

extant is unknown, but a great many must have been destroyed in the upheavals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

20.4 Historiography

History was written by officials for officials—Etienne Balazs

One of the unique features of Chinese historical studies is that a very large number of the primary sources were works produced in or preserved by a conscious tradition of historical writing and compilation often by officials. The two most famous works of historical criticism (*shiping* 史評) were:

Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721), *Shitong* 史通 (Generalities on history), 710.³

Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801), *Wenshi tongyi* 文史通義 (General meaning of historiography), 1832, Shanghai guji, 1993.⁴

Note also *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (30.1).

Because of the long and sophisticated historiographical tradition in China, instead of working from official archives or private documents (as in post-Rankean European historiography), the modern student of Chinese history is liable to be handling historical works compiled by Chinese historians continuously over the last 3,000 years. In order to be able to assess the qualities and the biases of these works, clearly some knowledge of the aims and methods of the historians and compilers who produced them is essential.

Furthermore, in order to be able to start looking for primary sources on the topic of his choice, the student of Chinese

³ Liu's work is discussed by Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Chinese Historical Criticism, Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang," in *Historians of China and Japan*, William G. Beasley and Edwin G. Pulleyblank, eds., OUP, 1961, 135–66; David McMullen, *State and Scholarship in Tang China*, CUP, 1988, "History," 159–205. Guy Gagnon, *Concordance Combinée du Shitong et du Shitong xiaofan*, 2 vols., Maisonneuve, 1977. For a translation, see Stuart H. Sargent, "Liu Chih-chi: *Understanding History: The Narration of Events*," in *Renditions* 15: 27–35 (1981).

⁴ On Zhang's work, see David S. Nivison, *The Life and Thought of Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng (1738–1801)*, SUP, 1966.

history will also need to know how traditional historians organized their materials and classified different types of sources. This is a subject discussed in section 9.3.⁵

The characteristics of traditional Chinese historical writing were as follows: (1) Chinese historians were typically Confucian literati, but more significantly, they were also officials. Their primary focus was on politics defined as the affairs of state, which meant the record of imperial government. In common with officials in other societies, the final record that they compiled was based on official documents and encoded into bureaucratic (Confucian) categories. These were usually far removed from actual transcripts of conversations or events. From this follow the second, third, and fourth characteristics of traditional historical writing: (2) its many close connections with government and the orthodox ideology, as seen in the theory of *zhengtong* 正統 (legitimate succession), which official historians traced in an effort to legitimize new dynasties (see Box 8 at the end of this chapter); also as seen in the compilation of compendia of historical precedents as a guide to official action; (3) its strong moral didacticism, with the historian's duty being to bestow *baobian* 褒貶 (praise and blame), using Confucian moral tenets as the yardstick; (4) its ruthless excision of anything judged in conflict with the above two concerns (thus not only a focus on the elite and its ideology but also a particularly narrow focus on that elite). Additional characteristics of

⁵ Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the Tang*, CUP, 1992, analyzes the process of official historical writing and compilation at a formative period. Beasley and Pulleyblank (1961) contains 11 papers on different aspects of Chinese traditional historical writing and still forms the best interpretive introduction to the subject in a Western language. *Essays on the Sources for Chinese History*, Donald Daniel Leslie, Colin Mackerras and Wang Gungwu, eds., ANU, 1973; Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1975, has some excellent chapters which are cited in the appropriate chapters of the manual. Han Yu-shan, *Elements of Chinese Historiography*, W. M. Hawley, 1955, contains a lot of basic information. Charles S. Gardner (1900-66), *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, HUP, 1938; rev. ed., 1961, provides a brief overview.

China's traditional historical writing are: (5) its early elevation to the status of an activity differentiated from other branches of writing, to which great importance was attached for two millennia of continuous historical production;⁶ (6) its development into many well defined genres and subgenres; (7) its scholarly attention to such ancillary disciplines as cataloguing, calendrical sciences, historical geography, ancient scripts and artifacts; and (8) its development of a philosophy of history.⁷

20.5 *Private Historical Writing*

In addition to official historical writing, a large amount of historical works were written privately (*sisbi* 私史). Often they followed the main forms of the official histories, including annals, annals-biography, topically arranged histories and so forth (Table 12, section 9.3). Indeed, many of the most distinguished works in the official historical canon were credited to or written by private individuals, for example the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 or

