the States)
Ta-ya 大雅 (Greater Court Poems)
Hsiao-ya 小雅 (Lesser Court Poems)
Sung 頌 (Sacrificial Odes).

The basic commentary for the Shih is the Mao-shih cheng-yi 毛詩正義, which includes the earliest glosses by Mao Heng 毛亨 and Mao Ch’ang 毛萇 of the Han, and commentaries by Cheng Hsuan 鄭玄 (127- 200) and K’ung Ying-ta 孔穎達 (574-648). Chu Hsi’s Shih ching chi-chuan 集傳 has also been influential.

There are dozens of good modern commentaries; among these are Shih ching t’ung-shih 詩經通釋, by Wang Ching-chih 王靜芝 [O.C. PL 2466 .Z6 W2], Shih ching shih-yi 詩經釋義, by Chun Wan-li 屈萬里 [O.C. PL 2466 .Z6 C83 1961], and Shih-ching chih-chieh 詩經直解, by Ch’en
Tzu-chan 陳子展 [O.C. PL 2466 .Z6 C513 1983], although none should be considered authoritative. (An edition that appears very accessible is Shih ching chien-shang 詩經鑑賞, by Chou Hsiao-t’ien 周嘯天 [O.C. PL 2466 .Z7 S45 1994].)

By far the most scholarly translation in English has been done by Bernhard Karlgren, whose translations and glosses of each section of text were published as issues of the annual The Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (BMFEA) in 1942, 1944, and 1946; reprinted in a separate volume as: The Book of Odes (Stockholm: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, 1950) [PL 2478 .F5 1950]. Arthur Waley’s translations (The Book of Songs [New York: Grove Press, 1960] (PL 2478 .F9 1960)) are clear and elegant.

The most extensive modern study of the Shih is Shikyōshohen no seiritsu ni kan suru kenkyū 詩經諸篇の成立に関する研究, by Matsumoto Masaaki 松本雅明 (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunken, 1958), which builds on the highly original study by Marcel Granet, Festivals and Songs of Ancient China (New York: 1932) [DS 719 .G72 1932]. Both studies use unusual interpretive methods, and should be used with caution (a coded phrase generally warning readers to dismiss the scholarship, but in this case just suggesting that the stimulating scholarship need not be followed over cliff’s edge).

Concordances: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #9; ICS, #29 [not held by IU]
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 6, p. 813

2. Shu ching 書經

The Shu is a collection of political texts, purporting to date from pre-Shang times through the early Chou. The actual dates of the various chapters are much disputed (see Herrlee Creel, The Origins of Statecraft in China. Chicago: 1970, pp. 447-63 for one briefly stated analysis). There are two versions of the text. One, known as the Chin-wen Shang-shu 今文尚書 includes only chapters current during the early Han. The other, Ku-wen 古文 Shang-shu, includes chapters supposedly unearthed during the Han; these are, in fact, forgeries by the Six Dynasties scholar Mei Tse 梅瑺 (c.290- c.360?) (see the discussion on Old and New Text Schools below).

The most ancient extant commentaries to the Shu date from the Han, with the commentary of K’ung An-kuo 孔安國 the most important. K’ung was the “discoveror” of an original “old text” version of the Shu, which was later lost. Mei’s forgery was largely based on K’ung’s preserved commentaries. The most authoritative traditional commentary was considered to be that of Ts’ai Ch’en 蔡沉, a student of Chu Hsi. Ts’ai’s commentary reflects the understanding of the Shu which prevailed for many centuries. Ch’ing scholarship, however, greatly advanced the understanding of the Shu because of the increased ability to use epigraphical materials to interpret the archaisms of the text, and to address issues of authenticity. Because the Shu is, basically, an enormously problematic text, no single commentary may be considered adequate.

For practical use, several modern editions of the Shu help make it accessible. The most basic is published by the San-min shu-chü in Taiwan, Wu Yü 吳虞, Shang shu tu-pen 尚書讀本. San-min
editions, if available, are generally the easiest route to learning the classics. They include *chu-yin fu-hao* phonetic notation and *pai-hua* translation, and the notes are geared to Taiwan high school level students. The interpretations are rarely erudite, but the notes are well informed by traditional sources, and frequently cite references. If no San-min edition is available, the Commercial Press *Chin-chu chin-yi 今注今譯* editions are often useful, although the notes are rarely as detailed as the San-min versions. In the case of the *Shu*, the Commercial Press primer is by the noted scholar Ch’ü Wan-li 屈萬里, and has been highly, perhaps excessively, celebrated. One very popular modern edition edition is *Shang-shu cheng-tu 尚書正讀*, by Tseng Yun-ch’ien 曾運乾 (Taipei: Hua-cheng, 1974), but it is less accessible than the editions mentioned above.

