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CHAPTER 11

WHO AND WHAT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED, AND WHY? MESSAGES CONVEYED IN THE *SUMMARIES* IN CHAPTER 130 OF THE *HISTORICAL RECORDS*, AS COMPARED WITH THE CORRESPONDING *BIOGRAPHIES*

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Abstract

The short, partly rhymed abstracts of the 130 chapters of the *Shiji* are all listed in the last, autobiographical chapter of the received work. They have mostly been regarded as synopses of the chapters after they had been finalized by Sima Qian. This essay argues that there is good reason to assume that these abstracts (or *Summaries*) were written already by his father, Sima Tan, who conceived them as a blueprint of the chapters still to be written. Focusing on the seventy chapters that compose the fifth and last part of the *Shiji*, the *liezhuan* 列傳 ("Biographies"), this study compares the contents of these *Summaries* to the corresponding *Biographies* based on the working thesis that the corresponding seventy chapters of the *Biographies* were all finalized by Sima Qian. Firstly, a look is taken at the number of figures dealt with in the *Summaries*, the time frame of their lifespan, the values they stand for, and the main message conveyed about them, compared with those of the corresponding *Biographies*. Secondly, a closer analysis is made, based on four example cases that illustrate the differences between the contents of the *Summaries* and those of the corresponding *Shiji* chapters. Lastly, Sima Tan's and Sima Qian's educational background and professional duties, as well as differences in their life circumstances and their way of responding to them, are scrutinized.

CHAPITRE 11

DE QUI ET DE QUOI DEVRAIT-ON SE SOUVENIR, ET POURQUOI ? LES MESSAGES CONTENUS DANS LES *RÉSUMÉS* DU CHAPITRE 130 DES *MÉMOIRES HISTORIQUES* ET LEUR COMPARAISON AVEC LES *BIOGRAPHIES* CORRESPONDANTES

Dorothee Schaab-Hanke

Résumé

Les courts *Résumés*, en partie rimés, des 130 chapitres du *Shiji* apparaissent tous dans le dernier chapitre, autobiographique, de l'œuvre transmise. On les considère principalement comme des synopsis des chapitres après leur finalisation par Sima Qian. Cet essai soutient que nous avons de bonnes raisons de considérer que ces *Résumés* furent rédigés par son père, Sima Tan, qui les conçut comme un plan directeur pour les futurs chapitres biographiques. Centrée sur les soixante-dix chapitres qui composent la cinquième et dernière partie du *Shiji*, les *liezhuan* 列傳 ("Biographies"), cette étude compare le contenu de ces *Résumés* avec les *Biographies* correspondantes, en partant de l'hypothèse selon laquelle tous les chapitres biographiques furent finalisés par Sima Qian. Dans un premier temps, le nombre de personnages traités dans les *Résumés*, la chronologie dans laquelle s'inscrit leur vécu, les valeurs qu'ils défendent et le message principal communiqué à leur sujet, sont comparés avec les données analogues fournies par les biographies correspondantes. Dans un deuxième temps, quatre cas représentatifs des différences de contenu entre *Résumés* et chapitres correspondants du *Shiji* sont analysés. Enfin sont examinés la formation et les fonctions professionnelles de Sima Tan et de Sima Qian, ainsi que les événements ayant marqué leur vie et leur façon d'y répondre.

Introduction

It may seem a quite bold or even wholly futile effort, after all that has already been written about the possibility or impossibility of distinguishing between the two historians Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE) and his son, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (*ca* 145–*ca* 86 BCE), in their contributions to the *Shiji* 史記, to make another attempt at such a distinction. It is true that, in spite of the efforts of several generations of Sinologists to find reliable methods for distinguishing the share of the two historians, not a single book concentrating on this topic has to my knowledge so far been published. In my view, however, it is worth not giving up these efforts, keeping in mind that already the famous historian Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980) declared that it should be finally acknowledged that not only Sima Qian but also his father Tan should be conceded a place among the great Chinese historians and writers.[1] With this goal in mind, an attempt to distinguish between the individual contributions of Sima Tan and Sima Qian in the *Shiji* will be made by comparing the short, partly rhymed texts included in its last, autobiographical chapter, in which the main ideas of each of the 130 chapters are summarized, with the contents of the corresponding *Shiji* chapters themselves.[2]

The present study will be confined to those 70 chapters that make up the fifth and last part of the *Shiji*, the "Liezhuan" 列傳 (hereafter rendered as *Biographies*),[3] not only because this fits the frame of this volume, but also because, as I will argue here, there is good reason to assume that all these abstracts (hereafter referred to as *Summaries*) referring to this last part of the *Shiji* were written by Sima Tan, whereas all the corresponding chapters were written by Sima Qian.[4]

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1 Gu, "Sima Tan zuo shi," p. 88: (…) 而"史記"之作, 遷遂不得專美, 凡言吾國之大史學家與大文學家者, 必增一人曰司馬談.

2 SJ, 130.3301–3320. There is no special term used to introduce the sequence of abstracts in this last chapter of the *Shiji*, but in the last abstract referring to the corresponding autobiographical chapter the term *lüe* 略 occurs which denotes, as I argue here, these abstracts. See SJ, 130.3319. In Chinese secondary literature they are denoted variously, depending on how they were interpreted. Zhang, "Sima Tan zuo shi kaolun shuping," p. 375, for example, refers to them as the 130 *xumu tiyao* 序目提要 ("abstracts of the [chapters listed in the] postface").

3 While my own preference would be to render the term "liezhuan" 列傳 as "(arrayed) memoirs," especially with regard to chapters such as the "Xiongnu liezhuan" 匈奴列傳, which also belong to this part of the *Shiji* but contain the biographies of men interacting with the Xiongnu rather than with the biographies of the Xiongnu people, I use here the term "biographies" in the interest of this volume's consistency.

4 For previous approaches to distinguishing between Sima Tan's and Sima Qian's share in the *Shiji*, see, among others, Wang, "Taishi gong xingnian kao" (1923); Li, "Sima Qian de fuqin" (1944); Gu, "Sima Tan zuo shi" (1963); Zhang, "'Taishi gong zixu' jiedu" (1999); Zhao, "Sima Tan zuo shi kaoshu" (2000); and Schaab-Hanke, *Der Geschichtsschreiber als Exeget*, "Einführung," especially pp. 10–18.

In the *Summaries*, the content of each chapter is described in a rather condensed way, and at the end of each of these texts, the following formula gives the title and the number of the respective chapter: "*zuo* '(x) *liezhuan' di* (y)" 作"(x) 列傳" 第 (y). In previous translations of the *Shiji*, as far as I can see, this formula has always been rendered in the past tense — "Biography (x) was made as no. (y)"[5] — although it could grammatically be read in the present or future tense as well — "Biography (x) is/will/should be made as no. (y)." Translated in this way, the *Summaries* are not to be understood as synopses of already finalized texts but, instead, of contents projected but still awaiting their realization or finalization.

Burton Watson (1925–2017), who had understood the *Summaries* as synopses of the finalized chapters, decided to put them at the beginning of his translations of the corresponding *Shiji* chapters, thereby using them as a motto introducing the contents of each respective chapter.[6] And probably precisely because he perceived the *Summaries* merely as synopses of the chapters themselves, he also did not hesitate to "improve" on some of the titles, for example in the case of *Shiji* chapter 61, whose title he "corrected" in his translation to "Biography of Boyi and Shuqi" even though the Chinese title of that chapter is "Boyi liezhuan" 伯夷列傳 and, in the *Summary*, mention is also made of Boyi only.[7]

Another often-quoted passage shortly before the end of the last, autobiographical chapter of the *Shiji* directly addresses the *Summaries* and their overall conception, saying:

> [序] 略, 以拾遺補藝, 成一家之言, 厥協六經異傳, 整齊百家雜語. 藏之名山, 副在京師, 俟後世聖人君子.
>
> The *Summaries* [of the postface][8] were made to collect what has been lost and should supplement the [Six] Disciplines, thus completing the teachings of one unified school,[9] harmonizing the various transmissions of the Six Classics and equalizing the differing words of the hundred schools. [The book] shall be stored in the Famous Mountain, with a copy [deposited] in the capital, to await the sages and noble men of later generations.[10]

The fact that these *Summaries* are included in the last chapter of the *Shiji*, combined with the information that the original of the work will be stored in the "Famous Mountain" (*ming shan* 名山) and a copy deposited in the capital (*jingshi* 京師),[11] seems to have suggested to most readers that they were written by Sima Qian as synopses of the chapters only after he had completed the work.[12] However, if one renders this passage in the future tense, one gains a wholly different impression, namely not of something that Sima Qian wrote after having completed his work, but rather of something he also reported duly from his father's words as his overall conception and legacy.

1. First Glimpses at the Contents of the *Summaries*

Let us now take a first look at the contents of the *Summaries*, with only a more general glance at the corresponding *Biographies*. The focus will be on the number of persons addressed in the *Summaries* as compared with the corresponding chapters, the time span that the *Summaries* comprise, and the values represented by the persons addressed in them and the *Biographies*.