⁶ On the overlap between early historical and literary narrative, see David Derwei Wang, "Fictional History/Historical Fiction," in *Studies in Language and Literature* I (1985), 64–74; Anthony C. Yu, "History, Fiction and the Reading of Chinese Narrative," in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* X (1988), 1–19; Andrew H. Plaks, "Toward a Critical Theory of Chinese Narrative," in Plaks, *Chinese Narrative, Critical and Theoretical Essays*, PUP, 1977, 309–52; Sheldon Hsiao-peng Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative*, SUP, 1994; Henri Maspero, "Historical Romance in History," in *China in Antiquity*, Frank A. Kierman, Jr., tr., Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1978, 357–65; and David Johnson, "Epic and History in Early China: The Matter of Wu Tzu-hsu," *JAS* 40.2: 255–71 (1981). See also studies of early historical works such as the *Zuozhuan* or the *Mu tianzi zhuan*.

⁷ For an overview of Chinese historiography arranged by themes (for example, "talking straight and making a point by indirection," or "the advantages and disadvantages of national, informal and family histories"), see Qu Lindong 瞿林東, *Zhongguo gudai shixue piping zongheng* 中國古代史學批評縱橫 (An evaluation of historical criticism in ancient China), Zhonghua, 1994. For a bibliography of Chinese writing on historiography between 1900 and 1985, see *Zhongguo shixueshi yanjiu shuyao* 中國史學史研究述要, Yang Yixiang 楊翼驥 et al., eds., Tianjin jiaoyu, 1996.

the *Shiji* 史記. Private historical writing also took many other forms, including scholarly commentaries, studies of primary sources, and informal jottings (*biji* 筆記). There were special terms to distinguish privately written histories from official ones, for example, *bieshi* 別史, *zashi* 雜史 and *yeshi* 野史.

The definition of *bieshi* (lit. "separate history") changed over time. In general it was applied to nonofficial works which were not in annals or annals-biography form (*jizhuanti* 紀傳體). Sometimes it was used interchangeably with *zashi*, but normally the distinction between the two was that *bieshi* were considered more serious works, lying somewhere between *zhengshi* 正史 on the one hand and *zashi* on the other. *Zashi* (chap. 24) were often in the form of *biji* (chap. 31). *Baishi* 稗史 was a term sometimes used in book catalogs in the sense of record of folkways, otherwise just as another word for nonofficial history. The general expression *yeshi* 野史 was not used as a category in book catalogs. In ordinary language it meant nonofficial histories written about the dynasty of the day (private history, as opposed to official history). *Yeshi* flourished in the *Nan-Bei Chao*, in the Song and in the Ming. From the Qing onward they typically recount in a semifictional way life at the court. *Waishi* 外史 (informal history) was normally used in the titles of fictional narratives, the most famous example being the eighteenth-century satire *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (*The Scholars*).⁸

Shichao (historical excerpts) began to be published in the Song. They consist of quotations usually culled from the Standard Histories.

Zaiji (contemporary records) are the histories of states not regarded as legitimate. As recorded, for example, in *Wu-Yue chungiu* (Table 18, section 19.1), in the *Shiliuguo chungiu* (45.2) or in the *Manshu* (41.5.1).

Bieshi, *zaiji* or *baishi* were also often classified as *zashi*.

⁸ Harold Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes*, Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1971; rpnt., 1978, contains a perceptive study of official and unofficial historiography of the later empire.

Box 8: Five-Element Theory (Wuxing 五行)

From the Warring States to the *Nan-Bei Chao*, it was considered vital to correctly identify the pattern of the rise and fall of dynasties and to identify each dynasty with the right one of the five elements or agents.⁸ At first these were ordered in a mutually overcoming cycle (*xiangke* 相克) in which each element successively overcomes the next one: water, fire, metal, wood, earth (*shui* 水, *huo* 火, *jin* 金, *mu* 木, *tu* 土). Then in the Han dynasty, the order was changed to a mutually producing cycle (*xiangsheng* 相生) in which each element produces its successor: wood, fire, earth, metal, water (*mu* 木, *huo* 火, *tu* 土, *jin* 金, *shui* 水). The debate on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei dynasty turned on the choice of the right element;⁹ the same applied to the debate on the legitimacy of the Jin.¹⁰ Thereafter, political legitimacy used other symbols, although the five elements continued to be a popular means of ranking people and things (for example, in the choice of the characters for siblings; see 3.2).

