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“To Die for the Sanctity of the Name”: Name (*ming* 名) as Prime Mover of Political Action in Early China*

Yuri Pines

In one of the most celebrated moments in *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Romance of the Three Kingdoms), Lord Guan 關公 (Guan Yu 關羽, d. 219), who faces inevitable defeat, refuses to submit to the state of Wu 吳, saying:

玉可碎而不可改其白，竹可焚而不可毀其節。身雖殞，名可垂於竹帛也。

Jade can be smashed but its whiteness cannot be changed; bamboo can be burned, but its joints cannot be destroyed. Although my body will perish, my name will be handed down on bamboo and silk.¹

This statement encapsulates the extraordinary importance of one’s name (*ming* 名) in Chinese thought. Lord Guan’s steadfast preservation of his integrity, his loyalty to the ruler-brother, Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223), and his readiness to face death rather than disgrace are all justified by the bottom line: his name will be handed down for generations. Needless to say, the

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1 *Sanguo yanyi* 76: 991. Note that “bamboo joints” 節 is precisely the term used for personal integrity and steadfast commitment to one’s moral principles.

novel itself, which narrates Lord Guan's heroic death, serves as the best testimony to his success. For well over one thousand years, Lord Guan has been one of the best-known names throughout China—both as a deity and as a remarkable human being.²

Self-sacrifice and heroic martyrdom are common throughout the world, past and present. Religion, ethics, or, more unusually, a secular ideology—all can prompt a human being to consider life as a light thing in comparison to higher goals. Jewish martyrdom is defined in Hebrew as “dying for the sanctity of the Name” (למות על קידוש השם), when the Name, of course, is that of God Almighty. In China one also dies (or acts in an extraordinary way against narrowly conceived selfish interests) out of commitment to a higher cause. Quite often the potential martyr declares that he is willing to die for the sake of his “name” (*ming* 名). This quest for “a name” is openly recognized, debated, and quite often endorsed, in a great variety of philosophical and literary works from the Warring States period (Zhanguo 戰國, 453–221 BCE) on. This discourse about the quest for a name, its legitimacy, and its social and political desirability is the focus of my study.

The word *ming* is one of the most multi-faceted terms in Chinese political, ethical, social, philosophical, and religious discourse. Even its most immediate literal meaning as an individual's appellation is imbued with social, political, and religious significance: one's name was a tabooed word for the person's inferiors and its usage was closely related to questions of social and political hierarchy.³ The second semantic layer, the one on which my current study will focus, is that of repute, renown, fame. Closely related to this is the notion of *ming* as commemoration, which again will be discussed below. Third, and to a certain extent related to one's repute, was the meaning of *ming* as designation of one's social status, which also will be addressed below. The fourth semantic layer refers to *ming* as a

2 For the evolution of the cult of Lord Guan (first attested to under the Tang dynasty [618–907]), and for his literary commemoration (traceable back to the Song dynasty [960–1279]), see Duara 1988.

3 See details in Adamek 2016; Cao Feng 2017: 30–45.

terminus technicus in administrative and legal discourse.⁴ Add to these the fifth, philosophical, meaning of *ming* as “a word” or “a term” (see Defoort, Chapter 1). This lengthy—and by no means exhaustive—list, as well as persistent interactions among distinct semantic layers of the term *ming*, suffice to demonstrate the difficulty—I would say even impossibility—of dealing with the term *ming* in a single study.⁵

Yet the goals of the present paper are relatively modest. Insofar as philosophical and, to a lesser extent, administrative aspects of *ming* have been explored in numerous studies, I shall not address them in what follows.⁶ The focus of this study will be on the “name” as *repute* and its related meaning as one’s social status. I shall survey the Warring States period debates about the desirability of the quest for *ming* and about its political and social implications. In the final two sections I shall explore how these debates are related to the usages of *ming* by the imperial literati and outline aspects of the imperial-period views of name-seeking. I hope that this study will add some new dimensions to our exploration of the interrelationships among ethics, politics, social practices, and religion in China, as well as among philosophical, historical, and literary texts.⁷

4 *Ming* may, for instance, refer to a “title” compared with “performance” (*xing* 形), as in *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (see Goldin 2013: 8–10; cf. Makeham 1990–1991), or to specific items of legal regulations, as in Chapter 26 (“Ding fen” 定分) of the *Shangjunshu* 商君書 (Book of Lord Shang); Pines 2017a: 243–248.

5 In a very recent insightful book, Cao Feng 曹峰 (2017) discusses *ming* in the context of political thought; yet his monograph and the present article almost do not overlap. This suffices to indicate the breadth of the applications of the term *ming* in Chinese intellectual discourse.

6 The single most prolific writer on various aspects of *ming* is John Makeham (see, e.g., Makeham 1990–1991, 1991, 1994). For explorations of the philosophical contents of *ming*, see also Möller 1997; Loy 2003; Geaney 2010; Solomon 2013; Tavor 2014.

7 The non-philosophical dimensions of *ming* were not adequately explored in the West (for major exceptions, see Makeham 1993 and parts of Makeham 1994). This situation is due to change after the publication of Mark E. Lewis’s forthcoming monograph. Cao Feng lamented the distortions in the studies of *ming* imposed by the acceptance of a “foreign conceptual framework” (Cao Feng 2008: 225; cf. Cao Feng 2017: 20). In not a few Chinese studies, attempts were made to overcome this distortion; see, e.g., Gou Dongfeng 2013 and, most notably Cao Feng 2017.