When one compares the number of persons recorded in the *Summaries* with those mentioned in the *Biographies*, one finds that there are often more persons dealt with in them than in the *Summaries*. This is already the case with *Biographies* no. 1 (chapter 61). While the *Summary* only deals with Boyi 伯夷, the text of the chapter proper devotes almost the same amount of space to his younger brother Shuqi 叔齊. The *Summary* of no. 3 (chapter 63) mentions only Lao zi 老子 and Han Fei 韓非 (d. 233 BCE), while the corresponding chapter deals with no fewer than eight figures, namely Master Old Lai 老萊子, five descendants of Lao zi down to the second century (named Zong 宗, Zhu 注, Gong 宮, Jia 假 and Jie 解 respectively),

5 See, for instance, in all translations by Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, and in *The Grand Scribe's Records* series edited by Nienhauser. Unless indicated otherwise, all translations in this essay are mine.

6 This is the case in Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*. In the *Shiji* translation series edited by Nienhauser, the *Summaries* are sometimes added at the end of the respective biographies, sometimes not, albeit seemingly without taking much care of the discrepancies between them and the biographies proper.

7 Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, p. 11.

8 Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, p. 57, leaves the term *xulüe* 序略 untranslated. Cf. Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 361, where Hans van Ess translates: "This appended account is sketchy." While the interpunction of this passage follows here the Zhonghua shuju edition, Lee Chi-hsiang, in his essay in this volume, has pointed to the fact that the *Hohyō Shiki hyōrin* has a different interpunctuation of this passage: *xu* 序 is read there as part of the preceding sentence, thus pointing to the "Postface of the Book of the Lord Grand Scribe" ("Taishi gong shu xu" 太史公書序), and a new sentence begins with *lüe* 略. See *Hohyō Shiki hyōrin*, 130.19b.

9 Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien*, p. 57, renders the much-discussed expression *cheng yijia zhi yan* as: "It is the work of one family." In Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 361, van Ess translates almost identically: "I have completed the teachings of one family." I think that the term *jia* 家 relates here to the Six Schools that Sima Tan had characterized in his *Discussion of the Essentials of the Six Schools* (*Liujia zhi yaozhi lun* 六家之要旨論), in the sense of a new school into which all the other schools would be integrated.

10 SJ, 130.3319.

11 SJ, 130.3321: 正本藏之書府, 副本留京師也. Sima Zhen 司馬貞 adds in his commentary that *ming shan* (literally "famous mountain") refers here to the book archives (*shufu* 書府) where the original script should be stored.

12 It was not necessarily Sima Qian's intention to convey this impression. Instead, Sima Qian could have meant it as the textual evidence (addressed to later generations of readers?) that he had duly fulfilled the task begun by his father.

Zhuang zi 莊子 (or Zhuang Zhou 莊周, 4th cent. BCE), and Shen Buhai 申不害 (*ca* 400–*ca* 337 BCE).[13] In the *Summary* of no. 5 (chapter 65), Sun Wu 孫武 (*ca* 544–*ca* 496 BCE) and Wu Qi 吳起 (*ca* 440–*ca* 381 BCE), two specialists of warfare, are mentioned by name, whereas the corresponding chapter discusses three men in total — Sun Wu, Sun Bin 孫臏 (382–316 BCE), and Wu Qi. The *Summary* of no. 24 (chapter 84) only mentions Qu Yuan and his narrative poem "Encountering Sorrow" ("Lisao" 離騷), whereas the corresponding chapter also includes the biography of Jia Yi 賈誼 (*ca* 200–168 BCE).[14] The *Summary* of no. 26 (chapter 86) only mentions the assassins Cao Mo 曹沫 and Yu Rang 豫讓 (d. *ca* 425 BCE), whereas the corresponding chapter presents three more assassins, namely Zhuan Zhu 專諸, Nie Zheng 聶政 (d. *ca* 397 BCE), and Jing Ke 荊軻 (d. 227 BCE).

One might argue that many of the *Biographies* deal with more persons than those mentioned in the *Summaries* simply because, due to their condensed nature, the latter lacked space for all protagonists from each chapter to be mentioned. However, another explanation that deserves consideration is that in Tan's original conception, fewer protagonists were supposed to be given biographies than are found in the finalized work. One can well imagine that, as he wrote down the *Biographies*, Sima Qian realized that there were more figures who, in his view, deserved to be remembered by later generations than his father originally planned, and that, not daring to expand the number of chapters, he decided instead to insert unplanned biographies where he thought they might fit best.[15]

The time span covered by the *Summaries* is, as one would expect, largely parallel with that covered in the *Biographies* themselves, but, as we shall see, there are significant differences, especially when we approach the time shortly before Sima Tan's death. The sequence of the *Summaries*, like that of the *Biographies*, is basically chronological, with some notable exceptions. The first chapter of the *Biographies*, devoted to Boyi (chapter 61), is also in this respect a special case, as Boyi (and his younger brother Shuqi) lived at the turn from the Shang 商 to the Zhou 周 dynasty. *Biographies* nos. 2–28 (chapters 62–88) deal with Eastern Zhou 東周 times; more precisely, no. 7 (chapter 67) is related to the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu 春秋) era, and nos. 8–26 (chapters 68–86) to the Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國) era; nos. 27–28 (Li Si 李斯 and Meng Tian 蒙恬, chapters 87–88) date to the time around the reign of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇帝 (r. 221–210 BCE); nos. 29–40 (chapters 89–100) deal with the time of Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BCE), nos. 41–46 (chapters 101–106) with the reigns of Han Emperors Wen 文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE) and Jing 景帝 (r. 157–141 BCE), and nos. 47–69 (chapters 107–129) reach well into the regnal years of Han Emperor Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE).[16]

A significant difference in the span of time covered between a *Summary* and the contents of its corresponding *Biography* may be noted in no. 51 (chapter 111). The *Summary* praises the Han generals Wei Qing 衛青 (d. 106 BCE) and Huo Qubing 霍去病 (d. 117 BCE) for their success in defeating the Xiongnu 匈奴 tribes and thus expanding Han territory to the West. Actually, Wei Qing's death occurred after Sima Tan's, but the time addressed in the *Summary* is related to Wei Qing's campaign in 123 BCE and Huo Qubing's in 121 BCE.[17] In the same year, Huo Qubing received the title General of Agile Cavalry (*piaoqi jiangjun* 驃騎將軍),[18] also mentioned at the end of the *Summary*. Since Tan is known to have died in the year 110 BCE,[19] from these very dates there is no reason why he should not have also written this *Summary* and others relating to the time of Emperor Wu.

A further interesting hint of the time span on which the *Summaries* concentrate is the statement in no. 61 of the *Summaries*, "Biographies of the Classical Masters" ("Rulin liezhuan" 儒林列傳), that after the death of Confucius, none in the capital thought much of the local schools (*xiangxu* 庠序) and that only during the eras Jianyuan 建元 (140–135 BCE) and Yuanshou 元狩 (122–117 BCE), that is, during the reign of Emperor Wu, did the words of texts (*wenci* 文辭) newly gain high regard and importance.[20] It is the only *Summary* that gives such era dates, and, as we shall see, they fit also well with the time when Sima Tan was working as Grand Scribe (*taishi* 太史)[21] at Emperor Wu's court.

Coming now to the values that the protagonists represent according to the *Summaries* as compared with those in the corresponding chapters, one of the values occurring rather often in the *Summaries* is that of *yi* 義 (righteousness). Keeping to a

13 For the total number of figures mentioned in that chapter, see also Grégoire Espesset's essay in this volume.

14 Jia Yi's name, however, is added in both the title of the chapter proper and the formula at the end of the *Summary*.

15 Exemplifying a biography that was probably added only later by Sima Qian because of a similar fate and attitude seems to be that of Jia Yi, added to that of Qu Yuan (no. 24, chapter 84), which will be more closely analyzed below.

16 For further reflections on the sequence of the *Biographies*, see Reynolds, "A Note on Chronology," p. x; van Ess, "Introduction," p. xii. Van Ess also points to the biographies of *Shiji* chapters 105 (on the physicians Bian Que 扁鵲 and Mister Cang 倉公) and 106 (on Liu Pi 劉濞 [216–154 BCE], leader of a rebellion in 154 BCE) as two special cases.

17 See Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, p. 574.

18 See SJ, 111.2929; translated by J. Michael Farmer in Nienhauser, *The Grand Sand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, p. 329. In n. 122, Farmer adds that the office of *piaoqi jiangjun* began with Huo Qubing.

19 The year of Sima Tan's death can be concluded from the passage in SJ, 130.3295.

20 SJ, 130.3318. On the "Rulin liezhuan" chapter, see also Michael Nylan's essay in this volume.

21 As is commonly known, the title *taishi* 太史 (Grand Scribe) and the honoring address *taishi gong* 太史公 (Lord Grand Scribe 太史公) were used to address both Sima Tan and Sima Qian, thus contributing to a kind of common identity. The original title of the *Shiji* was *Taishi gong shu* 太史公書.

few examples, it is attributed in no. 1 (chapter 61) to Boyi, who is said to have "fled [from home] due to [his sense of] righteousness" (*ben yi* 奔義), by contrast with the world (at the end of the Shang dynasty) when people were "fighting for profit" (*zheng li* 爭利). In *Summary* no. 7 (chapter 67), it is stated about Master Kong's disciples that they "exalted humanity and polished righteousness" (*chong ren li yi* 崇仁厲義). In no. 14 (chapter 74), the Confucian philosophers Meng zi 孟子 (371–289 BCE) and Xun zi 荀子 (*ca* 316–237/235 BCE) are addressed as scholars who "illuminated the guiding principles of correct behavior and righteousness" (*ming liyi zhi tongji* 明禮義之統紀). Likewise, in no. 24 (chapter 84), Qu Yuan is depicted as someone who "strove for righteousness" (*zheng yi* 爭義).