⁸ L. S. Yang (Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞), "Toward a Study of Dynastic Configurations in Chinese History," in his *Studies in Chinese Institutional History*, HUP, 1963, 1-17; Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun* 中國史學上之正統論 (The theory of legitimate succession in Chinese historiography), HKCU Press, 1977; rpnt., Shanghai yuandong, 1996, which is an anthology of 170 excerpts on the theme preceded by a lengthy introduction.

⁹ John Lee, "From Five Elements to Five Agents: Wu-hsing in Chinese History," in *Sages and Filial Sons*, Julia Ching and R. W. L. Guisso, eds., HKCUP, 1991, 163-78.

¹⁰ Chan Hok-lam (Chen Xuelin 陳學林), "Patterns of Legitimation in Imperial China," Part I of *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty*, Univ. of Washington Press, 1984, 19-48. Chan returns to the same question in an article whose scope is wider than the title implies, "'Ta Chin' (Great Golden): the Origin and Changing Interpretations of the Jurchen State Name," *TP* 77.4-5: 253-99 (1991).

Annals

The earliest and one of the most important methods of arranging historical materials throughout Chinese history began as a bare catalog of court events arranged chronologically: e.g., "on such and such a year, month, day, King X of Y went on a hunt." Much of the writing on the oracle bones (cf ap. 15), which predates the first extant historical work by many centuries, contains similar records of single events and actions, but the relations between court scapulimancy and the origins of a continuous process of record keeping are obscure. The court chronicler in early China was an important official charged with astronomical as well as archival functions; he played a key part in the arrangement and timing of royal ancestor worship and sacrificial rites and other ceremonies. He may also have had remonstrance functions, in light of his duties of keeping records of models worthy of emulation and of portents heralding disaster.

In later Chinese history the bare catalog of events at court was greatly expanded and elaborate composite chronicles of events throughout the empire began to appear, either written privately or under official sponsorship (although always with the major focus on the court and central government).

21.1 Chunqiu 春秋

The earliest extant example of a historical work in the annals style is the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals*), the court chronicle of the state of Lu.¹ It is only 17,000 characters long, but covers 242 years (722–481 BC), which works out at 70 characters per year; so events are tersely recorded. The longest entry is only 47 characters. The average is 10. The shortest is just one character under the year 715 BC: “*Ming* 螟” (pests).

Editorship was traditionally and implausibly attributed to Confucius. The *Chunqiu*'s title was later used to name the period 770–476.

The third of the three commentaries on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to have survived, the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Commentary of Zuo*), is much fuller and more lively than the *Annals* themselves and goes beyond the other two commentaries. It is the

¹ In the Western Zhou, *Chunqiu* meant “year” and was used as one of the generic terms for “annals.” There are seven Warring States works with *chunqiu* in the title. Because of the connection with Confucius who also came from Lu, the *Lu chunqiu* 魯春秋 became one of the Classics and the only one to survive. The most convenient edition of the *Chunqiu* and its three commentaries is included in *ICS Concordances* 30–32. See also the older *H-Y Index*, Supplement 17. Note Bernard Karlgren, “Glosses on the Tso chuan,” *BMFEA* (1969–70); for other references, see Anne Cheng in *ECHBG*, 67–76.

For translations, see Burton Watson, *The Tso chuan: Selections from China's Oldest Narrative History*, Col. UP, 1989; James Legge in *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 4 in 2 parts, HKU Press, 1960; Séraphin Couvreur, *Tch'ouen ts'iou et Tso tschouan*, 3 vols., Ho-kien fu, 1914; rpt., Cathasia, 1951.

For stylistic analysis, see David Schaberg, “Foundations of Chinese Historiography: Literary Representation in *Zuo zhuan* and *Guoyu*,” Ph.D., Harvard University, 1996; John C. Y. Wang, “Early Chinese Narrative: the *Tso-chuan* as Example,” in Andrew H. Plaks, *Chinese Narrative, Critical and Theoretical Essays*, PUP, 1977. For a dictionary of the language, as well as a place name and personal-name index, see *Chunqiu zuozhuan cidian* 春秋左傳詞典, Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 and Xu Ti 徐提, eds., Zhonghua, 1985.

prime source on the history of the period 722–468 BC.² Another important early chronicle (mainly of the state of Wei) is the *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (Table 18, 19.1).