The only translation of scholarly interest is that by Karlgren, again, published as translation and glosses in *BMFEA* (1950; Karlgren’s sinological notes on the text were published as a monograph: *Glosses on the Book of Documents* [Stockholm: 1970]). It is a remarkable piece of philological work, although it suffers from a lack of insight into the thought behind the text.

There is an outstanding study of the *Shu* by Matsumoto Masaaki: *Shunjū senkoku ni okeru Shōshō no tenkai* 春秋戰國における尚書の展開 (Tokyo: 1966). Note also the excellent entry in Morohasi.


Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 4, pp. 104-5

3. *Yi ching* 易經

The *Yi* is a strange book. It consists of heterogenous materials which accrued to the text much as layers of sediment form geological configurations. It was, at first, a divination text. At its base are the “trigrams” and “hexagrams” (*kua 卦*), composed of broken and unbroken lines representing, perhaps, *yin* and *yang*. Over these are spread the commentaries, some integrated in the main body of the text, others appended. The oldest are esoteric, relying heavily on imagery presumably coherent to specialists in divination by milfoil. The later commentaries are Confucian in tone, and interpret the earlier ones. Enough naturalistic ideas pervade the late commentaries to make them appear Taoist to those disposed in that direction, and the text was certainly integral to both the Confucian and taoist traditions. The commentaries, taken as a group, are known as the “ten wings” (*shih yi 十翼*).

Probably, nobody understands the *Yi*. Since the later “wings” frequently appear to misconstrue the earlier ones, it may be that no one has ever understood the *Yi*. It is, therefore, difficult to recommend a useful commentary. Many people regard Chu Hsi’s *Chou-yi pen-yi 周易本義* as the standard. This is most likely because Chu wrote it, rather than because of what it says – it is not a very informative commentary, but it is, at least, relatively untaxing. A more ambitious introductory commentary (introductory, that is, in the sense of addressing basic as well as more advanced material) is by the Ming specialist Lai Chih-te 來知德: *Yi ching Lai chu t’u-chieh 易經來註圖解.*
But the Yi should primarily be viewed as a vehicle for carrying the philosophical ideas of commentators, rather than as a philosophical work in itself, and in this light, the best commentary is the one written by or read by whatever people or group of people your research may be about.

The Yi has not been under-translated. The best established version is that by Richard Wilhelm (Cary Baynes, tr.; Princeton: 1967, 3d ed. [O.R. PL 2478 .D9, other copies in regular collections). The translation was somewhat unfortunately influenced by currents of early twentieth century European social science, but it is a responsible job. There have been several recent translations of the Yi. Richard Lynn’s (NY: Columbia, 1994 [PL 2478 .D48 1996]) appears to be particularly valuable.

We now have early manuscript editions of the Yi that clarify much about the state of the text in Classical times. An early Han silk manuscript, recovered with the famous Ma-wang-tui 馬王堆 finds of 1973, tallies rather closely with the received text, although few of the “ten wings” are included, and a number of other appended commentaries that were subsequently lost are. This text, which dates from about 190 BCE, has been translated by Edward Shaughnessy as I Ching: The Classic of Change (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996). More recently, a bamboo text of a large section of the Yi that likely dates from a century earlier emerged among the Shanghai Museum Chu manuscripts; it was published in volume 3 of Shang-hai Po-wu-kuan ts’ang Chan-kuo Ch’u chu-shu. The text includes none of the wings, at least in the portion recovered, but is otherwise in very close accord with the received version.

Traditionally, the Yi ching has been understood as the divination manual of the Chou dynastic house (hence its alternative title, Chou yi). The Shang was said to have used a different text of the Yi, known as the Guicang yi 歸藏易, while the earlier Hsia was said to have used a version called the Lien-shan yi 連山易. Fragmentary quotations purporting to be from these texts appeared in traditional books and were collected by Ch’ing era scholars. A text recovered from a Ch’in era site known as Wangjiatai 王家台 bears enough features in common with preserved citations of the Guicang text as to bear out the likelihood that it was indeed at some point an alternative Yi tradition.

Among the Classics, the Yi stands out historically as a text that has attracted unusually broad interest and speculative interpretations. It has become, for many authors, an obsession, and that holds for traditional literati and contemporary bloggers alike. The bibliography of Yi studies in Chinese is comparable, I believe, to none other, with the possible exception of Hung-lou meng studies, and the enthusiast’s spirit has enlarged the bibliography in Western languages as well. In this way, the Yi functions as a living tradition in a manner unlike the other classics.