1. Prelude: *Ming* in the Aristocratic Age

The term *ming* does not appear to have played a significant role in either political or ethical discourse prior to the Warring States period. It is all but absent from the Western Zhou period's (西周, ca. 1046–771 BCE) sections of *Shijing* 詩經 (Canon of poems) and *Shujing* 書經 (Canon of documents), while in bronze inscriptions it appears only as one's name or as a verb, "to name."⁸ It is present, albeit indirectly, in another would-be canonical text, namely the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn annals, hereafter the *Annals*) of the state of Lu 魯. Without entering here into the controversies regarding the nature and the authorship of the *Annals* and its peculiar "rules of recording" (*shu fa* 書法), suffice it to say that certain records could be utilized to express "praise and blame" (*baobian* 褒貶) of historical personages. In particular, writing down a person's given name in certain contexts was a potent means of shaming through naming.⁹

The most celebrated story of naming a culprit as a means of censuring him is the condemnation of a Jin 晉 prime minister, Zhao Dun 趙盾. In 607 BCE, Zhao Dun orchestrated the assassination of his ruler, Lord Ling 晉靈公 (r. 620–607 BCE), while pretending to flee the state. The court scribe, Dong Hu 董狐, nevertheless recorded for the annals: "Zhao Dun murdered his ruler" 趙盾弑其君. Zhao protested, but Dong Hu explained

8 In a later interpretation of the inscriptions' contents, the Warring States period exegetes postulated: "An inscription comes from naming [oneself]. One names oneself to extol the perfection of one's ancestors, making it manifest for posterity" 銘者，自名也。自名以稱揚其先祖之美，而明著之後世者也。 *Liji jijie* XLVII.25: 1250 ["Ji tong" 祭統]). Yet judging from the original setting of the inscriptions within the bronze vessels, they were primarily directed at the ancestors rather than to posterity (Falkenhausen 1993). Their relation to the later notion of individual commemoration deserves a separate study.

9 For my views of the *Annals*, see Pines 2009b: 316–323; for their rules of recording, see Van Auken 2007 (and see Van Auken 2016 for a broader study of the *Annals* and their commentaries). That naming a culprit in the *Annals* meant condemning his misdeeds is explicitly stated in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Xuan 4.2: 768). Even if this rule is merely a post-factum explanation, it seems to grasp accurately some of the recording patterns in the *Annals*. It should be noted though that naming in the *Annals* is not exclusively used for the purpose of condemnation; see more in Van Auken 2016.

that as Zhao neither left the state at the time of the murder nor punished the criminals thereafter, the legal responsibility was his. The veracity of the story and its underlying historiographic principles need not concern us here; what is important is that there is enough evidence to confirm that mentioning a person's name in the *Annals* in certain circumstances was a way of blaming him.¹⁰

When we turn to the major commentary of the *Annals* and our major source for the history of the Spring and Autumn period (Chunqiu 春秋, 770–453 BCE)—*Zuozhuan* 左傳—we can easily discern the statesmen's concern with their repute.¹¹ Being named in a negative context “on the bamboo tablets of the regional lords” (在諸侯之策; a referent to the annals that in all likelihood were produced in each of the major regional courts and not just in the state of Lu) was a major blow to one's reputation, a matter of grave concern.¹² By the same token, the appeal to the need to preserve one's “fine name” (*ling ming* 令名) was a potent argument in urging a leader to adopt a recommended policy course.¹³ Whereas name-

10 *Zuozhuan*, Xuan 2.3: 662–663. Another equally celebrated case of naming a culprit in the *Annals* as a means to condemning him is the case of Cui Zhu 崔杼, who assassinated Lord Zhuang of Qi 齊莊公 (r. 553–548 BCE). Cui Zhu had no less than two scribes killed in order to prevent them from recording his guilt, but the scribes' persistence left him no option but to accept the damage to his name (*Zuozhuan*, Xiang 25.2: 1099). For other cases in which the *Annals'* naming of a ruler's murderer hints at a legally responsible person, who technically was not the killer, see Zhao Shengqun 2000: 251–257. For some cases in which the culprits succeeded in avoiding being named, see Pines 2009b: 329–330.

11 It is not my intention here to address anew the contentious issue about whether *Zuozhuan* reflects ideas of the aristocratic Spring and Autumn period or of the subsequent age of the Warring States; nor am I concerned with the precise nature of relations between *Zuozhuan* and the *Annals*. For different approaches, see Schaberg 2001; Pines 2002a and forthcoming; Li Wai-ye 2007, q.v. for further references.

12 See, e.g., *Zuozhuan*, Wen 15.2: 609; Xiang 20.7: 1055; and the discussion of these cases in Pines 2009b: 321–323. For an idea that the *Annals* represent the common tradition of the Zhou states, see Karapetants 1988.

13 See, e.g., *Zuozhuan*, Xiang 24.2: 1089, Zhao 16.3: 1379. Interestingly, the binome “fine name” is relatively rare in pre-imperial texts; its usage is confined almost exclusively to *Zuozhuan* and a few sections of the parallel *Guoyu* 國語 (Discourses of the states).

seeking as such was censured as morally inappropriate for the “noble men” (*junzi* 君子), overall, the concern for one’s reputation was considered fully legitimate.¹⁴

This said, when we compare the *Zuozhuan* narratives with the texts from the Warring States period, one may come to the conclusion that the quest for a name (fame, reputation) was not a significant factor in political and ethical life of the aristocratic age. Appeals to one’s “fine name” recur from time to time, but never does the quest for a name stand alone as the major determinant of one’s action. Even in terms of posthumous reputation, the word “name” does not appear as singularly important. In a major discussion of what it means “to die but not decay” (*si er bu xiu* 死而不朽), recorded under the year 549 BCE, a Lu noble, Shusun Bao 叔孫豹, explains to his Jin colleague that immortality does not imply mere preservation of the lineage’s status, but something greater than that:

魯有先大夫曰臧文仲，既沒，其言立，其是之謂乎！豹聞之：「大上有立德，其次有立功，其次有立言。」雖久不廢，此之謂不朽。若夫保姓受氏，以守宗祚，世不絕祀，無國無之。祿之大者，不可謂不朽。

Lu had a former grandee Zang Wenzhong; he is dead already, but his words are still established: is that not what is meant [“to die but not decay”]? I, Bao, heard: “The best is to establish virtue; second to it is to establish merits; next is to establish words.” If even as time elapses they do not fade away—this is what is called “not decaying.” As for preserving one’s clan and receiving a lineage [name] to guard the ancestral temple so that sacrifices do not fade for generations—this exists in every state. That, which is great among emolument, cannot be called “not decaying.”¹⁵

In my view, the three ways of immortality outlined above may be related to the three levels of political success in aristocratic society. The first is

14 For criticism of name-seeking, see *Zuozhuan*, Xiang 26.11: 1123 and Xiang 27.4: 1129.

15 *Zuozhuan*, Xiang 24.1: 1087–1088. My translations from *Zuozhuan* borrow (and modify from time to time) Durrant, Li, and Schaberg 2016.