21.2 *Annalistic Sources and Veritable Records*

Annalistic writing was one of the main methods of arrangement adopted by Sima Qian in the *Shiji* (in the Basic Annals section) and it remained an integral part of the Standard Histories thereafter (see chap. 22). Xun Yue 荀悅 (148–209), *Hanji* 漢紀 was based on the *Hanshu*. It is the first annals of a single dynasty. From the Tang, the official writing of annalistic history had become standardized into the following types:

1. *Qijuzhu* 起居注 (Court Diaries), sometimes translated as diaries of activity and repose, imperial diaries or audience records. They record the decisions and actions of the emperor in the conduct of government business, normally as this occurred in formal sessions of the imperial court each morning. In periods when the emperor conducted the government informally or secretly, the *qijuzhu* were weak or nonexistent; the *qijuzhu* began in the Later Han and continued on and off until 1911. They were in no sense intended for publication. Only a tiny fraction survive up to the Qing, from which time the greater part, both in Chinese and Manchu, are extant in 12,000 *cc*.³
2. *Shizhengji* 時政記 (Records of Current Government), were in some periods confidential records compiled under the authority of ministers.
3. *Rili* 日曆 (Daily Calendars) were a condensation, arranged day by day, of the first two.

² Note that the first recorded title (in the *Hanshu* “Yiwenzhi,” *Zhonghua*, 1,713) is *Zuoshizhuan* 左氏傳. It is usually referred to simply as the *Zuozhuan*.

³ The Chinese versions of the following reigns have been printed: Kangxi, Yongzheng, Daoguang, Xianfeng, Tongzhi, and Guangxu (see 50.5 for details). The *Neige Manwen qijuzhu* 內閣滿文起居注 (Manchu versions of the *qijuzhu*) are available on microfilm at the Yishiguan in Beijing (50.2.1).

Only fragments of the Court Diaries, the Records of Current Government and the Daily Calendars have survived from before the Qing.

Given that the Court Diaries were composed almost immediately after the event, and were usually secret, they tend to be more reliable than other officially compiled sources, for example the Veritable Records, or even more so, the Standard Histories, which were compiled only after the downfall of a dynasty by its successor and therefore often came several hundred years after the event.

All three of the above were used as the chief source for the annalistic Veritable Records (*Shilu* 實錄), of which there was one for each emperor, as well as for the less detailed National Histories (*Guoshi* 國史), which were compiled in some periods for each reign. The keeping of *Shilu* began in the *Nan-Bei Chao* and continued until 1911. Less than 1 percent of the *Shilu* survive from before the Ming (a small part of the year 805 from the Tang and portions of the years 983 and 996 from the Song).⁴

The *Shilu* of the Ming and Qing covering the years 1368 to 1911 are extant in over 7,500 *juan*. They form an extremely important source for the Ming and for the Qing, but they were compiled only after the end of each reign, so they could come at some distance from what happened at the beginning of a long reign, and always with the risk of strong influence from participants (or their successors) in the events recorded.

Despite these drawbacks, the *Shilu* contain an extraordinarily detailed record, unequalled for any comparable period in any country. Many edicts, memorials and other documents, as well as day-to-day events, are preserved in them.⁵ They constitute

⁴ Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the Tang*, CUP, 1992.

⁵ On the process of the compilation of the Veritable Records, see L. S. Yang (Yang Liansheng 楊聯陞), "The Organization of Chinese Official Historiography: Principles and Methods of the Standard Histories from the T'ang through the Ming Dynasty," in Beasley and Pulleyblank, 44-59, rpt. in Yang's *Excursions in Sinology*, HUP, 1969, 96-111. Twitchett (1992), 119-59 examines the compilation of the Tang Veritable Records

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the single most important source for the last 500 years of Chinese history.

21.3 Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑

Although many annals and chronicles (not to mention Veritable Records) were written during and after the Han, it was not until the Song that a major step forward took place in this genre with the compilation of the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive mirror for aid in government) by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–86). This magisterially carries the history of China from 403 BC in continuous chronicle form over the following 1,362 years down to AD 959. In the catholicity of sources consulted, many since lost, in its discussion of disputed points where there was a divergence of evidence (*kaoyi* 考異), as well as in its huge table of contents (running to 74 pages in the Zhonghua edition), it marked an important new level for the chronicle form as well as for general historical methodology. It had an enormous influence on later Chinese historical writing, either directly or through its many abbreviations, continuations, and adaptations.⁶ It remains an extraordinarily useful first reference for a quick and reliable coverage of events at a particular time.