Concordance: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #10; ICS #27
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 2, pp. 925-26

4. Chou-li 周禮

The Chou-li was a text “rediscovered” the bibliographer Liu Hsin 劉歆 towards the end of the Western Han. It is basically a map of an administrative system supposedly characteristic of the early Chou. The author was traditionally believed to be the Duke of Chou. Partisans of the New Text
School view the text as a fabrication by Liu Hsin, devised for the purpose of legitimizing Wang Mang’s usurpation of the Han throne (A.D. 9-23). The Chou-li is not exciting reading, but for many centuries, the text was viewed as a true reflection of the ideal system of the Chou and was a building block of all political theory.

The standard commentary is the Chou-li chu-shu 周禮註疏, which includes a Han commentary, which is attributed to Cheng Hsuan (usually referred to here by title, Cheng Ssu-nung 鄭司農) and a T’ang commentary by Chia Kung-yen 賈公彥. I know of only one usable modern edition, and that is in the Commercial Press series. The commentary is as colorless and uninformative as the text, and the translations are an exercise in wasted ink, but it is helpful nevertheless.


Index: Harvard-Yenching, #37
Concordance: ICS #13
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 2, p. 929

5. Yi-li 儀禮

The Yi-li is generally considered the dullest of the classics. I like it. It consists of detailed scripts for ceremonial rituals, and was probably a practical handbook for Confucians. Its date of composition is in doubt, but most scholars are content to say: probably compiled during the later Han from materials of much earlier date. It is not a classic generally quoted by later writers, but they were probably well versed in its contents, as later ritual ceremonies drew on the Yi-li.

The commentaries by Cheng Hsuan and Chia Kung-yen are standard, but a number of detailed commentaries were compiled during the Ch’ing.

There is a translation by John Steele, The I-li (London: 1917; rpt. Taipei: Ch’eng-wen, 1966 [PL 2478 .J7 v.1-2]). It is extremely helpful in decoding the technical language of the text, and the illustrations provide indispensable information.

Index: Harvard-Yenching #6
Concordance: ICS #24
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 1, p. 943

6. Li-chi 禮記

The Li-chi is not so much a book of ritual, as a compilation of materials rationalizing rituals. Several of its chapters are clearly early commentaries on sections of the Yi-li. Like that text, the Li-chi was probably put together during the early Han Dynasty, largely from materials composed earlier, but not so early as the materials of the Yi-li. Its contents are diverse and a number of the chapters are extremely important. The Yueh-chi 樂記 section, which duplicates materials in the Hsun Tzu 和 Shih-chi, is the most sustained discussion of music in the classics, and is considered by some to be the remnant of a lost “Classic of Music.” Depending on one’s viewpoint, the text
gives detailed information about either the education system of the early Chou, or the syllabus of study for late Chou Confucians.

The standard traditional commentary was the *Li-chi cheng-yi* 禮記正義, with commentary by Cheng Hsuan and K’ung Ying-ta of the T’ang (one of K’ung’s imperially commissioned cheng-yi editions, which established the “nine classic” canon). The best “modern” edition is *Li-chi chi-chieh* 禮記集解, by Sun Hsi-tan 孫希旦, a Ch’ing scholar. It is not hard to use, in part because the language of the *Li-chi* is not overly difficult. There is also a Commercial Press “chin-chu chin-yi” edition.

The only full translation in English is Legge’s *The Li Ki* (Oxford, 1890; several reprints as “Li Chi” [O.R. PL 2467 .Q11; PL 2478 .G4]).

Index: Harvard-Yenching #27
Concordance: ICS #2
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 8, p.503

7. *Ch’un-ch’iu Tso-chuan* 春秋左傳

The *Ch’un-ch’iu*: The *Ch’un-ch’iu* purports to be the court annals of the state of Lu during the years 722-481 B.C. It is not an exciting text to read. The annals record few events for each year. The events are noted with extreme terseness, and the patterns of which events are chosen to be recorded give little indication of any consistent editorial plan. Like the *Yi*, the core text of the *Ch’un-ch’iu* seems to be devoid of exalted ethical or metaphysical meaning, and like the *Yi*, the *Ch’un-ch’iu* became a focus for ethical and metaphysical philosophizing.