In the *Summary* of no. 5 (chapter 65), Sun Wu and Wu Qi, specialists of the art of war, are praised for their trustworthiness (*xin* 信), integrity (*lian* 廉), humanity (*ren* 仁) and courage (*yong* 勇). "A noble man," the text continues, "would grade them among the virtuous" (*junzi bi de yan* 君子比德焉). Sun Wu is only given a very short biography, which is mainly filled with the story of how he was requested by the king of Wu to present the principles laid down in his book with the help of palace women, perhaps with the idea to ridicule him.[22] And in his personal remarks, the Grand Scribe[23] writes that Sun Wu, in spite of his brilliance, could not save himself in the end from the disaster of mutilation, and that Wu Qi "destroyed himself through his harsh tyranny and lack of mercy."[24]

The *Summary* of no. 7 (chapter 67) praises unanimously the disciples of Confucius for having "promoted their master" (*dizi xing ye* 弟子興業) and for having "all become teachers or instructors" (*xian wei shifu* 咸為師傅). The corresponding chapter lists all disciples with their names and some detailed information on their characters, the position they had attained, and other events in their life. In his personal remarks at the end of the chapter, however, the Grand Scribe evaluates them much less euphorically, writing that "some of those who praised them have exaggerated [the description of] the facts" (譽者或過其實), while "those who condemn them [also] failed to do them justice" (毀者或損其真), and when weighing the different assessments, he concludes that "they have not yet been given a realistic portrait" (鈞之未鬻厥容貌). In the very last sentence of his personal remarks, the Grand Scribe refers to a list of disciples that, according to him, was among the old texts that came from the Kong 孔 family and would thus come close to the facts, and notes that

22 On Sun Wu's biography, see Grégoire Espesset's essay in this volume.

23 The formula that points to both Sima Tan's and Sima Qian's own remarks is the frequently occurring expression "taishi gong yue" 太史公曰 (literally "His Honor the Grand Scribe says"), probably an intended common identity. See also Martin Kern's essay in this volume.

24 SJ, 65.2168–2169: 孫子籌策龐涓明矣, 然不能蚤救患於被刑. 吳起說武侯以形勢不如德, 然行之於楚, 以刻暴少恩亡其軀. 悲夫!

he therefore used that list, along with the questions of the disciples in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), to arrange this chapter.[25] The Grand Scribe must thus have had several sources at his disposal for his assessment of the disciples of Confucius, among which he chose the one that seemed to him the most reliable.

In the *Summaries*, of great importance are the values represented by a group of men called *shi* 士. The *shi* were men of the lowest segment of the hereditary aristocracy, who made their living as stewards and retainers of noble lineages. One significant element of their self-understanding was their common identity as men with a certain moral compass; thus I denote them hereafter as "men of breeding."[26] In no. 15, Lord of Mengchang 孟嘗君 is said to have been "hospitable to retainers and delighted in [the company of] men of breeding" (*hao ke xi shi* 好客喜士) and that, for this reason, "men of breeding had gathered together in Xue" (*shi gui yu Xue* 士歸于薛). These men appear in no. 25 as "the men of breeding from among the feudal lords" (*zhuhou zhi shi* 諸侯之士). Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE) is praised here for his ability to attract them to his court.

To the group of these men of breeding also belong, in a larger sense, the "assassin-retainers" (*cike* 刺客) who are ready to die for their lords, for instance in case of blood-enmity with another aristocratic clan. In the *Summary* of no. 26 (chapter 86), the assassin Yu Rang is praised for "his righteousness of not having two hearts" (*yi bu wei erxin* 義不為二心), meaning that he served only one master with utmost loyalty. As for the "wandering knights" (*youxia* 游俠),[27] the *Summary* no. 64 (chapter 124) sings a true song of praise for their rescuing others from danger,

25 SJ, 67.2226: 則論言弟子籍, 出孔氏古文近是. 余以弟子名姓文字悉取論語弟子問并次為篇, 疑者闕焉. The phrase "Kong *shi guwen*" 孔氏古文 ("old texts from the Kong family") probably alludes to the texts reportedly discovered in the old house of the Kong family by Kong Anguo 孔安國 (156–74 BCE), a descendant of Confucius. Kong is said to have acquired all the writings that were found at the demolition of his ancestral house. Among these texts was a version of the *Shangshu* 尚書 that differed considerably from the then circulating version and which was later called the *Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書, which Kong Anguo is said to have taught. See Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, p. 206. See also Su Zheyu's translation in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, p. 149, where *dizi ji* 弟子籍 is not understood as a title. Nevertheless, Su (p. 150, n. 235) refers to the suggestion by van Ess that both *dizi ji* and *dizi wen* 弟子問 were possibly titles of lost books. In that case, these would probably be the *Old Analects* (*Gu Lun* 古論), one of the three versions of the *Analects* that were probably later combined and arranged as what we now know as the *Analects*.

26 For the rendering of the term *shi* 士 as "men of breeding," see also Michael Nylan's essay in this volume. The term would later shift toward the meaning of "soldier."

27 For the difficulty of rendering the term *youxia* 游俠 adequately, see Clara Luhn's comments on her decision to maintain the previously used translation as "gallants." In a personal communication, Michael Nylan suggests that the term rather means something like "enforcers." My decision in favor of "knight," in a sense that points to the group's honorable conduct and not to their social status, follows the argument made by Burton Watson as quoted by Luhn in her translator's note in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 127.

helping those who cannot help themselves, being "trustworthy" (*xin* 信) and, at least in some cases, "righteous to the point of being taken as a model" (義者有取焉). When one compares the praise here with the judgment given in the corresponding chapter, one gains the impression that there the Grand Scribe hesitates, starting with a quotation from the *Han Fei zi* 韓非子 in which the (wandering) knights are criticized for trespassing the rules with their martial actions (*xia yi wu fan jin* 俠以武犯禁)[28] and ending with an equivocal assessment of Guo Xie as representative of the group.[29]

In the *Summaries* of nos. 47 to 49, although they all deal with military conflicts under Emperor Wu, emphasis is again laid on the ability of generals to attract men of breeding. Readers learn this as being characteristic of Dou Ying 竇嬰 (d. 131 BCE) (no. 47; chapter 107), of whom it is said that, "among the members of the royal clan, only [Dou] Ying held men of breeding in high respect and liked them, and these men were attracted to him" (宗屬唯嬰賢而喜士, 士鄉之). In no. 48 (chapter 108), Han Anguo 韓安國 (d. 127 BCE) is described as someone whose "lenience was sufficient so that he could use it in order to win other men" (*kuan zu yong deren* 寬足用得人), and of General Li Guang 李光 (d. 119 BCE) it is said in the *Summary* of no. 49 (chapter 109) that he "was full of affection for his officers and [ordinary] soldiers" (*ren'ai shizu* 仁愛士卒) and that, consequently, "the elder and younger soldiers [in his army] sided with him" (*shitu xiang zhi* 師徒鄉之).[30]

It is interesting to look at the *Summaries* of the two chapters that deal with two contrasted groups of officials, the "Principled Officials" (*xunli* 循吏), no. 59 (chapter 119) on the one hand, and the "Harsh Officials" (*kuli* 酷吏), no. 62 (chapter 122) on the other. As for the first group, the *Summary* describes officials, without naming any, who "upheld the laws" (*feng fa* 奉法) and thereby "followed their principles" (*xun li* 循理), "without boasting of their own merits" (*bu fa gong* 不伐功) or "bragging about their own talents" (*jin neng* 矜能). As for the second group, the "harsh officials," the *Summary* says about them that, in a time when people committed all kinds of trespassing, "good people would not have been able to change them for the better" (*shanren bu neng hua* 善人不能化), and "only through severe cuts one was able to make them equal [before the law]" (*wei yiqie yanxiao wei neng qi zhi* 唯一切嚴削為能齊之).[31] In other words, the author of the *Summaries* seems to estimate this group of hardliners as much as the reasonable officials. In clear contrast, the Grand Scribe's final judgment on the ten men presented in the chapter on the "harsh officials" is clearly negative. This is already expressed in the first sentence of his personal comment, where he says that "all ten men — from Zhi Du 郅都 to Du Zhou 杜周 — created a reputation for themselves through their harshness and violence."[32] Even though for some of the persons treated here, for example Zhang Tang 張湯 (*fl.* 130–115 BCE) at the very center of the chapter, a slightly more nuanced picture is drawn, the overall assessment is clearly a negative one, which is also the reason why the title of the chapter has been rendered by most translators as "harsh" or "ruthless officials."[33] As for the "Biographies of the Principled Officials," the discrepancy between the *Summary* and the chapter itself is not as sharp as in the case of the harsh officials. However, the remark that these officials were not praised by the "hundred cognomens" (*baixing* 百姓), that is, the long-established families, does not seem to be echoed by the content of the corresponding chapter.[34]

In the *Summary* of no. 65 (chapter 125), the "Cunning Favorites" (*ningxing* 佞幸) as a group are depicted positively as people who, in serving their ruler, managed to get close to him not only because he had a special preference for them, but also because "each of them had some special capability in which they excelled" (*neng yi ge you suo chang* 能亦各有所長). In the chapter itself, by contrast, the Grand Scribe draws a rather ambiguous picture of these favorites.[35] For example, the Grand Scribe says about two boys called Ji 籍 and Hong 閎, who served Han Emperors Gaozu and Hui 惠帝 (r. 194–188 BCE) respectively, that they were "favorites [of their monarchs], not because they had any talent or ability, but only because of their obedience and flatteries, and that because they lay down and got up together with the Emperor, [even] the high officials had access [to the emperor] only through them."[36] However, the Grand Scribe also mentions a certain Zhao Tong 趙同 who was favored by Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 180–157 BCE), thanks to his skills in astrology and the art of the ethers.[37] All in all, the picture of the favorites is that of sycophants.