In writing it, Sima Guang was assisted by three outstanding scholars: Fan Zuyu 范祖禹 who prepared the first draft on the Tang; Liu Shu 劉恕, who prepared the draft on the Wei, Jin

(no longer extant) and *ISMH*, 29–33, does the same for the Ming *Shilu*, which are extant. For editions of the Ming and Qing *Shilu*, see 49.1 and 50.5, respectively.

⁶ On the compilation of Sima Guang's great work, see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Chinese Historical Criticism: Liu Chih-chi and Ssu-ma Kuang," in Beasley and Pulleyblank, 135–66; also Zhang Xu 張須, *Tongjian xue* 通鑑學 (Studies on the Comprehensive Mirror), Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1948; rev., 1957; rev. and exp., Anhui renmin, 1981.

Chaps. 54 to 78 of the *Zizhi tongjian*, covering the last years of the Han and the Three Kingdoms, have been translated into English (45.2).

and *Nan-Bei Chao*; and Liu Ban 劉放, who worked on the Han period. Sima Guang's son did the proofreading.

The best modern edition of the *Tongjian* is the punctuated, movable-type one prepared by a team of 12 editors led by Wang Chongwu 王崇武, Nie Chongqi 聶崇岐 and Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛. The text used was a Qing reprint of the Yuan dynasty edition of *Zizhi tongjian* by Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1302). Hu incorporated the *kaoyi* 考異 into the text as notes (they had originally been printed separately). Many of the sources quoted in them have since been lost. Hu also provided his own comments and corrections separately (appendix to vol. 20 of the Zhonghua edition, 1–190). The Zhonghua editors have incorporated the textual notes of Zhang Yu 章鉅 (1865–1937) which were taken from the most important Song, Yuan and Ming editions and added these and other Song commentaries in bracketed notes in the main text.⁷

Many adaptations and summaries of this massive 9,612 page chronicle were made. The most popular of all was a highly moralistic one entitled *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* 資治通鑑綱目. It was devised by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and written by his pupils.⁸ The *Siku* editors classified it under historiography (*shi-ping* 史評), nevertheless, because of Zhu Xi's name it was the *Gangmu* which was read in the Ming and Qing rather than the much longer and more rigorous *Tongjian*.⁹ But it is the *Tong-*

⁷ Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, Guji, 1956; 9th rpnt., 20 vols., Zhonghua, 1995; convenient and readable, two-volume, reduced-size reprint (four pages to the page with original page numbers indicated), 1997.

⁸ Conrad Schirokauer, "Chu Hsi's Sense of History," in *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China*, Robert P. Hyams and Conrad Schirokauer, eds., UCP, 1993, 193–220.

⁹ J. A. M. de Moyriac de Mailla's *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou annales de cet empire; traduites du Tong-Kien Kang-Mou*, 13 vols., Paris: Pierres et Clousier, 1777–85; Taipei rpnt., 1968 is an abridged translation from the Manchu version of Zhu Xi's *Zizhi tongjian gangmu* (Summary of the comprehensive mirror for aid in government) and its later continuations. It was the largest general history of China available in a West-

Footnote continued on next page

jian itself and the full continuations of it that are of interest to the modern historian.¹⁰ The most important of these cover the Song and are listed in 47.1 and 47.2.

There is a dictionary to help find one's way around the *Tongjian*:

Zizhi tongjian da cidian 資治通鑑大辭典 (Great dictionary of the *Zizhi tongjian*), Shi Ding 施丁 and Shen Zhihua 深志華, eds. in chief, Jilin renmin, 1994.

Also indexes:

Shiji tsugan sakuin 資治通鑑索引, Saeki Tomi 佐伯富, ed., Tôyôshi kenkyûkai, 1961.

Shiji tsugan kochû chimei sakuin 資治通鑑胡注地名索引, Araki Toshikazu 荒木敏一 and Yoneda Kenjirô 米田賢次郎 comps., Jimbun, 1967. An index to the place names in Hu Sanxing's notes.

ern language for two centuries (until the publication of *The Cambridge History of China*) and it was used by many later textbook writers.