the major, epochal “establishment of virtue” (*li de* 立德), which perhaps hints at the meaning of *de* as the charismatic power of dynastic founders; this is a matter of success for the whole clan (*xing* 姓). The second level of “establishing merits” (*li gong* 立功) probably refers to the founding of an aristocratic lineage (*shi* 氏), the precondition for which was that the ancestor be meritorious enough to get an official position and a hereditary allotment, the *sine qua non* for the lineage’s longevity. The third, and lowest level of “establishing words” (*li yan* 立言) refers to an individual’s—rather than clan or lineage’s—immortality. Here one would expect to find the word “name,” should we speak of a Warring States period text. However, this term is absent, and this absence is not incidental.¹⁶ Individual establishment of a “name” outside the lineage framework was not an option for a noble of the Spring and Autumn period. What a noble could “establish” were “words,” i.e., making politically and morally important pronouncements that would be transmitted to posterity, as many exemplary speeches in *Zuozhuan* were. Yet to have the right to “establish words” one should be an aristocrat, a political insider. At least insofar as *Zuozhuan* is concerned, it never records lengthy ideologically important speeches of persons outside the hereditary power order. A name—in its Warring States period meaning, as an asset of political outsiders—is not mentioned in Shusun Bao’s speech, nor elsewhere in *Zuozhuan*.

2. The Noble Man’s Quest for a Name

Confucius (孔子, 551–479 BCE) is a watershed figure in China’s intellectual history. Before his emergence, “establishing words”—i.e. bequeathing one’s ideological legacy to posterity—appears to be a prerogative of hereditary

16 Actually, in some Chinese discussions of the role of a “name” in political discourse, this passage is routinely invoked as an example of name-seeking, without authors’ paying attention to the absence of the term *ming*. See, e.g., Ruan Zhong 2003; Yang Jianqiang and Xiao Qunzhong 2015.

aristocrats. If any member of the lowest segment of nobility—the *shi* (士, “men-of-service”) stratum—was intellectually active prior to Confucius, our sources remain silent about that. Confucius was the first speaker on behalf of the rising *shi*, and the first thinker to deal, even if cautiously, with the issue of the upward mobility of the *shi*. As is well known, one of his major breakthroughs was redefining the term *junzi* 君子 (the noble man) from a pedigree-based to a morality-based designation. A *shi* should aspire to become a *junzi*, which will make him into a legitimate member of the ruling elite.¹⁷

Unlike the aristocrats, whose employment was more or less ensured under the principle of hereditary office-holding, the *shi* had to prove their abilities in the ever escalating competition with nobles and with other *shi*. In this situation, one’s renown was an important asset; conceivably, a famous *shi* would be more readily employed than his lesser-known peers. This explains the considerable interest in one’s name that we encounter in the *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*). Thus, Confucius is quoted as saying: “The noble man is pained if by the end of his life his name is not mentioned” 君子疾沒世而名不稱焉。The Master speaks dismissively of those who failed to establish their renown by the age of forty or fifty. And he appears to be greatly annoyed by a remark that, despite his broad learning, his own name is not widely known.¹⁸

Confucius’s quest for a name made some later thinkers, such as the Han man of letters Xu Gan 徐幹 (170–218), as well as some modern scholars, uneasy. Surely, the Master should have focused on “inner happiness” rather than on such a “dubious” thing as one’s name.¹⁹ I think these attempts to diminish the importance of a name for Confucius are not convincing. The Master did want to attain a fine reputation, just as he wanted to attain an official position; it is just that these goals were to remain subordinate to moral and ethical considerations. Confucius clarifies:

17 For the changing concept of *junzi* in the *Lunyu* vis-à-vis earlier texts, see Gassman 2007; Brindley 2009; Pines 2017b.

18 See respectively *Lunyu yizhu* 15.20: 166, 9.23: 94, 9.2: 88.

19 See, e.g., Makeham 1993, who elaborates on Xu Gan’s views; cf. Roetz 1993: 181–183.

富與貴是人之所欲也；不以其道得之，不處也。貧與賤是人之所惡也；不以其道得〔=去〕之，不去也。君子去仁，惡乎成名？

Riches and nobility are what every man desires; but if they cannot be attained in accordance with the Way, do not accept them. Poverty and base status are what every man detests. But if they cannot be avoided in accordance with the Way, do not avoid them. If the noble man abandons benevolence, how will he accomplish his name?²⁰

The message is clear: while the quest for a name, just like the quest for material benefits, is natural and laudable, it should be pursued only in accordance with one's moral Way. The Master is well aware of the difficulty of attaining the balance. Time and again he repeats that one should concern oneself with one's own abilities rather than with recognition from others.²¹ Becoming famous is desirable but it is still a secondary goal.

As we advance into the Warring States period, the importance of the quest for a name increases, as is observable in a great variety of texts. Let us take *Mozi* 墨子 as an example. The text repeatedly treats the quest for renown and praise (*yu* 譽) as a singularly important factor in determining the behavior of the elite members. Mozi (ca. 460–390 BCE) specifically appeals to the rulers' quest for fame so as to encourage them to accept his controversial advice; should the rulers do so, "their name will be handed down to posterity."²² The same quest for name and praise influenced the behavior of the fellow *shi*. As distinct from Confucius, Mozi unequivocally endorses this quest. In his seminal chapters on the principle of "elevating the worthy" (*shang xian* 尚賢), Mozi explains how the worthies' quest for renown should be addressed by the rulers. Monarchs should "enrich, honor, respect, and praise" 富之、貴之、敬之、譽之 their aides; only "then will

20 *Lunyu yizhu* 4.5: 36.

21 *Lunyu yizhu* 1.16: 10, 4.14: 38–39, 14.30: 155.

22 垂名於後世. See, e.g., *Mozi jiaozhu* III.12: 121 ("Shang tong 尚同 zhong"); V.9: 218 ("Fei gong 非攻 xia").

it be possible to gain [the service of] good *shi* in the state and increase their number” 然后國之良士，亦將可得而眾也。²³

Mozi's suggestions are simple: like other specialists in different fields, “good *shi*” (*liang shi* 良士) are interested in acclaim and emoluments, and in order to attract them the ruler should generously subsidize them and flatter them. A *shi*'s quest for riches and fame does not diminish their worthiness in Mozi's eyes. Mozi surely dislikes unjustified renown (e.g., his opposition to the glorification of aggressive generals),²⁴ but worthy *shi* fully deserve the ruler's endorsement of their quest for a fine reputation.