28 SJ, 124.3181; cf. *Han Fei zi*, 49.9.2.

29 SJ, 124.3189.

30 In a postface to his translation, Enno Giele has adduced the *Summaries* of these chapters as a means to illuminate the messages of these three biographies: "It is this blending together textual elements on different levels of content and significance to form an intricately interconnected running narrative that accounts for the literary narrative of the *Shih chi*." (See Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, p. 233.) I think, however, that here too, instead of reading the contents of the *Summaries* and that of the *Biographies* together, it would be much more illuminative to read them against each other.

31 I owe this rendering of *qi zhi* 齊之 to Michael Nylan, whom I hereby thank also for her constructive remarks following her critical reading of this essay.

32 SJ, 122.3154: 太史公曰: 自郅都、杜周十人者, 此皆以酷烈為聲.

33 See, for example, Yang and Yang, *Selections from Records of the Historian by Szuma Chien*, p. 437: "harsh"; cf. Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 358: "ruthless."

34 SJ, 119.3099–3103.

35 SJ, 125.3191–3196.

36 SJ, 125.3191: (...) 非有材能, 徒以婉佞貴幸, 與上臥起, 公卿皆因關說.

37 SJ, 125.3192: 趙同以星氣幸.

The *Summary* of no. 66 (chapter 126), the "Quick-Witted Court Fools" (*guji* 滑稽), says about them that they "did not strive to gain any profit" (*bu zheng zhi li* 不爭埶利), "nor did they harm anyone" (*ren mo zhi hai* 人莫之害), but they "served in accordance with the Way" (*yi dao zhi yong* 以道之用).

Finally, what does no. 69 (chapter 129), the "Huozhi liezhuan" 貨殖列傳 ("Biographies of [People] Making Money"), tell us about this social group, whose members were mostly despised in Chinese history? In the *Summary*, they are denoted as "commoners having no official posts" (*buyi pifu zhi ren* 布衣匹夫之人) who will not hamper the upper classes in any respect. The fact that they are "capable of making use of the right moment to increase their wealth" (*qu yu yi shi er xi cai fu* 取與以時而息財富) is something that, according to the Grand Scribe, a knowledgeable man might take as a model. Remarkably, the term *li* 利 ("profit"), which one might have expected to find and which would certainly have turned the piece into a critique of this group, does not occur in the *Summary*. The corresponding chapter, by contrast, shows a quite complex structure, looking at the merchants from various perspectives rather than assessing them as positively as the *Summary* does.[38]

What we may conclude from this first look at the *Summaries* is that the protagonists dealt with in them may all be subsumed under the term "role models." That they "have something that a noble man may take as a model" (*you qu yan* 有取焉) is explicitly said in one of the *Summaries* (no. 64), and another (no. 69) remarks — about the merchants whose goods increase — that "an insightful man will select [the best] from them" (*zhizhe you cai yan* 智者有采焉).

As one can see from this brief comparison of the contents of the *Summaries* with that of the corresponding *Biographies*, the *Summaries* always contain some praise for the persons to whom a biography is devoted, whereas the assessment of the same persons in the corresponding chapter of the *Biographies* is mostly ambiguous or even wholly negative. The positive assessment in the *Summaries* is especially remarkable with regard to the "assassin-retainers," the "harsh officials," the "cunning favorites," and the merchants, a group not normally held in high esteem; all of these groups are shown to have at least something that a noble man — be it a king or an official — may learn from. In my view, this positive assessment in the *Summaries* evidences the initial conception of that last part of the *Shiji*, namely that only persons or groups of persons deemed worthy to be commemorated for posterity should be included therein. This is at striking variance with the judgments passed in the finalized corresponding chapters.[39]

38 For a detailed analysis of the assessment of the merchants in the *Shiji* as compared with the treatment of merchants in chapter 91 of the *Han shu*, see L'Haridon, "The Merchants in *Shiji*," and Nylan, "Assets Accumulating."

39 In the *Biographies* devoted to non-Han peoples, the "Xiongnu liezhuan," "Nan Yue liezhuan" 南越列傳, "Dong Yue liezhuan" 東越列傳, "Chaoxian liezhuan" 朝鮮列傳, and "Xi nan Yi liezhuan" 西南夷列傳 (chapters 110–116), these peoples themselves are less central than the military officials who won merits for China in dealing with them. These men are praised, albeit not always explicitly named, in the *Summaries*, and they are more closely assessed (with their names) in the respective *Biographies*.

2. A Closer Comparison between the *Summaries* and the Corresponding *Biographies*: Some Case Examples

After this overview, let us now take a closer look at some of the *Summaries* when compared with the corresponding *Shiji* chapters. The first case example will be the "Boyi liezhuan." This is what its *Summary* says:

> 末世爭利, 維彼奔義; 讓國餓死, 天下稱之. 作伯夷列傳第一.
>
> At the end of the age [of the Shang, people] were fighting for profit, / Only he fled [from Guzhu] due to [his sense of] righteousness; / After renouncing [the throne of] the domain he starved of hunger, / All under Heaven praised him. / Thus the "Biography of Boyi" will be made as the first.[40]

As mentioned before, it is important to note that, in the last line of this *Summary* as in the corresponding biography, mention is made only of Boyi, so that all that is said following the first line should be related to him only.[41]

Boyi's righteousness (*yi* 義) is at the core of this summary and, in order to understand in which respect he was noted there for this quality, we must recall that Boyi was the eldest of the three sons of the Lord of Guzhu 孤竹君 at the time of Zhou Xin 紂辛, the last Shang ruler, who is said to have lived in the eleventh century BCE. The lord wished to make his second son, Shuqi, his heir, instead of Boyi. After their father's death, Boyi did not want to act contrary to his father's wishes, while Shuqi did not want to deprive his elder brother of his birthright, so they both left Guzhu. In other words, Boyi's righteousness consisted in his decision not to act contrary to his father's wish but to leave his father's domain instead.

Let us now turn to the corresponding chapter of the *Shiji*.[42] Here the

40 SJ, 130.3312. Compare the recent rendering by van Ess, who also translates the summary in the plural, although he correctly renders the title as being related to Boyi only: "When in the last phase of an age one struggled for profit, / Only they raced to righteousness; / They declined a state and starved to death and / The Empire praised this. / Thus I created the 'Arrayed Memoirs of Po Yi, Number One.'" See Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 349.

41 Cf. Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian*, p. 11, who translated: "While a degenerate age scrambled for profit, they alone hastened to righteousness, relinquishing a state, starving to death, and for this the whole world praised them. Thus I made The Biography of Po Yi and Shu Ch'i." Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, p. 1, n. 1, remarks that "The title and content of the chapter vary in different editions," but I could not locate any "Boyi Shuqi liezhuan" in any other edition.

42 SJ, 61.2121–2129; cf. Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, pp. 1–11 (revised translation by William H. Nienhauser, Jr.).

biography proper — which clearly deals with both Boyi and Shuqi — is preceded by a discussion of the reliability of ancient sources with respect to what they said about worthy men of old. The Grand Scribe then quotes Confucius' words from the *Analects*, according to which Boyi and Shuqi "did not dwell on old offenses and thus they harbored little resentment."[43] To this he adds another passage from the *Analects*, in which Zigong 子貢 (520–450 BCE) asks Confucius what kind of people the two brothers were. When the master answers that they were worthies of old, Zigong wants to know if they harbored resentment (*yuan* 怨). To this Confucius replies: "They strove for humaneness and thus got humaneness, so why should they have harbored resentment?" 求仁而得仁, 又何怨.[44] As I understand it, this reply means that the two brothers felt no grudge because they considered that their father's wish was not acceptable and deemed it morally correct to leave Guzhu together.[45]

But the Grand Scribe does not seem to be content with the master's interpretation. He continues instead:

> 余悲伯夷之意, 睹軼詩可異焉.
>
> I was profoundly moved by Boyi's resolve, but looking at that apocryphal poem [of his], one should really feel strange about [this matter].[46]

Only after these sentences does the biography proper start, and we read the following story, which is not alluded to in the *Summary*: the brothers planned to turn to Chang, Earl of the West (Xi Bo Chang 西伯昌), after hearing that he cared well for the old, but, upon arriving there, they were shocked to learn that his son was leading an expedition against Zhou Xin immediately after his father's death, which they perceived as not filial and not humane, because as a vassal of the Shang, Chang's son would be committing regicide. Twice in this biography the term *yi* 義 occurs, first when a worthy minister saves the two brothers from the attack of attendants by declaring that "these are righteous men" (*ci yiren ye* 此義人也), a second time when we are told that "it was their righteousness not to eat the grain of Zhou" (*yi bu shi Zhou su* 義不食周粟).