During the Han, the fulcrum of the debate between the New and Old Text Schools was the issue of which commentary on the *Ch’un-ch’iu* reflected the true meaning of the text. The contenders were the two New Text traditions of Kung-yang and Ku-liang, and the Old Text tradition of the *Tso-chuan*. The former had been handed down as oral traditions through the mid-Han, and then formed the basis for sanctioned *Ch’un-ch’iu* exegesis at the Imperial Academy; the latter had sprung fully grown from the bibliographical researches of Liu Hsin. The two New Text commentaries were both predicated on the belief that Confucius had edited the *Ch’un-ch’iu* in such a way that the most arcane truths had become lodged in the cryptic prose of the annals. The task of the commentary traditions was to decode the text and reveal those truths. The *Tso* indicates no such premise. Rather than being an explication of the abstruse annals, it is simply a collection of facts and anecdotes arranged loosely around the chronological structure of the annals. The identity of its supposed author, Tso Ch’iu-ming 左丘明, is shadowy. Ch’ing New Texters claimed Liu Hsin had fabricated the text, lifting much of it from the *Shih-chi*, which seems to have used the *Tso* as a source (or to have used as a source a “proto-Tso”). The *Tso* is primarily a history text of very high literary value, but the anecdotes in it also reveal many of the ideas of its author(s), and it had a significant influence on philosophy. Much of the image of pre-Confucian society held by traditional Chinese scholars was derived from the *Tso*. However, since the text probably dates from no earlier than 400 B.C., modern scholars are cautious about the historicity of the *Tso* narrative.
The foremost commentator for the *Tso* was Tu Yü 杜預 (222-284) (a distant ancestor of the poet Tu Fu), whose *Tso-chuan chu* 左傳注 is the basis for all later commentaries. The outstanding modern edition was published in a Japanese series called *Kanbun taikei* 漢文大系, which includes excellent editions of all the major classics and philosophical works. The *Tso* text was edited by Takezoe Kōkō (Shin’ichirō) 竹添光鴻, with the title *Saden kaisen* 左氏會箋 (pirated in Taiwan as *Tso-chuan hui -chien* [O.C. PL 2470 .Z6 T34 1993]). It is outstanding. The contemporary scholar Yang Po-chün 楊伯峻 has produced a very good commentary edition of the *Tso*, *Ch’un-ch’iu Tso-chuan chu* 春秋左傳注 [O.C. PL 2470 .Z6 Y29 1983] (keyed to this edition is Yang’s useful *Ch’un-ch’iu Tso-chuan tz’u-tien* [O.R. PL 2470 .Z5 Y36 1985]).

The only full translation of the *Tso* is Legge’s *The Ch’un Ts’ew with the Tso chuen* (Volume V of *The Chinese Classics* 1895, 1939, 1960). It has many inaccuracies and brutal transcription problems, but is still very useful. (There is an index to Legge’s translation by Everard Fraser [O.C. PL 2470 .R3].)

Possibly the best critical study of the *Tso* appears as part of a general preface to HY index suppl. #11, which is a general concordance to the *Ch’un-ch’iu* and all three commentaries. The preface is by William Hung (Hung Yeh 洪業), general editor of the concordance series. It is also useful to consult Karlgren’s brief monograph, *On the Authenticity and Nature of the Tso Chuan* (1926; Taipei rpt: Ch’eng-wen, 1968 [PL 2470 .Z7 K18]).

Concordance: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #11; ICS #30-32 [not held by IU]
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi *Ch’un-chiu* (vol. 5, pp. 817-18); *Tso*: (vol. 4, pp. 354-55)

8. *Ch’un-ch’iu Kung-yang chuan* 春秋公羊傳

The *Kung-yang* is entirely different from the *Tso*. Stylistically, it is a commentary even more cryptic than the *Ch’un-ch’iu* itself. It is arranged as a series of questions and answers concerning exegetical rules for squeezing meaning out of the original text. It includes in it certain concepts highly important for Confucianism, such as the notion of the future age of *ta-t’ung* 大同, or utopia. There is also a fascinating anti-totalitarian theme to the commentary, which makes it quite plain why the Imperial rulers of China were content to see the *Kung-yang* tradition wither over many centuries. Note that this strange text was the central one for both Han and Ch’ing period New Text Schools. It is a difficult text because of the difficulty of its subject matter, but the difficulties are increased by its oracular style and frequent use words characteristic of the Ch’i dialect. The commentary is supposed to have originated with Kung-yang Kao 公羊高.

There is only one basic commentary to the *Kung-yang*, written during the Han by Ho Hsiu 何休 (129-181): *Kung-yang chieh-ku* 公羊解詁. Because the Kung-yang tradition was an oral one until the late Han, Ho’s remarks carry nearly as much authority as the commentary itself. Though Ho’s statements often appear rather wild, they are actually no more so than those of the *Kung-yang* commentary itself. Note that prior to Ho, the most important member of the *Kung-yang* “lineage” was the most prominent Han Confucian, Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒. Some chapters of the
Ch’un-ch’iu fan-lu 春秋繁露, attributed to Tung, may be read as amplifications of the Kung-yang. The definitive Ch’ing commentary is the Kung-yang yi-shu 公羊義疏 of Ch’en Li 陳立.

There is no full translation of the Kung-yang. A partial translation has been made by Gören Malmqvist in Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 43 (1971).

