THE PROBLEM OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF SHIH-CHI CH. 123, THE MEMOIR ON TA YÜAN

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In his general attack on the authenticity of the Shih-chi Ts’ui Shih in 1910 also gave his verdict on chapter 123 of this work, the Memoir on Ta Yüan, condemning it in a few lapidary sentences as a late fabrication 1). In 1927, Li K’uei-yao added support to Ts’ui’s general thesis 2), and in 1933 Fritz Jaeger surveyed the situation in some detail 3). In 1937, Gustav Haloun voiced his negative opinion specifically on the authenticity of SC 123 4), though with some ambiguity 5), and finally Professor E. G. Pulleyblank defended the authenticity of this chapter 6). Haloun had urged that a text-critical study of this chapter should be undertaken 7), but neither he, nor Paul Pelliot 8) who had explicitly promised to do so, nor Professor Pulleyblank, nor any Chinese 9), Japanese or other Western

1) 崔適, 史記探源 (preface dated 1910; published 1918, reprinted in 1922 and 1924 by the Peking National University), 8.15a—b. Wang Shu-min 王叔岷, 史記解證總論, in CYYY 38 (1968), pp. 1—18, does not mention this study.
2) 李奎耀, 史記考疑, in Tsinghua Journal 4 (1927), pp. 1175—1215.
4) Gustav Haloun, “Zur Üe-tsi-Frage”, in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 91 (1937), pp. 243—318, especially p. 250, note 1, but compare p. 246, note 2, and p. 295. In the following notes, this article will be referred to as Haloun (1937).
9) 楊惠人, 史漢西域記傳管見, in Yü-kung V, 8-9 (1936), pp. 115—144 (mentioned by Haloun, p. 250, note 1), only presents parallel passages without attempting to correlate these.
scholar have done this, although articles on the subject continue to be written, defending the authenticity of SC 123 on historical and geographical grounds\(^{10}\), but never using textcretical criteria.

When Dr. M. A. N. Loewe of the University of Cambridge and I were invited by the then director of the Chinese Dynastic Histories Project of the University of Washington in Seattle, Professor Hellmut Wilhelm\(^{11}\), to provide a new translation of the chapters on the Western Regions for the Han History Project\(^{12}\), the problem of the authenticity of the 123rd chapter of the Shih-chi had to be faced. The following pages constitute an attempt to solve this question. Its solution is of importance not only for those whose main interest is Chinese history, but also for the scholars from many fields whose chief concern is the history of Central Asia during the centuries around the beginning of the Christian era.

I believe it to be possible to solve the question, i.a. owing to the fortunate circumstance that the eminent textual critic Wang Nien-sun (1744-1832) discovered that a confused passage in Han shu 61 had been preserved undisturbed in Shih-chi 123, and that the disruption affected 69 characters\(^{13}\), clearly the contents of three bamboo or wooden strips on which the original texts had been written. This discovery, as well as other indications that the Han shu—at least chapter 61—had been written on strips containing 23 characters, enabled Dr. Loewe and me to reconstruct the equally confused text immediately surrounding the passage indicated by Wang. It has also been of considerable use in the present research.

It is wellknown that the texts of the chapters concerning the history of the Han from its foundation down to the end of the 2nd century B.C. are practically identical in the Shih-chi and in the Han shu. To traditional scholarship this identity was the natural result of the belief that Pan Ku in the second half of the 1st century A.D. had contented himself with merely copying the text which Ssu-ma Ch'ien had composed nearly two centuries earlier. Typical

\(^{10}\) The latest contribution as far as I am aware is 大河内隆, 漢書張騫傳の疑問—とくに烏孫を中心として, 日本大是史学倶研究報告, 10, 1966, p. 58ff.

\(^{11}\) Since his retirement replaced by Professor Jack L. Dull.


\(^{13}\) 王念孫, 讀書雜志, pt. IV, 11.4a—b. Cf. also the interesting remarks by Peter A. Boodberg, "Notes on isocolometry", in Oriens 10 (Leiden, 1957), pp. 119—127, on "normal" columns with 21 to 25 characters.