43 *Lunyu*, 5.23: 子曰: "伯夷、叔齊不念舊惡, 怨是用希."

44 *Lunyu*, 7.15. I think that *qiu ren* 求仁 is equivalent with *yu ren* 欲仁 occurring slightly later in *Lunyu*, 7.30. Here *ren* is not something expected from others, but an inner state that one strives to reach.

45 For a different reading of both the *Lunyu* passage and the *Shiji* parallel, see van Ess, *Konfuzius*, p. 314, who translates thus: "Wer eine anständige Behandlung fordert und anständige Behandlung erhält, was hat der noch zu grollen?"

46 SJ, 61.2122. According to Sima Zhen's commentary, the term *yishi* 軼詩 means that the poem had not become part of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Poetry), hence my rendering it as "apocryphal." Cf. Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, p. 6, n. 36, who renders the term as "neglected poem." See also the comment by Sima Zhen: 是怨詞也, 故云可異焉 ("This is a poem of resentment, that is why [the text] says 'one should feel strange'").

Then the poem previously announced is rendered in full:

> 登彼西山兮, 采其薇矣. 以暴易暴兮, 不知其非矣. 神農、虞、夏忽焉沒兮, 我安適歸矣? 于嗟徂兮, 命之衰矣!
>
> I climb that West Mountain, / pluck its ferns. / He has replaced tyranny with tyranny, / without even recognizing his offense. / [The rulers] Shennong, Yu, and Xia have perished, / where shall I go, where to turn? / Alas it is all over, / my fate is sealed!

This is followed by the comment:

> 由此觀之, 怨邪非邪?
>
> Judging from this, did [Boyi] harbor resentment, or not?

In other words, the Grand Scribe doubts the reliability of Confucius' claim that Boyi scarcely harbored any resentment. The evidence he adduces to prove the contrary, the "apocryphal poem," probably a piece that survived only fragmentarily, serves him to prove that Boyi indeed felt resentment. The Grand Scribe thus rejects both Confucius' claim as transmitted in the *Analects* and, by adding a discussion of resentment, he does more than merely developing the idea expressed in the *Summary*. More importantly, the fact that figures such as Boyi and Shuqi would never have been remembered by later generations unless someone, in this case Confucius, had cared to make a record of them, goes far beyond mere biographical purpose and turns the chapter, as has already been suggested, into a programmatic chapter for the whole *Biographies* section.

To sum up, the difference between the *Summary* and the corresponding chapter of the *Shiji* seems to be of special relevance here. While the *Summary* wholly focuses on Boyi, the chapter itself deals with him and his brother mostly as an inseparable pair. The *Summary* unquestionably praises Boyi as a model of righteous action. In *Shiji* chapter 61, the biography proper is preceded by a discussion of the reliability of judgments passed on worthies of old in ancient sources. Confucius' claim concerning Boyi is called into question by the Grand Scribe, who refers to an "apocryphal poem" (*yishi*) as counter-evidence. In sum, this chapter of the *Shiji* turns out to be much more than a biography of Boyi (and Shuqi): it offers a theory of historiography and its responsibility in commemorating people whose existence would otherwise not be remembered by later generations — ideas quite different from the original concept of the chapter as it is laid down in the *Summary*. In my view, this makes apparent, right from the first chapter of the *Biographies* section, the difference between Sima Tan and Sima Qian, even if one concedes that Qian had done his best to write the chapter on the basis of his father's conception.[47]

47 In an earlier study, I had already suggested that the decision to place the figure of Boyi as a role model at the beginning of the *Biographies* part was Sima Tan's, while Sima Qian, in writing

The second case example is no. 3 (chapter 63) devoted to Lao zi and Han Fei. The summary says:

> 李耳無為自化, 清淨自正; 韓非揣事情, 循執理. 作老子韓非列傳第三.
>
> Li Er through non-interfering brought about a change of self, / Purely and quietly aligning himself; / Han Fei, by calculating the circumstances, / Followed the law of things. / Thus the "Biographies of Lao zi and Han Fei" will be made as no. 3.[48]

While the *Summary* mentions only the names of Lao zi and Han Fei, the corresponding chapter also includes biographies of Zhuang zi (following that of Lao zi) and of Shen Buhai (before that of Han Fei). There is an interesting passage at the end of the biographical account of Lao zi, where the Grand Scribe writes:

> 世之學老子者則絀儒學, 儒學亦絀老子. "道不同不相為謀," 豈謂是邪? "李耳無為自化, 清靜自正."
>
> Those who in this generation study Master Lao denigrate [the adherents] of the Confucian teachings, and [the adherents of] the Confucian teachings denigrate Master Lao. How can one say that "those whose ways are different cannot give each other counsel"? "Li Er through non-acting brought about a change of self, / purely and quietly correcting himself."[49]

What the Grand Scribe refers to here are scholarly debates, which he was apparently witnessing in his time, in which representatives of different schools showed little tolerance for each other. Remarkably, the same Confucian quote from the *Analects* ("道不同不相為謀") occurs also in the end of chapter 61 — only a few pages before the beginning of chapter 63 — seemingly pointing to the different attitudes taken by King Wu of the Zhou on the one hand, and by the brothers Boyi and Shuqi on the other.[50] The last sentence of the Grand Scribe's words repeats verbatim, or so it seems to me, the words of the last line of the *Summary* referring to Lao zi.[51]

down this chapter, clearly expressed doubts about the claim made by Confucius that Boyi felt no resentment (*yuan* 怨) in view of his fate. See Schaab-Hanke, "Sima Qians *Huo*-Zweifel in Kapitel 61 des *Shiji*," especially p. 138. For the programmatic intent of this opening chapter of the *Biographies* part of the *Shiji*, as compared with the opening biographical chapters in the *Han shu* and *Hou Han shu*, see the essay by Béatrice L'Haridon in this volume.

48 SJ, 130.3313.

49 SJ, 63.2142; for the last sentence, see n. 51.

50 Compare the parallel formulation in SJ, 61.2126. For the Confucian quote and its context, see *Lunyu*, 15.40; cf. van Ess, *Konfuzius*, p. 618.

51 For a different reading, see the remark by van Ess in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, p. 43, n. 21: "Several scholars believe this sentence is an interpolation from Ssu-ma Ch'ien's postface to the *Shih chi*." To some, this may seem to be the *lectio facilior*, but to me it seems much more plausible that Sima Qian here quotes his father's words.

Also remarkable is the final judgment of the Grand Scribe, who criticizes the four main protagonists dealt with in that chapter for their deficiencies: Lao zi, for his "words that were esoteric but difficult to understand" 辭稱微妙難識; Zhuang zi, for his exaggerations, "abandoning morality, and for letting loose his discussions" 散道德放論; Shen Buhai, for his too narrowly applying his theories on the relation between names and reality; and Han Fei, for his "maximizing cruelty and minimizing mercy" 極慘礉少恩.[52] Even though the last sentence acknowledges that Lao zi, in whose teachings all the others were rooted, was by far the most "deep and far-reaching" (*shenyuan* 深遠), the judgment passed there is quite different from the unambiguous praise expressed in the *Summary*.

Let us now consider the Summary of no. 26 (chapter 86), "Cike liezhuan" 刺客列傳 ("Biographies of the Assassin-Retainers"):

> 曹子七首, 魯獲其田, 齊明其信; 豫讓義不為二心. 作刺客列傳第二十六.
>
> Through the Seven-Headed [dagger] of Master Cao, / Lu captured [back] its fields, / And [Duke Huan of] Qi realized his (Cao's) trustworthiness; / It was the righteousness of Yu Rang not to harbor two [loyalties] in his heart. / Thus the "Biographies of the Assassin-Retainers" will be made as no. 26.

Two persons are mentioned here and praised for their actions. The first, Cao Mo, is a native of Lu 魯 who devoted his strength to serve Duke Zhuang 莊公 of Lu (r. 693–662 BCE). After losing three battles against Qi 齊, he nevertheless successfully gained back Lu's lost territory by menacing Duke Huan 桓公 of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE) with his "Seven-Headed" (*qishou* 七首) dagger. At first, Huan got angry, but his worthy advisor Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 BCE) admonished him not to be too greedy and to retrocede to Lu the land that he had captured from it. The second person mentioned, Yu Rang, served the Earl of Zhi 智伯, who greatly respected and honored him. Yu Rang decided to repay Zhi by killing Zhi's enemy, the Viscount Xiang 襄 of Zhao 趙 (r. 458–425 BCE). His first assassination attempt failed and he was caught. But the Viscount of Zhao was fond of Yu's principles and decided to release him, hoping Yu might serve him after the Earl had died. Yu, however, planned a second assassination attempt. When that also failed, he asked the viscount to give him some of his garments in order to take at least a symbolic revenge and, when he got the garments, he leaped in the air three times, then struck the garments and finally fell on his sword and died. Both men are praised in the *Summary* for the values they represented — Cao Mo for his trustworthiness (*xin* 信), Yu Rang for his loyalty to the Earl of Zhi (*bu wei erxin* 不為二心).