One of the most influential studies of the Kung-yang in the West has been a study by George Kennedy which systematically proved that the exegetical techniques of the commentary were radically flawed, and that the Ch’un-ch’iu was not, in fact, a text carefully edited to embed meanings. Kennedy’s conclusions, which were in part a response to the extravagant claims about the Kung-yang that had been made by the late Ch’ing reformer K’ang Yu-wei 康有為, allowed Westerners to dismiss the Kung-yang on the odd grounds that if important ideas occurred in the commentary rather than in the original text, they weren’t important. (Note that Legge, in his translation of the Tso, took time out to give sample translations of both the Kung-yang and the Ku-liang for the purpose of dismissing them both as rubbish.)

Concordance: Same as (7)
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 2, p. 43

9. Ch’un-ch’iu Ku-liang chuan 春秋穀梁傳

This commentary appears to read quite similarly to the Kung-yang, but I have had so little contact with it that I am unable to characterize it. It is supposedly the product of Ku-liang Ch’ih 穀梁赤. [Note the odd coincidence of the earlist two commentaries to the Ch’un-ch’iu both having utterly obscure double- surnames with the initial syllable beginning “ku-“ and the final ending “-iang.” Virtually nothing is known of either, and their commentaries look similar. A suspicious person would be suspicious.

The basic commentary for the Ku-liang was written during the Chin period by Fan Ning 范甯, Ch’un-ch’iu Ku-liang chuan Fan-shih chi-chieng 春秋穀梁傳范士集解. The standard Ch’ing era subcommentary is by Liao P’ing 廖平, Ku-liang Ch’un-ch’iu ching-chuan ku yi-shu 穀梁春秋經傳古義疏.

There is no full translation of the Ku-liang. A partial translation has been made by Gören Malmqvist in Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities 43 (1971).

Concordance: Same as (7)
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol.8, p. 617

10. Hsiao ching 孝經

The Hsiao ching is a late classic, probably an early Han product. It is of little philosophical interest, but of enormous historical importance, providing, as it does, rationalizations for many of the most
distinctive features of China’s traditional social organization (and the most odious features of premodern paternalistic autocracy).

The *Hsiao ching* originally existed in both New and Old Text versions, the former with commentary by Cheng Hsuan (?), the latter by K’ung An-kuo. The T’ang Emperor Hsuan Tsung took an interest in adjudicating between the two, and selected the New Text version as preferable, writing an influential commentary on it.

There have been many translations of the *Hsiao ching*. As it is not a difficult text, however, they are not of great value.

Index: None.
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 3, p. 828

11. **Erh-ya 爾雅**

The *Erh-ya* is an early dictionary-encyclopedia, which consists of lists of synonyms arranged by category. It is, perhaps, best conceived as a thesaurus. It was frequently used by traditional commentators as an authority for word interpretation, along with works such as the *Shuo-wen chieh-tzu*, *Kuang yun*, etc.


There have been no translations.

Index: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #18
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol.7, pp. 586-87

12. **Lun-yü**

13. **Meng Tzu** Considered under “The Four Books”

B. **The Four Books**

There are many editions, commentaries, translations, and studies of the Four Books. In many instances, the works are treated separately; in some cases they are collected as a group. The *San-min shu-chu*” publishes a pai-hua translation version, *Ssu-shu tu-pen*, and it is a good place to begin. The best modern commentary, in my opinion, is also called *Ssu-shu tu-pen*; it is by Chiang Po-ch’ien 蔣伯潛, and was published in Hong Kong with a Taipei reprint. It includes Chu Hsi’s celebrated commentary, and draws heavily on other traditional commentaries.
Index: A combined concordance for the Four Books, called Ssu-shu so-yin has been published in Taiwan. It incorporates the HY concordances for the Lun-yü and Meng Tzu, along with a similar index for the Ta-hsueh and Chung-yung. There is no publication information provided.

Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 3, p. 24

1. Lun-yü 論語

The Lun-yü was probably compiled from several texts, representing the core teachings of a number of schools sprung from the disciples of Confucius. Unlike other Confucian philosophical texts (such as the Meng-tzu, its authority is absolute, and in that respect it slightly resembles the Western Bible.

The outstanding Ch’ing commentary is the Lun-yü cheng-yi 論語正義, by Liu Pao-nan 劉寶楠. There is an excellent recent variorum-commentary: Lun-yü chi-shih 論語集釋, by Ch’eng Shu-te 程樹德 (Taipei: Yi-wen, 1965, 2 vols.). The question of early commentaries for the Lun-yü is too complicated to enter into here.

There have been many translations of the text. The most prominent are those by Arthur Waley and D.C. Lau. Both have many faults but are basically well informed. A translation by Bruce and Taeko Brooks, published in 1999 by Columbia University Press, incorporates many fresh and provocative ideas in a representation of the text according to the authors’ theories of its process of creation. A translation by Edward Slingerland that takes Ch’eng Shu-te’s collected commentary edition as a basis is also an excellent resource.