¹⁰ For example, Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–97) et al., *Xu Zizhi tongjian* 續資治通鑑, 12 vols., Beijing, 1957; 6th rpnt., 1988. Replaces the other continuations compiled in the Qing and covers the years 960–1370.

Standard Histories

The first great innovation in historical writing and departure from the early annals style was the work of Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BC) and his son, Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145–86 BC), court astronomers and librarians during the second and at the beginning of the first century BC (44.2). They wrote what many centuries later was chosen as the first of the *zhengshi* 正史 (Standard Histories or Histories, for short). There was eventually one for each legitimate dynasty. In all, 24 Histories written over 1,832 years. They number just under 40,000,000 characters (*Hanzi* 漢字), of which 13,966 are different ones.

22.1 Structure, Contents and Titles

The *Shiji* is a history of China from the Yellow Emperor down to Han Wudi arranged in a manner which, with certain adaptations, was to set the form for a new way of writing history that came to be known as *jizhuan* 紀傳體 (annals-biography) after two of its most important parts. It was to be used in all of what later became known in the eighteenth century as the *Ershisishi* 二十四史 (The 24 histories).

The *Shiji* contains 130 chapters (*juan* 卷) divided into 12 *Benji* 本紀 (basic annals), 10 *Biao* 表 (tables), 8 *Shu* 書 (monographs), 30 *Shijia* 世家 (hereditary houses), and 70 *Liezhuan* 列傳 (collected biographies or memoirs). The two main innovations of Sima Qian were the monographs (*Shu* 書) and the memoirs (*Liezhuan* 列傳). The monographs (in later Standard

Histories usually called *Zhi* 志 and sometimes translated as treatises) cover the historical evolution of selected institutions such as rituals, the calendar, astronomy or political economy (with the emphasis on taxation and coinage). The memoirs are groups of biographies or profiles of both famous and (some) less famous people (as well as foreign peoples) of each age. These two sections of the *Shiji*, together with the older-style basic annals (*Benji* 本紀) which carried on the court annals tradition, became the three major elements of the *jizhuan* genre of history writing. In the Chinese historiographical tradition the annals were considered the core and the biographies as illustrations of the core. The monographs were entirely left out of eight of the earlier Histories. They were considered belonging to a separate tradition of institutional history writing. The other sections of the *Shiji*, the *biao* and the *shijia* (which cover the history of the major pre-Han states) were incorporated only sporadically or not at all in the later Histories.

The most important difference between all the Standard Histories from the *Hanshu* 漢書 onward and the *Shiji* was that they covered only one dynasty and made no attempt to cover the vast sweep of history (3,000 years) embraced by the *Shiji*. The generic term is *duandaishi* 斷代史; as distinct from works such as the *Shiji*, which are called *tongshi* 通史. Only the monographs continued to cover periods of time extending earlier than the dynasty in question (see Table 23 for a list of the different topics covered in the monographs in each of the Histories). Another important difference between the earlier and later Standard Histories is that prior to the Tang, eight of what later were recognized as Standard Histories were written by private individuals and another seven were commissioned from one or two individuals. After the Tang reorganization of the Bureau of Historiography, the Histories (with some notable exceptions) tended to become more and more standardized as they became the final step in a cumulative process of compilation by committees of official historians (which History fell into which category of authorial composition is indicated in Table 21).

Explanation of Table 21

One asterisk indicates that the work was written by a private individual. Two asterisks indicate that the work was commissioned from one or two individuals.

Those Histories which were officially compiled (marked with three asterisks) had a nominal editor-in-chief (whose name is listed in the Table), but they were the work of many hands at the Historiography Bureau. They based themselves on materials compiled by the Bureau of the previous dynasty.

The numbering from 1-24 in the left-hand column is the same order as that in the *Siku quanshu zongmu*. With the exception of the *Nanshi* and the *Beishi*, it follows the chronological order of the dynasties. The numbering in brackets (1-26) is somewhat different because it shows the order according to the dates of compilation.