We shall return later to Mozi's other considerations regarding one's quest for a name and its influence on individual behavior, but first let us explore some of the ideas of Confucius's followers. In general, these viewed the quest for a name in highly positive terms, although voices of caution that we encounter in the *Analects* recur in many later texts as well. In the *Mengzi* 孟子, for instance, the quest for a name appears in a highly positive context: “One who is fond of [a good] name is able to yield a thousand-chariot-sized state. If he is not such a person, his countenance will be uneasy even when giving away a basketful of food and a cup of soup.”²⁵ Yet Mengzi (ca. 380–304 BCE) echoes Confucius's reservations about paying too much attention to external reputation and career success. Rather, the real nobility, renown, and fine reputation are “embedded” in one's self: they are not delivered by the outside world.²⁶ The quest for a name is a positive ethical factor, but it should not be the primary motivation of the noble man's action: priority should be given to one's inner satisfaction with one's own morality. Hence, discussions about attaining a good name remain marginal in *Mengzi*.

23 *Mozi jiaozhu* II.8: 66 (“Shang xian 尚賢 shang”).

24 See *Mozi jiaozhu* V.7: 199 (“Fei gong 非攻 shang”).

25 好名之人，能讓千乘之國。苟非其人，簞食豆羹見於色。◦ *Mengzi yizhu* 14.II: 304. Note that Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) reads this passage differently: a person may do a great gesture of yielding in search for praise, but actually his morality still remains flawed and his greed will transpire in small matters. See *Mengzi zhangju* 14: 366.

26 *Mengzi yizhu* 11.17: 251; see also Roetz 1993: 182; Goldin 2011: 54–55.

In sharp contrast to *Mengzi*, *Xunzi* 荀子 presents the most sophisticated discussion about the impact of the quest for a name on a noble man's ethical and political conduct. In discussing Xunzi's (ca. 310–230 BCE) views of names, I shall not focus on his philosophical explorations of the idea of “names” and their “rectification,” which has been discussed elsewhere.²⁷ Let us move directly to the ethical and political meanings of the term *ming* in *Xunzi*. Here we can discern several distinct usages. First, much like in *Mozi*, a “name” (i.e., fame, good reputation) is a promise for rulers who would heed Xunzi's recommendations. Attaining a “name” on a par with actual achievements (*gong* 功) will be the hallmark of their success.²⁸ Yet the second level shows that the name does not always parallel one's achievements. As far as outstanding *shi* are concerned, good repute can arise not from a real success but as a compensation for the lack thereof. Xunzi clarifies this in one of the central chapters of the text, “Ru xiao” (儒效, “The Effectiveness of the Ru”):

故君子無爵而貴，無祿而富，不言而信，不怒而威，窮處而榮，獨居而樂，豈不至尊、至富、至重、至嚴之情舉積此哉！……故君子務脩其內，而讓之於外；務積德於身，而處之以遵道。如是，則貴名起如日月，天下應之如雷霆。故曰：君子隱而顯，微而明，辭讓而勝。《詩》曰：「鶴鳴于九皋，聲聞于天。」此之謂也。

Hence the noble man is esteemed without rank, rich without emoluments, trustworthy without words, awe-inspiring without anger. He lives in poverty but is glorious, dwells alone but is joyful—is it not that he accumulated the essence of the most respectable, the richest, the most important and the sternest? ... Hence the noble man is devoted to internal cultivation and yields externally, devotes himself to accumulating virtue in his body and dwells in it to comply with the Way. In this way, his noble name arises like the sun and moon, All-under-Heaven respond to him

27 Graham 1989: 265–267; Goldin 2011: 92–95; Fraser 2016; q.v. for further references.

28 See, e.g., *Xunzi jijie* V.9: 152 (“Wang zhi” 王制), VII.11: 216 (“Wang ba” 王霸); IX.14: 263 (“Zhi shi” 致士), *et saepe*.

as to a thunderbolt. Therefore it is said: the noble man is obscure, and yet is illustrious; he is hidden and yet is luminous; he is yielding and yet victorious. The *Poem* says: “The crane cries at the nine marshes, its voice is heard in Heaven.” This is what is meant.²⁹

The noble man does not depend on external circumstances; his internal cultivation suffices to counterbalance failures in pursuing his career. Accumulation of virtue allows him to attain the “noble name” even when he remains obscure and lacks rank and emolument. His name makes him the true leader of All-under-Heaven, the one to whom the people respond “as to the thunderbolt.” Elsewhere, Xunzi clarifies further how the name compensates the noble man (or, more precisely, the best of the noble men—the Great Ru 大儒) for his failures in real life:

彼大儒者，雖隱於窮閭漏屋，無置錐之地，而王公不能與之爭名；用百里之地，而千里之國莫能與之爭勝；笞極暴國，齊一天下，而莫能傾也——是大儒之徵也。……通則一天下，窮則獨立貴名，天不能死，地不能埋，桀、跖之世不能汙，非大儒莫之能立。

This Great Ru, even when he lives in obscurity in an impoverished lane in a leaking house and has not enough space to place an awl, kings and dukes are unable to vie for a good name with him; when he has a territory of a hundred *li* squared, none of the states of one thousand *li* squared can vie for superiority with him. He beats down violent states, orders and unifies All-under-Heaven, and nobody is able to overturn him—this is the sign of the Great Ru. ... When he succeeds, he unifies All-under-Heaven; when he fails, he establishes alone his noble name. Heaven cannot kill it; Earth cannot bury it; the age of [tyrant] Jie and [Robber] Zhi cannot tarnish it: only the Great Ru can establish it like this.³⁰

Here the “name” (i.e., good reputation) is posed as the supreme asset of the Great Ru, the possession of which is a recompense for the lack of attainments

29 *Xunzi jijie* IV.8: 127–128 (“Ru xiao”). The quoted poem is “He ming” 鶴鳴 (Mao 184).

30 *Xunzi jijie* IV.8: 117–118 (“Ru xiao”).

in his real life. Obscure and impoverished, he is still able to contest successfully with self-proclaimed kings of the Warring States and with other territorial lords, because his noble name is the source of enormous moral power. This name reaches cosmic dimensions: neither Heaven, nor Earth, nor human evildoers can tarnish it. Possessing a “noble name” is depicted in this extraordinary panegyric to the Great Ru as coequal with the supreme political achievement of unifying All-under-Heaven, which was during the Warring States period the ultimate goal of competing thinkers.³¹ In fact, Xunzi creates here two parallel hierarchies: one is crowned by real political achievements, and another one marked by the attainment of a “noble name.”