A number of superb studies have been made of the text (as opposed to the innumerable studies of Confucius and his thought). The best are probably three Japanese monographs, the authors being Takeuchi Yoshio 武內義雄, Tsuda Sōkichi 津田左右吉, and Kimura Eiichi 木村英一. The best brief summary, although inadequate, appears as an appendix in Lau’s translation; the Brooks’ edition of the text, The Original Analects, is in the tradition of Takeuchi and Kimura.

Concordance: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #16; ICS #33 [not held by IU]

Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 10, pp. 518-19

2. Meng Tzu (Mencius) 孟子

The Mencius dates from about 300 B.C., and was composed by the disciples of Mencius. It may be that Mencius himself aided them in the early stages. The status of the text was nowhere near as high as it is today until Chu Hsi’s promotion of it in the 12th century. During the Han, the Mencius’ influence in no way compared to the enormous influence of its doctrinal competitor, the Hsun Tzu 荀子.
The most influential commentary is the *Meng Tzu cheng-yi* 孟子正義, by the brothers Chiao Hsun 焦循 and Chiao Hu 焦琥 of the Ch’ing. The earliest commentator was the Eastern Han scholar Chao Ch’i 趙岐.

There have been many translations of the *Meng Tzu*. The best are by W.A.C.H. Dobson [B 128 .M33 D63 1963] and D.C. Lau. A new translation, informed by excellent scholarship, has recently been published by Irene Bloom.

Concordance: Harvard-Yenching, Supplement #17; ICS #34 [not held by IU]
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 3, p. 837

3. *Ta-hsueh*  
   &  
4. *Chung-yung*

These two brief essays were originally chapters in the *Li-chi*, but were extracted by Chu Hsi for separate attention. Chu also did considerable editorial work on the texts to bring out their meaning, as he saw it. They are reputed to have been authored by Confucius’ disciple Tseng Shen 曾参 and his grandson Tzu-ssu 子思 respectively, but that is most unlikely. They appear instead to be texts of the late Warring States or early Han periods. Many passages in them appear almost verbatim in the *Mencius* or the *Hsun Tzu*.

Chu Hsi’s commentary must be the standard, because the importance of the texts is their role in neo-Confucian rather than early Confucian thought.

There have been several translations. Perhaps the handiest are the highly Neo-Confucian ones in Wing Tsit-chan’s *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*.

It is worth noting Tu Wei-ming’s study of the *Chung-yung: Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung* (Honolulu: 1976). Tu’s monograph should be viewed as an explication of neo-Confucian perceptions of the text; this work was a forerunner of Tu’s emergence as the leading spokesman of “third-wave” Confucianism (“New Confucianism”), currently centered in Singapore.

Concordances: See above on *Ssu-shu so-yin*.
Traditional Bibliography: Morohashi, vol. 3, pp. 381-82; vol. 1, p. 313

III. Index and Concordance Editions

In addition to the Harvard-Yenching and ICS concordances and indexes of the classics, the following two print versions deserve notice.

*Shih-san ching so-yin* 十三經索引  
(Taipei: K’ai-ming shu-chü, 1955 [original edition 1946])  
[O.R. PL 2461 .Z9 I38 1946]
The advantage of using this index is that it covers all thirteen classics. However, it only indexes phrases (that is, major sentence-phrases), rather than words or individual characters, hence you need to know the first character of the phrase you are looking for to use this index. It is, thus, not a concordance, but it does break sentences into shorter phrases for more complete indexing. The references are keyed to the following edition of the texts: *Shih-san ching ching-wen* 十三經經文 (Taipei: K’ai-ming shu-chü, 1965) [O.R. PL 2461 .Q65 1965].


The *Gokyō sakuin* is a concordance to the Five Classics, including the *Shih*, *Shu*, *Li*, *Yi*, and the *Ch’un-ch’iu* (exclusive of the three *chuan*). It includes three volumes of index, and a fourth volume that contains the texts. The indexes are keyed to the fourth volume texts. Although its range is much narrower than the preceding item, it is far more useful for the texts that it covers. Its major drawback is that it is complicated to use, hence the following longish discussion.

Characters are arranged by the Japanese syllabary. Each of the three index volumes contains two finding tables at the start: one listing characters in syllabary order, the other by radicals. Both finding tables list only characters included in that single index volume. A comprehensive four-corner finding table appears at the end of the last index volume, and gives both the character number in the index and the page number on which it is located.