Table 21: The Standard Histories

Title	Author, editor (dates)	Compiled (presented or printed)	Period covered
*1 (1). <i>Shiji</i> 史記 (<i>The Records of the Grand Historian</i>)	Sima Tan 司馬談 (?180-110 BC) and Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145-86 BC)	104-87 (91) BC	Earliest times to 95 BC
**2 (2). [Qian] <i>Hanshu</i> [前]漢書 (<i>History of the Former Han</i>)	Ban Gu 班固 (AD 32-92)	AD 58-76 (92)	206 BC - AD 24
*3 (4). <i>Hou Hanshu</i> 後漢書 (<i>History of the Later Han</i>)	Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445)	398-445 (445)	25-220
*4 (3). <i>Sanguozhi</i> 三國志 (<i>The Record of the History of the Three Kingdoms</i>)	Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-97)	285-97 (297)	Wei 221-65; Shu 221-64; Wu 222-80
***5 (13). <i>Jinshu</i> 晉書 (<i>History of the Jin</i>)	Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648)	644 (646)	265-419

Table continues

Table 21—continued

Title	Author, editor (dates)	Compiled (completed or printed)	Period covered
**6 (5). <i>Songsbu</i> 宋書 (<i>History of the Song</i>)	Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513)	492–493	420–78
*7 (6). <i>Nan Qishu</i> 南齊書 (<i>History of Southern Qi</i>)	Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (489–537)	489–537 (537)	479–502
**8 (8). <i>Liangshu</i> 梁書 (<i>History of the Liang</i>)	Yao Cha 姚察 (533–606) and Yao Silian 姚思廉 (d. 637)	628–35 (636)	502–56
**9 (9). <i>Chenshu</i> 陳書 (<i>History of the Chen</i>)	Yao Cha 姚察 (533–606) and Yao Silian 姚思廉	622–29 (636)	557–89
**10 (7). <i>Weishu</i> 魏書 (<i>History of the Wei</i>)	Wei Shou 魏收 (506–72)	551–54 (554)	386–550
**11 (10). <i>Bei Qishu</i> 北齊書 (<i>History of the Northern Qi</i>)	Li Delin 李德林 (530–590) and Li Boyao 李百藥 (565–648)	627–36 (636)	550–77
***12 (11). <i>Zhoushu</i> 周書 (<i>History of the Zhou</i>)	Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–661)	ca. 629 (636)	557–81
***13 (12). <i>Suishu</i> 隋書 (<i>History of Sui</i>)	Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643)	629–36 (636)	581–617
*14 (14). <i>Nanshi</i> 南史 (<i>History of the Southern Dynasties</i>)	Li Yanshou 李延壽 (fl. 618–76)	630–50 (659)	420–589
*15 (15). <i>Beishi</i> 北史 (<i>History of the Northern Dynasties</i>)	Li Yanshou 李延壽 (fl. 618–76)	630–50 (659)	368–618
***16 (16). <i>Jiu Tangshu</i> 舊唐書 (<i>Old History of the Tang</i>)	Liu Xu 劉煦 (887–946)	940–945 (945)	618–906

Table continues

Table 21—continued

Title	Author, editor (dates)	Compiled (completed or printed)	Period covered
**17 (18). <i>Xin Tangshu</i> 新唐書 (<i>New History of the Tang</i>)	Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-72) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998-1061)	1043-60 (1060)	618-906
***18 (17). <i>Jiu Wu- daishi</i> 舊五代史 (<i>Old History of the Five Dy- nasties</i>)	Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912-81)	973-74 (974)	907-60
*19 (19). <i>Xin Wudaishi</i> 新五代史 (<i>New His- tory of the Five Dynas- ties</i>). Original title: <i>Wudai shiji</i> 五代史記	Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-72)	1044-60 (1072)	907-60
***20 (22). <i>Songsbi</i> 宋史 (<i>History of the Song</i>)	Tuotuo (Toghto 脫脫) (1313-55)	1343-45 (1345)	960-1279
***21 (20). <i>Liaoshi</i> 遼史 (<i>History of the Liao</i>)	Same as <i>Songsbi</i>	1343-44 (1344)	916-1125
***22 (21). <i>Jinshi</i> 金史 (<i>History of the Jin</i>)	Same as <i>Songsbi</i>	1343-44 (1344)	1115-1234
***23 (23). <i>Yuanshi</i> 元史 (<i>History of the Yuan</i>)	Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-81)	1369-70 (1370)	1206-1369
***24 (24). <i>Mingshi</i> 明史 (<i>History of the Ming</i>)	Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉 (1672-1755)	1678-1735 (1739)	1368-1644
*25 (25). <i>Xin Yuanshi</i> 新元史 (<i>New History of the Yuan</i>)	Ke Shaomin 柯紹忞 (1850-1933)	1890-1920 (1920)	1206-1367
***26 (26). <i>Qingsh gao</i> 清史稿 (<i>Draft History of the Qing</i>)	Zhao Erxun 趙爾巽 (1844-1927)	1914-27 (1927)	1644-1911