Now let us check the corresponding chapter. As said before, not only two, but altogether five representatives of the "assassin-retainers" group are dealt with therein.

52 SJ, 63.2156.

The Grand Scribe's final judgment starts with how, "in the present generation" (*shi* 世), the story of Jing Ke is narrated — apparently with exaggerations and errors in the author's view — and then he refutes the idea that Jing Ke in his attack had succeeded to injure the King of Qin. He also reports how the events known in relation to the various assassin-retainers had been transmitted to the scholars Gongsun Jigong 公孫季功 and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (traditional dates: *ca* 179–*ca* 104 BCE), probably one of Sima Qian's teachers. Then he writes:

> 自曹沫至荊軻五人, 此其義或成或不成, 然其立意較然, 不欺其志, 名垂後世, 豈妄也哉!
>
> From Cao Mo down to Jing Ke, these five men were righteous no matter if they were successful or not, but they were all firmly determined and did not betray their goals, so how could it be immoral to transmit their names to later generations?[53]

Here again we may perceive the ambiguous attitude of the Grand Scribe, who does not withhold from the reader that in the "present" — presumably Sima Qian's — generation, the story of Jing Ke was narrated with exaggerations and errors, and somehow seems to struggle with the credibility of these stories, but who at the end of the chapter duly assesses that all five protagonists subsumed there under the label "assassins" may be justly taken as models representing the positive values of what we have called here "men of breeding" (*shi*).[54]

The fourth and last example in this essay will be no. 24 (chapter 84). In the *Summary* we read:

> 作辭以諷諫, 連類以爭義, 離騷有之. 作屈原賈生列傳第二十四.
>
> He composed words to criticize indirectly, / Stringing together metaphors in his striving for righteousness, / In "Encountering Sorrow" this is [all] contained. / Thus the "Biographies of Qu Yuan and Master Jia" will be made as no. 24.[55]

The first thing to be noted here is that, except from the formulaic last sentence, which concerns both Qu Yuan and Jia Yi, the summary is wholly centered on Qu Yuan. This is evidenced especially by the penultimate verse, where the above-mentioned "Lisao" — a narrative poem that is the first and foremost piece of the *Songs from the South* (*Chuci* 楚辭) anthology — is mentioned as the work in which Qu Yuan used all these metaphors. Qu Yuan is portrayed as a man who used words in order to "express indirect criticism" (*fengjian* 諷諫), one of the central virtues of a *shi* 士 of old, along with his striving for righteousness (*zheng yi* 爭義).

53 SJ, 86.2538.

54 For an earlier analysis of the *Shiji* chapter on the Assassin-Retainers, see Schaab-Hanke, "Dolchstecher, Bluträcher."

55 SJ, 130.3314.

Chapter 84 (which is devoted to both Qu Yuan and Jia Yi) starts with a biography of Qu Yuan and continues with a — much shorter — biography of Jia Yi, which includes two of his rhapsodies, the "Rhapsody Bemoaning Qu Yuan" ("Diao Qu Yuan fu" 吊屈原賦) and the "Rhapsody on an Owl" ("Funiao fu" 鵩鳥賦).[56] As Jia Yi lived about two hundred years after Qu Yuan, the relation is neither one of contemporaneity nor, as far as we know, blood, but rather an inner affinity that justifies the dealing with these two persons in one biography. Indeed, Jia Yi himself is depicted in this biography as someone to whom Qu Yuan meant very much, and the Grand Scribe reflects on how Jia Yi dealt with Qu Yuan as a role model.[57] In his final remarks, he writes:

> 余讀"離騷"、"天問"、"招魂"、"哀郢," 悲其志. 適長沙, 觀屈原所自沈淵, 未嘗不垂涕, 想見其為人. 及見賈生弔之, 又怪屈原以彼其材, 游諸侯, 何國不容, 而自令若是. 讀"服鳥賦," 同死生, 輕去就, 又爽然自失矣.
>
> When I read "Encountering Sorrow," "Questions to Heaven," "Summoning the Soul," and "A Lament for Ying,"[58] I am moved by Qu Yuan's resolve. Whenever I go to Changsha and see the place where Qu Yuan drowned himself in the [Miluo] stream, I always weep and wish I could see what kind of person he was. And when I see how Scholar Jia had bewailed him, however, I wonder why Qu Yuan, with his enormous talents, who would have been welcomed by any state if he had traveled to one of these feudal lords, had decided in this way for himself! And when I read the "Rhapsody on an Owl," where life and death are equated with each other, taking the question lightly whether one should leave or remain in service, I feel myself utterly at a loss.[59]

Several aspects in this passage merit our attention. Firstly, this is one of the places where the Grand Scribe uses the first-person pronoun *yu* 余 to tell his reader what he has read. This suggests that his reading of these works and his traveling to the location of Qu Yuan's suicide have aroused feelings in him; even stronger

56 SJ, 84.2481–2502; cf. Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, pp. 543–569 (revised translation by Christine Welch).

57 In Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7, pp. 571–572, Welch, who also notes that there is nothing but an inner bond between these two biographies, writes: "Scholars have also argued that Ch'ü Yüan's biography was cobbled together to serve as a foil for that of Chia Yi. But it is more likely that Ch'ü Yüan's is the basic text here, since the surrounding biographies in the *Shih chi* (Lu Chung-lien, Tsou Yang and Lü Pu-wei) were individuals from the pre-Ch'in era (...). Instead, we agree with [David] Hawkes (...) that the similarity of their biographies (...) was the reason for the interesting integration of these two men's biographies." (The reference is to Hawkes, *The Songs of the South*.)

58 These are all titles of sections of the *Chuci*.

59 SJ, 84.2503. Cf. the recent translation of this passage by Martin Kern, "The 'Masters' in the *Shiji*," p. 362. Kern interprets the formulation, which he calls both "emotional" and "formulaic," as being "less a function of truth-seeking historiography and more one of personal choice, perhaps shaped by Sima Qian's own experience." See also Martin Kern's essay in this volume.

feelings seem to have been aroused by his reading of Jia Yi's rhapsody, which taught him a different lesson about life and death. Without any doubt, the Grand Scribe here reflects in a very emotional way on both Qu Yuan's and Jia Yi's fates, which suggests that these two men are of special importance to him.[60]

On the one hand, the Grand Scribe seems to admire Qu Yuan for his decision to depart from life after he had been badly slandered and had lost the confidence of his ruler King Huai of Chu 楚懷王 (r. 328–299 BCE); on the other hand, he also admires Jia Yi, who, at first a highly estimated minister under Emperor Wen, was likewise slandered as soon as he attempted to promulgate major reforms of the dynastic calendar and rites, and was then demoted to a post far from the capital on the emperor's command. Jia Yi traveled to Changsha 長沙, crossed the Xiang river 湘江 and wrote a rhapsody to commemorate Qu Yuan (the "Diao Qu Yuan fu"). He then served for three years at the court of the King of Changsha, during which time he wrote his "Rhapsody on an Owl," before being recalled to the court of Emperor Wen for appointment as tutor of one of the emperor's sons. Jia Yi died shortly after his pupil fatally fell from a horse. When read as a coherent text, the biographies of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi give the impression that the demonstration of some close, hidden link between the two men — of which nothing is found in the *Summary* — is of special concern to Sima Qian.[61]

While Jia Yi is already depicted as someone whose fate was similar to that of Qu Yuan but who decided in favor of life instead of choosing death, the Grand Scribe seems to argue with Jia Yi that he doubts whether Qu Yuan's death was really necessary. This struggling with the question of life or death reminds one very much of Sima Qian's reflections on precisely this topic in his letter to Ren An 任安 (d. *ca* 91 BCE).[62] And there is a further hint that points to a close relationship

60 For an attempt to distinguish between Sima Tan and Sima Qian by looking at the use of *yu* 余 and *wu* 吾 as first-person pronouns in the Grand Scribe's personal remarks, see Schaab-Hanke, *Der Geschichtsschreiber als Exeget*, pp. 405–428. It is certainly true, as van Ess, "The Friends of Sima Tan and Sima Qian," p. 68, n. 4, has argued, that in some cases *yu* might also have been used by Sima Tan, but this occurs mostly when Sima Qian reports his father's words. Typical of Qian is, as I argued there, the use of the first-person pronoun *yu* 余 when a subjective perception, reading, reflection (etc.) is expressed.

61 I would thus suggest that this is one of the cases where even the title of the chapter has been altered by Sima Qian, from an original "Qu Yuan liezhuan" to a "Qu Yuan Jia sheng liezhuan." If this is true, we would even have to reckon with the fact that the formulaic sentence at the end of each *Summary* was something that had not yet been fixed in Sima Tan's original conception, but was only added in Sima Qian's later reshaping of the *Summaries* into postscripts documenting that he had completed his father's project.