The concordance does not give full text citations for every instance of the most common characters (e.g., 之, 也, 而), but does list reference numbers for every instance of the characters without including text. The concordance is incomplete is one other unusual way. Each of the classical texts in the final volume is divided into numbered “p’ien” and short numbered sub-sections, which form the smallest units for indexing. If a character appears twice or more in a sub-section, only the first instance will definitely appear in the concordance, although the fact that other instances occur will be noted, as explained below.

Under the entry for each character, the instances of its appearance are presented classic by classic, with compounds including the target character listed after the initial entry. Two numbers separated by a dot appear under the sign for each classic: these numbers note first the number of text sub-sections in which the target character appears in the classic, and then the total number of appearances (which may be greater, if in some sections the character appears more than once). The text passages are then listed together in paragraph form, separated by reference numbers. These numbers each have three parts: first, the number of the “p’ien” (which is followed by the small syllabary sign の: no, which corresponds to the
Chinese chih 之); second the sub-section number, and third, the total number of appearances of the character within the sub-section (the cited text may contain only one of these—the others must be pursued directly in the text).

There are 15 characters that have double entries (an error): there are cross-reference notations in the 1991 edition. The fifteen are listed as: 仼、晧、函、喙、壎、愨、敔、旂、楬、汽、耿、虺、繘、陷、頎。

NOTE: The two editions in the library differ in that the 1970 edition is shelved with the text volume listed as vol. 1, while for the 1991 edition, which is a corrected edition, the texts are shelved as vol. 4.

IV. The “New Text” and “Old Text” School Controversies

During the Han Dynasty, a basic split occurred in the interpretation of the classical canon. This split is known as the controversy between the New Text and Old Text schools. This terminology is widely known but little understood among Western sinologists. This brief section is meant to help clarify the significance of this aspect of intellectual history.

The Confucian canon was basically generated by the cultural gap created by the social revolution of the Ch’in Dynasty (221-208 B.C.). So fundamental and enduring were the changes implemented during this brief era that those who survived it and their descendants saw themselves permanently severed from the pre-Ch’in past, which was viewed as a repository of lost wisdom. Ch’in policies had attempted to dictate what knowledge of the past was worthy of preservation and to dictate, through book banning and destruction, the remainder. When free scholarship revived after 195 (the Han continued the Ch’in proscription on books until then), the re-emergent Confucian school attempted to reconstruct their traditions by recovering “lost” texts and selecting for special treatment certain extant texts and certain interpretive approaches to them. This is how the classical canon was generated.

After about 135 B.C., when the government began to sponsor Confucianism and appoint major scholars to high visibility (and high salary) offices, the stakes of various textual and interpretive controversies became very high. Han emperors generally adjudicated the outcome of these disputes when they appointed leading Confucians to the limited number of po-shih 博士 (erudite) positions at their new Imperial Academy. Each of the dozen or so po-shih were charged with disseminating their sanctioned teaching tradition of one of the Five Classics.

The New/Old Text dispute takes its name from a particular aspect of the “recovery” of lost classical texts. During the post-Ch’in era, some lost texts, such as the Shang shu, were initially recovered from the memories of aged scholars who had memorized them when young. Because the scholars of this early Han era had been educated after the great script reform of the Ch’in, their transcriptions of the aged scholars’ recitations were written in “new script,” and these recovered texts circulated in this form. Somewhat later, in a series of incidents, preserved copies of pre-Ch’in editions of the classics were “discovered” in long-forgotten hiding places. Naturally, these were
written (or, perhaps, forged) in old script. In some cases, entirely “new” classics were “rediscovered” (or created) in this way, most importantly the *Chou-li*.

The dispute over these issues is named after the difference in scripts, but in fact, the dispute was over two more important issues: which texts should be included in the Confucian canon, and what guiding ideology unites the canon. The latter was the key question. Champions of the New Text canon were generally adherents of a type of ideology that might be called “fang-shih 方士 style Confucianism.” They were highly influenced by issues of omenology, astrology, and divination; they were also, though patronized by the state, in many ways a subversive and anti-Imperial force. Old Texters developed a far more rationalistic and historical approach to the canon. Their goal was to displace the New Text school through careful philology using historical rather than superstitious interpretation. Old Text adherents also tended to be less inclined to use classical texts to engage in adversarial political struggle with the court. Eventually, after the second century A.D., the Old Text school gradually displaced the New Text school, which did not reemerge until the mid-Ch’ing, when it served as a Confucian foundation for anti-Manchus and reformers like K’ang Yu-wei.

On the following two pages are charts contrasting the two schools. The first lists the text editions and commentary traditions championed by the two schools. The most important contrasts lay in their choices of *Shang shu* texts, on the question of whether the *Chou-li* was a genuine or a forged classic, and on which *Ch’un-ch’iu* commentary would be viewed as authoritative. In textual terms, these disputes came out as a draw: only the New Text edition of the *Shu* is now regarded as genuine; the *Chou-li* remains controversial; the *Tso chuan*, championed by the Old Texters, is far more highly regarded than the *Kung-yang chuan*.