Yet Xunzi, who was fully aware of the dangerous quest for glory as a self-contained goal of some *shi* (a topic that will be discussed in the next section), was careful to avoid it. Hence he introduces the third dimension to his discussion of name: its subordination to other moral values. Xunzi reminds his audience that renown attained by villains like Robber Zhi 盜跖 may match that of the sage emperor Shun 舜, but “the noble man does not value it, because it did not come from the midst of ritual and propriety.”³² Those men who seek reputation for the sake of reputation—e.g. through display of excessive moral purism—are villains. “To steal a name is worse than stealing property.”³³ Real renown is attainable exclusively through following the path of morality:

故君子者，信矣，而亦欲人之信己也；忠矣，而亦欲人之親己也；脩正治辨矣，而亦欲人之善己也。慮之易知也，行之易安也，持之易立也，成則必得其所好，必不遇其所惡焉。是故窮則不隱，通則大明，身死而名彌白。

The noble man is trustworthy: and he also expects others to trust him. He is loyal: and he also expects others to be close to him. He cultivates his rectitude and puts in order his discriminative abilities: and he also

31 For this point, see Pines 2000a.

32 然而君子不貴者，非禮義之中也。《Xunzi jijie》II.3: 39 (“Bu gou” 不苟).

33 盜名不如盜貨。《Xunzi jijie》II.3: 52 (“Bu gou” 不苟).

expects others to be good to him. His thoughts are easy to understand, his behavior easily brings calm, what he adheres to is easy to establish. When he accomplishes his [goal], he will surely attain whatever he is drawn to and surely will not encounter whatever he detests. Therefore, even when impoverished, he is not obscure, and when he succeeds he becomes greatly illustrious. His body may die, but his name will be ever radiant.³⁴

This passage adds three points to Xunzi's discussion of names. First, it unequivocally reiterates that only through moral self-cultivation can one attain real renown, which will make one's name "radiant" forever. Second, from the promise "even when impoverished, he is not obscure" we may infer that obscurity—viz., lack of a name—was more frightening for a noble man than economic hardship. And third, the last line implies that attaining a noble name was a means of transcending death: compensation not just for immediate misfortune but even for mortality itself. The transcendent qualities of posthumous fame—echoed in a few other moralizing texts, such as the "Black Robes" ("Ziyi" 緇衣) chapter of the *Liji* 禮記³⁵—further elevate *ming* to the position of being the most valuable reward for one's goodness.

The above survey of different attitudes toward the noble man's quest for a name suffices to cover most invocations of the term "name" in discussions by the followers of Confucius and by other supporters of moralizing politics. A good name is a much-coveted goal of moral self-cultivation and of studying.³⁶ It is the natural prize for those who follow the Way (*Dao* 道)

34 *Xunzi jijie* II.4: 61 ("Rong ru" 榮辱).

35 "[The noble man] has substance behind his words and standards behind his actions; thus in life, he cannot be robbed of his will, and in death, he cannot be robbed of his [good] name" 言有物而行有格也；是以生則不可奪志，死則不可奪名 (*Liji jijie* LII.33: 1330 ["Ziyi" 緇衣]; for a parallel passage in the Guodian manuscript of "Ziyi," see Cook 2012: 410–412).

36 Thus, *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 reminds one that although Confucius and Mozi failed to implement their great way, they at least succeeded in accomplishing "illustrious names" (*xian ming* 顯名) (*Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 13.7: 722 ["Yu da" 論大]). For identifying prominence and good name as one of the primary goals of learning and self-cultivation, see also *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 4.2: 195 ("Quan xue" 勸學), 4.3: 205 ("Zun shi" 尊師).

and “principle” (*li* 理): it cannot be attained by immoral power-holders.³⁷ In a somewhat simplistically optimistic passage, *Zhong yong* 中庸 (The doctrine of the mean) places “name” together with “position” (*wei* 位), “emoluments” (*lu* 祿) and longevity (*shou* 壽) as the four “musts” that will be surely attained by a possessor of “great virtue.”³⁸ Other texts combine attaining a good name with filial obligations: most notably, the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (Canon of filial piety) proclaims in its opening paragraph:

身體髮膚，受之父母，不敢毀傷，孝之始也。立身行道，揚名於後世，以顯父母，孝之終也。

One’s body, hair, and skin are what one receives from one’s parents. Not daring to hurt them is the starting point of filiality. To establish oneself, to implement the way, and to make a name for subsequent generations, thereby bringing prominence to one’s parents: this is the final point of filiality.³⁹

The last sentence adds one more dimension to the notion of a good name as the apex of the noble man’s aspirations: attaining a name is related not just to one’s self-cultivation, learning, and moral conduct, but is also the end point of one’s filial obligations.⁴⁰ The quest for a name is not just legitimate; it is essential for a noble man. For a cultivated man of letters, it is the one—and, under unfavorable circumstances, the only—attainable goal. The quest for a glorious name becomes one of the major (if not *the major*) prime movers of the noble man’s actions.

3. Dying for One’s Name

In the above section we noticed concerns by Confucius, Mozi, and Xunzi that some people would attain undeserved renown not borne out by their

37 *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 2.1: 110–111 (“Gong ming” 功名).

38 *Zhong yong* 17, in *Si shu zhangju*, p. 25.

39 *Xiaojing yizhu* 1: 1 (“Kaizong mingyi” 開宗明義).

40 This point is echoed in *Lüshi chunqiu jiaoshi* 14.1: 733 (“Xiao xing” 孝行).

morality. Alas, their endorsement of the quest for a name might have contributed—even if inadvertently—precisely to the proliferation of name-seeking as its own goal. Actually, the entire atmosphere of the Warring States period was conducive to the transformation of a “name” into the most coveted asset. On the one hand, dissemination of meritocratic ideas and practices opened the routes of advancement to a great variety of aspiring men-of-service. On the other hand, there was no clear agreement as to which qualities made a man eligible for government service or patronage; nor was there agreement about how to select the worthy candidates.⁴¹ Under these circumstances, gaining renown—through whatever possible means—was an excellent way of acquiring patrons or recommenders for an office. For many people the quest for a name was the first step toward employment, riches, and political influence.⁴²