62 *Han shu*, 62.2725–2736; cf. *Wenxuan* 文選, 41.7a–18b, "Bao Ren Shaoqing shu" 報任少卿書 ("Response Letter to Ren Shaoqing"). For a discussion of this letter, see Schaab-Hanke, "In eigener Sache," p. 89; Schaab-Hanke, "Inheritor of a Subversive Mind?," especially pp. 210–214, and the essays collected in Durrant, Li, Nylan, and van Ess, *The Letter to Ren An and Sima Qian's Legacy*.

between Sima Qian and Jia Yi: shortly before the final remarks of the Grand Scribe begin, the reader learns that the Grand Scribe was in direct contact with Jia Jia 賈嘉, Jia Yi's grandson, a highly educated person, who had sent a letter to him.[63] Perhaps this direct contact that Sima Qian had, according to his own words, with Jia Yi's descendant is also the reason why the latter is addressed in the title of the biography as "Jia *sheng*" 賈生 instead of his full name.[64] The Grand Scribe's last sentence, namely that he wondered how Qu Yuan could come to such an end, shows that, far from simply praising Qu Yuan for his devotedness, he clearly struggled with Qu Yuan's decision to commit suicide. In this instance again the topic of "resentment" (*yuan* 怨) appears to have had a special significance for Sima Qian.

To sum up, we have several reasons to assume that Sima Tan had originally conceived only of a biography of Qu Yuan, and that it was Sima Qian's own decision to combine Jia Yi's biography with it.

3. Differences between the *Summaries* and the Corresponding *Biographies* as Seen in the Light of Differences between Sima Tan and Sima Qian

As should have become evident from the examples discussed in the preceding sections, the approach of reading the *Summaries* against the contents of corresponding chapters of the *Shiji* instead of reading them together, as has hitherto mostly been done, reveals remarkable differences between them both in terms of contents and judgments passed. One of these differences that was already discussed was that, in the *Summaries*, there is mostly only one protagonist or at least very few, while in the corresponding biographies there are often more persons who are related to the main protagonist or protagonists either through blood relations or due to some affinity (as in the Qu Yuan/Jia Yi case). Furthermore, the judgment passed on the protagonists to whom a *Summary* is devoted is simple and clear, the values emphasized are often those of the old men of breeding, and most importantly, the

63 SJ, 130.2503: 與余通書. It is also said there that under Emperor Zhao 昭帝 (r. 87–74 BCE), Jia Jia was appointed to one of the Nine Ministers (*jiuqing* 九卿) positions. If this information is not — as van Ess, "The Friends of Sima Tan and Sima Qian," p. 307, n. 85, has suggested — a "later interpolation," then it would be one of the latest data mentioned in the *Shiji* and could thus be safely assigned to Sima Qian. Note that Jia Jia is also mentioned among the scholars who specialized in the *Shangshu* in SJ, 121.3125.

64 Much has already been speculated with regard to the question if addresses such as "Jia *sheng*," "Fu *sheng*" 伏生 and "Dong *sheng*" 董生 might imply a special relation of either Sima Tan or Sima Qian to the person thus addressed. In "The Friends of Sima Tan and Sima Qian," p. 68, van Ess has rejected this idea with regard to Dong Zhongshu, arguing that the "Master Dong" mentioned in SJ, 86.2538, refers to someone else.

assessment of their subjects is always positive. In contrast, in the *Biographies* the Grand Scribe's judgment passed on the protagonists is often ambiguous and hesitating: the opinions of one or other authority referred to are discussed, documents that shed a new light on the circumstances are adduced, positive and negative aspects are weighed up against each other, and very often doubt is expressed (as, for instance, in the programmatic Boyi chapter).

In this section, I will argue that the differences that became apparent between the *Summaries* and the *Biographies* indicate important differences in thinking between Sima Tan and Sima Qian. In order to be able to substantiate this hypothesis in more detail, I shall first make a few comments on the educational and professional background of Sima Tan and of his son Qian, and also on some key experiences of both. Even though much of this has been already discussed at length, I hope to be able to shed new light on some aspects.

What we know about Sima Tan's educational background comes primarily from his son's account in *Shiji* chapter 130. There we learn that his father had studied the arts of heaven (*tianguan* 天官)[65] with Tang Du 唐都,[66] had studied the *Changes* (*Yi* 易) with Yang He 楊何, and had practiced the Way with a certain Master Huang (Huang zi 黃子).[67] We also learn from the same chapter that his father had attained a position at the imperial court between the eras Jianyuan (140–135 BCE) and Yuanfeng 元封 (110–105 BCE).[68] Since Tang Du was the first to attain this position under Emperor Wu, Sima Tan must have been his successor; Sima Qian inherited this office three years after his father's death, in 107 BCE.[69] From all this we can see that Sima Tan's professional specialization was what we would nowadays denote as astronomy mixed with astrology. Part of his duties were the calculation of the calendar[70] and the preparations for the Feng 封 and Shan 禪 sacrifices on Mount Tai

65 *Tianguan* refers to all the skills needed for interpreting the phenomena observed in the sky and their impact on the earth and the people. Pankenier, "Astrology for an Empire," gives the term the literal translation "Celestial Offices."

66 Tang Du was a specialist in astronomy, astrology, and the calendar. His ancestors are said to have been responsible for the arts of heaven in the kingdom of Chu for several generations in the pre-imperial era. According to SJ, 26.1260, Tang Du was a master of methods (*fangshi* 方士) and summoned to court as an official responsible for all affairs related to the arts of heaven shortly after Emperor Wu's accession. For Tang Du, see also Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, p. 502.

67 SJ, 130.3288: 太史公學天官於唐都, 受易於楊何, 習道論於黃子. This "Master Huang" is mostly understood in secondary literature as being a Huang-Lao 黃老 specialist, while van Ess, in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 316, n. 30, associates him with an event at the time of Emperor Jing. Yang He is identified by Xu Guang 徐廣 in the *Jijie* 集解 commentary as a man from Zaichuan 菑川.

68 SJ, 130.3288.

69 SJ, 130.3296.

70 As I have pointed out in Schaab-Hanke, "Crisis and Reform of the Calendar as Reflected in *Shiji* 26," p. 46, there were in fact two calendar reforms under Emperor Wu, the first in 110 BC, the very year in which Sima Tan died, and the second in 104 BCE. The first was probably prepared by Sima Tan, the second by his son and successor in office, Qian. Both probably contributed to the compilation of the "Treatise on the Calendar" ("Lishu" 曆書) in *Shiji* chapter 26. At the end of Han Anguo's biography in SJ, 108.2865, Sima Qian writes in the "Lord Grand Scribe's personal remark" that he and his colleague Hu Sui 壺遂 (*fl.* 105–104 BCE) had fixed the pitch pipes and the calendar. See also Schaab-Hanke, "The Power of an Alleged Tradition," p. 265, n. 92.

泰山, following the old theory according to which Heaven would favor the rise of a sage monarch at intervals of five hundred years.[71] As is well known, the year 110 BCE was precisely the year in which Emperor Wu would conduct these sacrifices. Sima Tan, to whom the outcome of these sacrifices was so important, was not allowed to take part in this event. He then fell seriously ill in Zhounan 周南,[72] and when Sima Qian came to see him there, Tan lay on the point of death and beseeched his son to faithfully record the outcome of the sacrifices in the *magnum opus* that he had begun on his own initiative[73] and which he hoped his son would bring to completion.[74]

About his own educational background, Sima Qian writes that, at the age of ten, he had mastered the old texts (*guwen* 古文).[75] In his *Suoyin* 索隱 commentary,

71 For Sima Qian's report of how his father had reckoned the passing of years up to Emperor Wu's conducting of the sacrifices, see SJ, 130.3296, as well as the reckoning in SJ, 130.3295. The numbers in both passages are contradictory.

72 SJ, 130.3295. According to the *Jijie* commentator Xu Guang, the old Zhounan was situated in what is "nowadays Luoyang" (今之洛陽).

73 Note that it was the task of scribes of old to record truthfully the events that occurred in their respective kingdoms. As I have argued in Schaab-Hanke, "Schreiber (*shi* 史) als Autoritäten in der Rezeption des *Shiji*, Teil II," p. 156, the important role that the accounts of scribes of old play in the *Shiji* account even justifies rendering the title *Shiji* as "Records of the Scribes."

74 SJ, 130.3295. As analyzed in detail in Schaab-Hanke, "Der Herrscher und sein Richter," especially pp. 143–146, Sima Qian indeed made a faithful record of the outcome of these sacrifices, intentionally writing the same content relating to these sacrifices twice in the *Shiji*, in chapters 12 ("Jinshang benji" 今上本紀, the annals of Emperor Wu) and 28 ("Fengshan shu" 封禪書, the treatise on the Feng and Shan sacrifices). There Sima Qian writes that he had accompanied the emperor while he conducted the sacrifices and "had seen precisely both the outside and the inside," and he continues to state that "noble men of later [generations] would be able to recognize it (the truth) from this [record]" 具見其表裏, 後有君子, 得以覽焉. By contrast, cf. van Ess' speculation added to the summary of chapter 12 in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 334, n. 113: "One may wonder whether this [parallelism of content] suggests that the chapter was put here by Ssu-ma Ch'ien after all, or whether a forger read this summary before he took chapter 28 to replace an original chapter 12."