The concept of a single Standard History for each successive dynasty emerged only very gradually. The term *zhengshi* 正史 itself was used for the first time in the Liang dynasty in AD 523 and incorporated into the *Suishu* "Jingjizhi 隋書經籍志" (*Standard History of the Sui*, monograph on dynastic bibliography) as a category distinct from *bashi* 霸史 (histories of dynasties not recognized as legitimate) or *bieshi* 別史 (not officially recognized history). As such it was applied to important historical works mainly in the *jizhuan* (and to some extent in the *bian-nian*) genres and it continued to be used in this sense until the Qing. The present usage to refer to the 24 (or 25, or 26) Histories became only the norm after the compilation of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 in the eighteenth century (9.5).

Until the Tang, the usual reference was to the *Sanshi* 三史 (The three Histories): that is the *Shiji*, the *Hanshu* and the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (replacing the *Dongguan Hanji* 東觀漢記). From the Tang, the *Sanguozhi* 三國志 was added to make the *Sishi* 四史 (The four Histories), or *Qian sishi* 前四史 (The first four Histories), terms still in use. During the Tang, six new Histories of different kingdoms of the preceding period were compiled by the Bureau of Historiography. Together with three privately written works this made a total of 13 works recognized as the main histories of China up to the end of the dynasty. They were referred to as the *Shisandai shi* 十三代史 (The Histories of thirteen dynasties). During the Northern Song, the *Nanshi* 南史 and *Beishi* 北史, which had been privately compiled in the Tang, were added to the Histories, as were the newly compiled *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (*New History of the Tang*) and *Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史 (*New History of the Five Dynasties*). This brought the total to 17. Thereafter new ones were added as they were officially compiled. At the end of the fourteenth century there were 21. The completion of the *Mingshi* 明史 (*Standard History of the Ming*) in 1735 raised the number to 22, to which were added at the time of the compilation of the *Siku Quanshu* the recovered editions of the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (*Old History of the Tang*) and the *Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史 (*Old History of the Five Dynasties*). The number now stood at 24

and the phrase *Ershisishi* 二十四史 (*The 24 Histories*) was coined on the completion of the palace edition in 1775 (22.2). The number rose to 25 after the official addition of the *Xin Yuanshi* 新元史 (*New History of the Yuan*) in 1921. Although the *Qingshi gao* 清史稿 (*Draft History of the Qing*) has not been officially included in the Histories, it is in the old tradition and is therefore included in Table 21 to bring the total to 26.

Although varying greatly in quality and length, the Standard Histories constitute a monumental *oeuvre*, the importance of which can hardly be exaggerated. They provide remarkably accurate coverage of over 2,000 years of Chinese history (from the official, Confucian standpoint, as seen from the imperial court), and they include historical profiles of the rulers, events, leading personalities, major institutions and administrative boundaries of each dynasty, as well as a considerable quantity of detailed information on the peoples of East, Central, and Southeast Asia. The value of the earlier Standard Histories is greatly enhanced by the fact that many of the sources upon which they were based have since been lost and alternative sources are lacking. For these reasons the scissors-and-paste methods of some of their editors should be regarded as an asset.

A huge literature exists on the Histories, especially on the first four, which are regarded as monuments of literary and historical excellence. A fraction of this literature is listed in the appropriate chapters of Part V. The following section notes various reference tools for the Histories as a whole.¹

¹ *Zhongguo jizhuanti wenxian yanjiu* 中國紀傳體文獻研究 (Research on Chinese annals-biography literature), Wang Jingui 王錦貴, ed., Beijing daxue, 1996. *Chūgoku seishi kenkyū bunken mokuroku* 中國正史研究文獻目錄 (Bibliography of research on the Chinese Standard Histories), Kokusho kankōkai 國書刊行會, eds., Kokusho kankōkai, 1977. Covers books and articles in Japanese, Chinese and Korean from 1868 to 1977. Arranged by Standard History.