Aside from career considerations, the quest for a name was fueled by the transcendent promise of posthumous fame, as noted above in our discussion of *Xunzi*. The idea of attaining an immortal name was appealing enough to some *shi* to brave death in their search for eternal glory. This motive appears most prominently in stories of assassin-retainers, scattered throughout the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Stratagems of the Warring States) and later collected by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–90 BCE) in his *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the historian). Their differences aside, these stories have a common plot. A powerful patron “discovers” or “recognizes” a brave *shi* and entices him—usually through very lavish gifts—to kill the patron’s enemy. The *shi* fulfills his promise, with varying degrees of success, but uniformly displays total commitment to the mission and readiness to self-sacrifice. Importantly, the stories neither provide moral or political

41 See more in Pines 2013; cf. Richter 2005.

42 One of the most peculiar offshoots of this quest for a name as a means of political advancement was the case of lofty recluses who ostensibly discarded political career, but actually gained thereby the renown due to moral purists and became even more welcome to occupy official positions. See Pines 2009: 152–161. Note that it is precisely these recluses’ quest for a name which ignites *Xunzi*’s ire (see note 33 above).

justification for the planned assassination, nor do they set much store by the success of an assassination attempt. Clearly, the focus of these stories lies elsewhere.

Let us illustrate this with two examples. The first is that of Yu Rang 豫讓, who was committed to avenging his dead master, Zhi Bo 知伯 (d. 453 BCE). Yu Rang is said to have once served Zhi Bo's enemies, heads of the Fan 范 and Zhonghang 中行 lineages,⁴³ but after those were eliminated by Zhi Bo, he served his new master faithfully. The latter treated him as a “state-level *shi*” (*guoshi* 國士), and hence deserved Yu's utmost loyalty: “A *shi* dies for the sake of the one who profoundly understands him” 士為知己者死.⁴⁴ After Zhi Bo's defeat and posthumous humiliation by his arch-enemy, Zhao Xiangzi 趙襄子 (d. ca. 442 BCE), Yu Rang committed himself to revenge. He went to great lengths to hide his identity (resorting to self-mutilation), but was nonetheless apprehended by Zhao Xiangzi. Considering Yu Rang a “righteous *shi*” (*yishi* 義士), Zhao released him, but when Yu Rang was caught for the second time Zhao told him:

嗟乎，豫子！豫子之為知伯，名既成矣，寡人舍子，亦以足矣。子自為計，寡人不舍子。

Alas, Master Yu! You, Master Yu, have already accomplished your name [by trying to avenge] Zhi Bo. And my previous release of you was enough as well. Think about this yourself: now I cannot release you.

To this Yu Rang replied:

43 The story is patently ahistorical here. The Fan and Zhonghang lineages were eliminated in 492 BCE by a coalition of Jin ministerial lineages led by Zhao Yang 趙鞅 (d. 475 BCE). One of the partners in this coalition was Zhi the Elder (Zhi Bo 知伯) by the name Li 躒, or, possibly, his son Zhi Jia 知甲. Zhi the Elder (Zhi Bo), who was killed in 453 BCE, was Zhi Jia's son, Yao 瑤, who played no role in the downfall of the Fan and Zhonghang lineages; and in any case it is highly implausible that Yu Rang was a servant of two different lineages forty years before the described events. Clearly, the authors of *Zhanguo ce* conflated different Zhi Elders and also embellished Yu Rang's biography.

44 *Zhanguo ce zhushi*, “Zhao ce 1” 18.4: 617.

臣聞明主不掩人之義，忠臣不愛死以成名。君前已寬舍臣，天下莫不稱君之賢。今日之事，臣故伏誅，然愿請君之衣而擊之，雖死不恨。非所望也，敢布腹心。

I heard that a clear-sighted sovereign does not conceal the righteousness of others; the loyal subject does not begrudge death in order to accomplish a good name. That you, my lord, generously released me previously caused everybody under Heaven to praise your worthiness. Now, I am ready to be executed. As for today's events, I am of course ready to submit to execution, but I wish to request to strike your garments, so that I shall have no regret even if I die. This would be beyond my expectations; yet I presume to lay bare my inmost heart.⁴⁵

Yu Rang's request was granted: he struck Zhao's garments, shouting: "I have avenged Zhi Bo," and then committed suicide. His heroic sacrifice ended therefore in fiasco: or did it? Politically speaking, his case was moribund: after all, his master, Zhi Bo was already eliminated, and revenge could do nothing to restore Zhi Bo's hereditary house. Nor did the success of his mission matter much to Yu Rang: the story tells of his rejection of a friend's idea to enter Zhao Xiangzi's service and then to murder him—this would contradict the basic principles of a retainer's loyalty! So what did matter to Yu Rang? I think the final exchange clarifies this beyond doubt: both Zhao Xiangzi and Yu Rang acted as actors in a historical spectacle, the greatest prize of which was attaining fame—a "name"—in this life and in the afterlife.

To check this assertion let us look at another assassin's story, that of Nie Zheng 聶政. Nie's patron, a disgruntled Han 韓 noble, Yan Sui 嚴遂, planned to assassinate his rival, Prime Minister Han Kui 韓傀 (d. ca. 397 BCE). Nie Zheng initially refused to enter Yan Sui's service, saying that he should take care of his aged mother, but after her death he volunteered to perform the assassination. Being careful not to let the plot be leaked even posthumously so as to prevent punishment for his patron, Nie performed

45 *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 18.4: 618 ("Zhao ce 趙策 1").

the assassination alone. Not only did he stab the well-guarded Han Kui and kill many of the guards, he also managed to gouge out his own eyes and cut off his own face so as to die unrecognized.

Yet the genre cannot tolerate a nameless hero. Here enters Nie Zheng's elder sister, who travels to the state of Han, where her brother's body lies in the expectation that somebody will identify the murderer. She explains her motives: "As my younger brother is supremely worthy, I cannot, for the sake of cherishing my body, allow my brother's name to be eradicated: it was not his intention!"⁴⁶ Then, in Han, she makes the final performance. The brother is named as being in line with supreme heroes of the past:

今死而無名，父母既歿矣，兄弟無有，此為我故也。夫愛身不揚弟之名，吾不忍也。

Now, he had died namelessly. Yet our parents are dead already, we have neither brothers nor sisters, so he [erased his identity] because of me. Yet to cherish my body and not extol the name of my younger brother: I cannot bear to do that!⁴⁷

Having said this, Nie Zheng's sister embraced her brother's body and committed suicide. Judging from political reasoning, this was a grave mistake: after all, Nie Zheng's avowed desire to preserve secrecy was out of concern for his employer, and his sister annulled her brother's achievement by identifying him. Yet this was not the judgment of the public opinion of that age, if we trust the *Zhanguo ce*:

晉、楚、齊、衛聞之曰：「非獨政之能，乃其姊者，以列女也。聶政之所以名施於後世者，其姊不避菹醢之誅，以揚其名也。」

Having heard about this, [the people] in Jin, Chu, Qi, and [smaller] Wei all said: "Not only was [Nie] Zheng an able person, his sister was also

46 弟至賢，不可愛妾之軀，滅吾弟之名，非弟意也。(Zhanguo ce zhushi 27.22: 1035 ["Han ce" 韓策 2]).