75 SJ, 130.3293: 年十歲則誦古文. Cf. van Ess in Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 11, p. 321, who renders *guwen* 古文 as "ancient texts." However, as Fuehrer, "Sima Qian as a Reader of Master Kong's Utterances," p. 26, has discussed in detail, it could also well be that this refers concretely to those scripts that Kong Anguo had taught, the *Guwen Shangshu* and perhaps also the *Gu Lun*. Since Kong Anguo later established his own school, where he read the texts in the ancient script, it might be that Sima Qian had either studied for some time directly with him, or with Ni Kuan 兒寬 (d. 103 BCE), one of Kong's disciples, who later became a colleague of Sima Tan and Sima Qian and worked together with them on the new calendar of the Han. For the Grand Scribe's remark on his using an old text from the Kong family, see also n. 25 above.

Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (679–732) says that Qian had studied with Master Fu (Fu *sheng* 伏生),[76] and had thus mastered the *Shangshu* 尚書 in ancient script (*Guwen Shangshu* 古文尚書). He further refers to a Mister Liu (Liu *shi* 劉氏) who had suggested that the term *guwen* also served to denote texts such as the *Zuo Tradition* (*Zuo zhuan* 左傳), *Discourses of the States* (*Guoyu* 國語) and *Origin of Lineages* (*Xiben* 系本).[77] Also according to Sima Qian's autobiographical remarks preserved in the last chapter of the *Shiji*, he had traveled far in his youth, taught what he had learned in the capitals of Qi and Lu, and after his return received a position at Emperor Wu's court as palace gentleman and imperial envoy.[78] We may thus cautiously conclude that Sima Qian in his youth had already personally benefited from the new opportunities that opened up with the establishment of chairs for individual Classics during Emperor Wu's reign.[79]

Sima Tan, though certainly not extensively trained in the reading of the *Classics* and their exegesis, seems to have laid much stress on questions such as the relations between Heaven and Earth, the values represented by the men of breeding discussed before, the question of how the existing schools of thought could be synthesized,[80] and the lessons of history. All these questions taken together must have led him to conceive his grand work, which no emperor had entrusted him with but which may nevertheless be understood as a logical outcome of his self-understanding as a scribe.[81] This attempt at synthesizing is at least what may be concluded from his famous *Discussion of the Essentials of the Six Schools* (*Liujia zhi yaozhi lun* 六家之要旨論), which Sima Qian also included in the last chapter and which is, apart from the contents of the seventy *Summaries* (according to my

76 Master Fu 伏生, who is identified, following the *Jijie* commentary, as Fu Sheng 伏勝, is recorded in the "Rulin liezhuan" as the scholar who, during the disorder of the Qin dynasty, had hidden in his house a copy of the *Shangshu* and found a damaged version of it when he later returned, which was then rewritten in the "new script." Emperor Wen wanted to appoint him to a post in the capital, but Fu declined because of his old age. See SJ, 121.3124. If Sima Qian had studied with him, he probably had to go to Qi or Lu, where he is said to have taught. See also n. 64.

77 SJ, 130.3294: 遷及事伏生, 是學誦"古文尚書." 劉氏以為"左傳"、"國語"、"系本"等書, 是亦名古文也.

78 See SJ, 130.3293.

79 For the establishment of these chairs and the first doctors installed at the Imperial Academy, see *Shiji* chapter 121. See also the essay by Michael Nylan in this volume.

80 This ideal of a direction of thinking that unifies all other "schools" as defined by Tan, and even adds to the *Classics* what is still lacking there, is not only expressed in his *Discussion of the Essentials of the Six Schools* but also, with more nuance, in the last of the *Summaries* (see n. 9). The famous formulation that one unified school should be established (*cheng yijia zhi yan*) would therefore, according to my reading, have been made first by Tan, not Qian.

81 For the tradition of scribes recording faithfully the historical events of their respective kingdoms in the time prior to the unification of the empire, see Schaab-Hanke, "Schreiber (*shi* 史) als Autoritäten in der Rezeption des *Shiji*."

working thesis), the only text that may be safely attributed to Sima Tan. Interestingly, Sima Qian lets his readers know that the reason Sima Tan had written this essay was because he was "concerned that scholars would not open their minds and adhere strictly to their school teachings."[82] One may wonder if by saying this he also had in mind his own son Qian, with his education in text exegesis.

And there is another often-adduced textual passage which also might serve to corroborate the thesis that Sima Tan's share in the grand work was primarily concentrating on the first four parts of the work — the "Basic Annals" (*benji* 本紀), "Tables" (*biao* 表), "Treatises" (*shu* 書) and "Hereditary Houses" (*shijia* 世家) — because all these seemed to have served him to find answers to the question of how history worked as a kind of all-encompassing mechanism moving Heaven and Earth. It is the short passage in which Sima Qian says that his father's duty was "to deal with the Office of Heaven, [but] not with governing the people," and that "he had a son named Qian."[83] In my view, this remark suggests that it was his father's idea that Sima Qian's major task should be to write out the biographies of persons worthy to be remembered as role models for rulers and worthies of the future. As suggested before, however, what Sima Tan presented in his *Summaries* were only the broad lines, while deciding how to write out the *Biographies* was ultimately Sima Qian's responsibility. Of course, the decision to add to the *Biographies* further protagonists, who were related to the original figures either by blood or by some affinity, was also an option that Sima Qian apparently did not consider to be a violation of the original concept.

A further difference between Sima Tan and Sima Qian concerns what may be called their life experience. Although this aspect has also previously been much discussed, it may be useful to mention it in this context too. Though we cannot know for sure how sincerely Sima Tan believed that Emperor Wu would turn out to be a sage monarch after having conducted the Feng and Shan sacrifices, it was his duty to do everything he could to create the conditions for his emperor to perform them. What we know for certain, however, is that Sima Qian did not believe that Wu was a good emperor. Sima Qian probably did not have much sympathy for this "martial" emperor even before he was so heavily punished with castration following his involvement in the so-called Li Ling 李陵 affair, in 98 BCE.[84] After this event, and after Sima Qian had, according to what he wrote in his famous letter to Ren An,

82 SJ, 130.3288: 太史公仕於建元元封之閒, 愍學者之不達其意而師悖, 乃論六家之要指.

83 SJ, 130.3293: 太史公既掌天官, 不治民. 有子曰遷.

84 SJ, 130.3300. For a detailed account of the events centering on the general Li Ling case, whom Sima Qian had defended against the reproach of having surrendered to the Xiongnu instead of sacrificing himself and his army in a desperate situation, see Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, pp. 224–225.

struggled with the decision of whether to commit suicide out of shame or stay alive in order to fulfill his father's wish and bring the *magnum opus* to an end, his feelings for Emperor Wu had certainly worsened further. That this crucial and devastating experience in Sima Qian's life had generally drawn him toward resentment (*yuan* 怨) is something that, I think, has left traces in his thinking and writing. This may be adduced as a further aspect in which differences between father and son Sima may be perceived.

Concluding Remarks

In this study I have attempted, on the basis of previous approaches of mine, to distinguish between the respective contributions of Sima Tan and Sima Qian in the *Shiji*, and to find evidence for the working thesis that all the *Summaries* of the 130 *Shiji* chapters that have been included by Sima Qian in the last, autobiographical chapter of the *Shiji*, were authored by his father, Sima Tan. As stated at the outset of this essay, the confinement of this approach to the seventy chapters of this fifth part of the *Shiji*, the *Biographies*, is a good starting point for such research since, in my view, there are clear indicators in the *Shiji* text itself that all the *Biographies* have been authored by Sima Qian, although he certainly had at his disposal, apart from the very scarce guidelines given by the *Summaries*, other materials left behind by his father that he could use for the finalization of these chapters. These indicators, which an attentive reader may perceive when reading the *Summaries* against the *Biographies* rather than as synopses of their contents, may be sensed from the way in which the author of the *Biographies* struggled with the assessments of protagonists given in the *Summaries*; how he weighed different accounts of one person against each other and adduced evidence from various sources; and how he, mostly either at the beginning or in the final assessments of the persons dealt with in the *Biographies*, arrived mostly at an ambiguous rather than a positive picture of the main protagonists, while still trying his best to fulfill the task with which his father had entrusted him, and to preserve his father's legacy.

A comparative analysis of the other four parts of the *Shiji* will be much more difficult, because one has to reckon with the very different states in which Sima Tan may have left his own work behind. Possibilities range from whole chapters already finalized by Sima Tan, to chapter parts written by Tan and finalized by Qian, to chapters entirely written by Qian but possibly based on materials prepared by his father. Once I hoped to be able to pursue this study further by myself, but it would take years, and besides, the search for the share of Sima Tan and Sima Qian in the *Shiji* is a rather thankless venture, because too many people who are considered experts in the field regard such an approach as being unrealizable. Yet I am still convinced that, in order to gain a better understanding of the *Shiji* with its many discussions and often seemingly contradictory statements, it is of central importance to keep in mind the possibility that the Simas' work is the result of complex teamwork.

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