In terms of general ideology, the Old Text positions continue to exert far more influence. The views of the classics as sources of historical understanding as opposed to semi-divine wisdom, the high regard in which the Duke of Chou is held, the view of Confucius as a cultural transmitter rather than a creative sage appointed by T’ien to rule as a king over the human spirit, and the anti-superstitious bent of the Old Texters all tend to suit modern tastes more than the comparable New Text positions. Both neo-Confucianism and contemporary “Third-Wave Confucianism” inherit Old Text points of view and tend to view Han Confucianism as an aberrant phase. There is, however, considerable evidence to suggest that the pre-Ch’ing Confucianism the first generated or selected the classical canon had far more in common with the New Text worldview, perhaps making that school more representative of the standpoint of “original” Confucianism.

By far the clearest account of the New and Old Text controversy is provided in the following extremely brief (50 page) book, from which the charts on the following pages are largely drawn:

### 漢代經文古存遺表

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<td>夏侯建</td>
<td>[偽著晉·梅赜本 今存有25篇本，俗與今文29篇並印 ]</td>
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漢代今古文派論爭要點

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<td>祖周公</td>
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<td>六經立《周官》為主</td>
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<td>無師傳</td>
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<td>西漢在民間</td>
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<td>東漢為盛時</td>
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<td>以今文經為秦火殘缺之餘</td>
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<td>《毛詩》、《周禮》、《左傳》</td>
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</table>
V. Online Searchable Databases for the Classics

1. CHANT (https://www-chant-org.ezproxy.lib.indiana.edu/member_login/login.aspx)

The CHANT database, introduced in the previous section of readings, includes the classics among the many received texts in its database. The following illustration provides an example of how the site is used to access and search relevant texts.

Sample Query: Locate all instances of references to Confucius by the name Chung-ni 仲尼 in the classic text Li-chi 禮記.

Classics are located in the Hsien-Ch’ in Liang-Han section of the “received texts” database.
Select a category of classic (for this example, we use 禮經類.)
A listing of texts is given, indicating the date of supposed origin (in traditional formulations; these are often duplicated). Link to any 禮記 register.

This is the initial page for the Li-chi text. The left register has links to philological material at the top and text chüan 卷, listed by number and title below. The opening of the first chüan is provided by default. Index numbers are provided for each section of text; these are the same as those provided in the ICS concordance series. An example of variorum annotation is in yellow below (the cursor is on the character 辨). To search for “Chung Ni,” click on the “search” (chien-suo 檢所) button.
This is the search screen. Type the target character or character string.

Each register of the search results gives the initial instance of the search item in a particular chüan. Here, we see first the text of Section 4.30— that is, the thirtieth section of the fourth chüan, which is the second part of the T’An Kung chapter.

The second register gives the complete text of section 8.8. The text is longer because the section is longer. Search item instances are highlighted in green.

The T’An Kung register header indicates that this juan has a total of four sections with instances of the item, and provides a link to a dedicated page.

From the home page, select:瀚典全文檢索系統 2.0 版;
On screen 2 select: 古漢語語料庫
On screen 3 select (without checking): 上古漢語語料庫
Screen 4 will present an array of pre-Ch’in texts, including, individually, the Thirteen Classics other than the *Kung-yang* and *Ku-liang* commentaries, the *Erh-ya* and the *Hsiao ching*. These may be searched individually or in groups by checking their boxes (any of the 11 other texts listed can be included). Clicking on items without checking will produce a breakdown by sections (which can be searched), and ultimately the text itself.


The left register lists the available searchable databases. The Thirteen Classics is first on the list. Clicking will call up a list of texts on the right along with the search feature. The texts can be viewed only through the search function.

*Here, we have a list of all instances of the items in the chüan.*

Hosted by the East China Institute of Technology Library (Tung-hua Li-kung Ta-hsueh T’u-shu-kuan 東華理工大學圖書館), this is an enormous database of digitalized texts. They are all in simplified character font and are less convenient for searching, because the texts are accessed juan by juan. Once accessed, they are searchable through desktop program search tools. Although the search function is less user-friendly, the organization of the site makes accessing and downloading readable texts particularly easy. The homepage provides a list of hundreds of texts and tools, with the Thirteen Classics in the top register. The second screen for each provides nice presentations of links to the various chapters of the texts. Note that for the Shang shu, the Old Text version, including many spurious (but interesting and sometimes influential) chapters, is the text provided. (The four basic registers of texts conforms to a traditional bibliographic model called the “Four Treasuries,” which will be discussed in later materials.)