47 Zhanguo ce zhushi 27.22: 1035 ("Han ce" 2).

an exemplary woman. The reason why Nie Zheng's name is transmitted to later generations is that his sister did not eschew the punishment of becoming mincemeat so as to extol her brother's name."⁴⁸

Once again this finale clarifies that the assassination was primarily about getting a name for Nie Zheng (and eventually for his sister as well).⁴⁹ Assassination had no moral justifications, nor did it attain its political goal (presumably after Nie Zheng was identified, his patron could not escape the vengeance of the Han ruling house). What matters is that one more hero joined the pantheon of martyrs who died to sanctify their name.

It goes without saying that stories about assassin-retainers collected in the *Zhanguo ce* and in the *Shiji* were heavily embellished—or outright invented—by their anonymous authors. What did they want to attain? I believe that the major goal was to promote the peculiar idea of personal loyalty, the one that is due only to the one who “profoundly understands” the true value of a *shi* (*zhi ji* 知己, implying “to understand the other as you understand yourself”). Creating and circulating these stories was an important means of convincing potential patrons of the high value of a *shi*: should an employer “profoundly understand” his retainer or minister (usually through lavishly rewarding him), he may be sure that the minister would reciprocate by sacrificing his life for the employer's sake.⁵⁰ This self-sacrifice was not just an act of gratitude but was motivated by the transcendent value of attaining a glorious name “to be transmitted in later generations.”

Assassin-retainers were just one group of heroes hailed for their readiness to sacrifice their lives for the sake of ultimate glory. To these

48 Ibid. “Becoming mincemeat” was the due punishment for those related to Nie Zheng. Nie's sister would have been turned into mincemeat had she not killed herself (or was she turned into mincemeat posthumously?).

49 Michael Nylan (1998–1999: 236–238) discusses this story in the context of Sima Qian's history writing. Oddly, she does not address at all the story's appearance in the *Zhanguo ce*, which in all likelihood served a source for Sima Qian. For a much more sophisticated discussion, which compares the *Zhanguo ce* and *Shiji*, see Durrant 1995: 105–110.

50 See more in Pines 2002b.

one can add another group of exemplary personages: moral purists who would starve themselves to death rather than accept morally contaminated emolument from contemporaneous rulers, or those willing to remonstrate on pain of death so as to preserve their integrity. These were represented by the imagined figures of Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, who abandoned even the righteous King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (d. ca. 1042 BCE) when the latter's behavior were at odds with their lofty principles, or Bigan 比干, the courageous cousin of the Shang 商 tyrant Zhouxin 紂辛 (d. ca. 1046 BCE), who was cruelly executed for his upright admonitions. As I have argued elsewhere, their stories were aimed at promulgating a type of loyalty different from that of the assassin-retainers: loyalty not to a ruler-friend, but to the Way, i.e. to one's moral principles.⁵¹ Yet going beyond these differences, one discovers a common trope of self-sacrifice (or sacrifice of one's career and of immediate material interests) not just out of commitment to one's principles but primarily as a means to attain glory and ensure thereby "commemorative immortality." Yu Rang and Nie Zheng differed tremendously from Boyi or Bigan, but each exemplified the common goal of the name seekers: "their body may be dead but their name is ever more radiant."⁵²

4. Name or Body?

In the pluralistic world of the Warring States, few if any political or ethical principles remained uncontested and the quest for a name was not an exception. It came under attack from two directions. Politically, it was considered by some as detrimental to proper norms of meritocratic

⁵¹ Pines 2002b: 53–62.

⁵² It was Han Fei 韓非 (d. 233 BCE), the singularly perceptive political analyst, who discerned the similar logic behind these divergent stories: hailing loyal ministers who were lofty enough to sacrifice themselves but whose practical value for the ruler was close to nil. See *Han Feizi jijie* IV.14: 105–106 ("Jian jie shi chen" 姦劫弑臣). See also more below in the text.

appointment. The danger that an unscrupulous manipulator might attain a good name at the expense of truly meritorious servitors was broadly recognized even before our age of sophisticated PR campaigns. This topic will be addressed in the next section; here I want to focus on a different line of attacking the name-seekers: i.e., the ultimate folly of sacrificing one's body for an elusive name.

This line of reasoning is commonly associated with the so-called Daoist thought, and there is no doubt that it is most readily observable in such texts as *Laozi* 老子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and (a much later) *Liezi* 列子. *Laozi* is one of the earliest texts to focus on the body or the self (*shen* 身) as a legitimate focus of concern. It is also arguably the first to juxtapose body and name. *Laozi* rhetorically asks: “What is closer to you: body or name?” 名與身孰親？—and the answer is clear.⁵³ The search for fame and reputation pales in comparison with preserving one's life: to attain longevity one should “know what is sufficient” (*zhi zu* 知足) and “when to stop” (*zhi zhi* 知止), which may well be interpreted specifically as the need to limit political involvement.⁵⁴

In *Zhuangzi*, a text that radically assaults the intellectuals' commitment to political involvement and denigrates career-seekers, the attack on the quest for a name becomes more vivid. Pursuing a name is dangerous; hence “The doer of good stays clear of a name (repute)” 為善無近名.⁵⁵ The quest for a name is characteristic of shortsighted and avaricious career-seekers, like Confucius and his disciples. In one of the anecdotes, a sagacious gardener criticizes Confucius's disciple, Zigong:

子非夫博學以擬聖，於于以蓋眾，獨弦哀歌以賣名聲於天下者乎？
汝方將忘汝神氣，墮汝形骸，而庶幾乎！而身之不能治，而何暇治
天下乎？子往矣，無乏吾事！

53 *Laozi* 44 cited from *Boshu Laozi*, 39–40; *Guodian Laozi* A, slip 35 (Cook 2012: 279).

54 For more on the *Laozi*'s role in prioritizing the “body” over political career, see Pines 2009a: 155–156.

55 *Zhuangzi jinzhū* 3: 94 (“Yang sheng zhu” 養生主); translation adapted from Graham 1981: 62.

Are not you the one who has learned extensively to resemble a sage, who huffs and puffs to lord it over the multitudes, the one who plucks the strings and sings mournfully all alone in order to peddle your name and renown in All-under-Heaven? You are one who forgets about your spirit and breath, destroys your body and bones, and only then can you approach [your goals]. You are unable to order your body: so where will you have spare time to order All-under-Heaven? Go away, do not disturb my job.⁵⁶

Zigong's behavior is both immoral (showing off his abilities to attain renown) and stupid: his achievements come at the expense of bodily health, and are therefore meaningless. Elsewhere, the authors present a more concentrated assault against the common quest for external gains at the expense of one's body:

自三代以下者，天下莫不以物易其性矣。小人則以身殉利，士則以身殉名，大夫則以身殉家，聖人則以身殉天下。故此數子者，事業不同，名聲異號，其於傷性以身為殉，一也。

From the Three Dynasties on, everybody under Heaven is engaged in seeking [external] things at the expense of one's [innate] nature. Petty men sacrifice their bodies for profits, *sbi* sacrifice their bodies for a good name; grandees sacrifice their bodies for their houses; sages sacrifice their bodies for All-under-Heaven. In all these cases, their undertakings are different and their appellations are distinct, but from the point of view of hurting their innate nature and sacrificing their bodies, they are all the same.⁵⁷

This is a doubly sophisticated assault on the quest for a name. Not only is this quest considered harmful for one's body, it is also ominously close to the profit-seeking of petty men. Recall that Confucius and his followers clearly distinguished between the term "benefit/profit" (*li* 利) with its

56 *Zhuangzi jinzhu* 12: 318 ("Tian di" 天地).

57 *Zhuangzi jinzhu* 8: 239 ("Pianmu" 駢拇).

negative emotive meaning⁵⁸ and “name,” the emotive meaning of which remained overwhelmingly positive. By contrast, Zhuangzi places both terms in dangerous proximity: they are “all the same” not just from the point of view of bodily harm they incur but possibly in terms of their moral value as well.

We shall return in the last section to the impact of *Laozi's* and *Zhuangzi's* views on the subsequent criticism of name-seekers in the imperial period; here I want only to note that awareness of the potential conflict between “body” and “name” was not limited to these two thinkers but was quite widespread. One indication of this is an interesting anecdote in the *Zhanguo ce*. It tells of a meeting between the powerful—but due-to-be-demoted—chancellor of Qin, Fan Sui 范雎 (d. 255 BCE) and his aspiring successor, Cai Ze 蔡澤.⁵⁹ Cai Ze tries to convince Fan Sui to resign by pointing to the mounting personal dangers for any gifted leader who ignores the advantages of a timely retreat. Fan Sui, aware of Cai's rhetorical trap, rebuffs him:

故君子殺身以成名，義之所在，身雖死，無憾悔，何為不可哉？

Thus, for a noble man to die in order to attain a name is where duty lies; even if I die, I shall have nothing to regret—why should I avoid it?⁶⁰

This statement—which is very audacious in light of the above passages from *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*—invokes the transcendent qualities of a good name: death pales in comparison with the attainment of lasting renown. Yet Cai Ze is well prepared for this argument. He reminds Fan that one can attain a good name even without sacrificing oneself. “If one can establish one's loyalty and achieve a name only after dying, then even Weizi was not benevolent enough, Confucius was not sage enough, and Guan Zhong was

58 For “benefit,” see Defoort 2008. For “emotive meaning,” see Defoort, this volume.

59 For in-depth analysis of this anecdote, see Pines 2018. Fan Sui's name is written either with character 雎 (Sui) or 雎 (Ju). My reading follows Bai Guohong 2015.

60 *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 5.18: 204 (“Qin ce 秦策 3”).

not great enough.”⁶¹ Having heard this, Fan Sui is willing to reconsider his adamant stance: if he could preserve both the name and the body it is surely preferable to a heroic but meaningless death. Yet the authors of the anecdote leave open the question as to which of the two—name or body—should be given priority.

5. Name and Politics

Aside from philosophical and ethical implications, the widespread quest for a good name had far-reaching political consequences. On the most immediate level, it posed the problem of fraudulent reputation. Insofar as many appointments were determined on the basis of one’s repute, it was increasingly important for policy makers to distinguish between an appointee’s deserved and undeserved prominence. On a deeper level, some thinkers noticed that the quest for a name could be utilized to strengthen rather than weaken the political order. As we shall see, the latter idea had far-reaching practical consequences.

Criticism of the unjustified quest for a name is explicit both in Mozi’s philippics against the renown of the supporters of aggressive wars and in repeated warnings by Confucius and his disciples that true repute should be based on moral principles alone. However, neither Mozi nor Confucians explained how undeserved prominence came about. It was the opponents of moralizing discourse in politics, Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 BCE), Han Fei 韓非 (d. 233 BCE), and other contributors to the books attributed to them (the *Shangjunshu* 商君書 [hereafter, *Book of Lord Shang*] and *Han Feizi* 韓非子),

61 夫待死之後可以立忠成名，是微子不足仁，孔子不足聖，管仲不足大也。(《Zhanguo ce zhushi》5.18: 204 [“Qin ce 3”]). Weizi was the minister of the last Shang tyrant, Zhouxin; he fled the state to avoid persecution. Confucius considered him a paragon of benevolence (*Lunyu* 18.1). Guan Zhong (d. 645 BCE) was the architect of hegemony of Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 BCE). Weizi, Guan Zhong, and Confucius had established their reputation without suffering persecution.

who exposed the reasons for this unwelcome phenomenon. The *Book of Lord Shang* ridicules the prevailing discourse of “elevating the worthy” as follows:

夫舉賢能，世之所以治也；而治之所以亂。世之所謂賢者，言正也；所以為言正者，黨也。聽其言也，則以為能；問其黨，以為然。故貴之，不待其有功；誅之，不待其有罪也。

Elevation of the worthy and the able is what the world considers orderly rule: that is why orderly rule is in turmoil. What the world calls a “worthy” is one who is defined as upright; but those who define him as good and upright are his clique. When you hear his words, you consider him able; when you ask his associates, they approve it. Hence, one is ennobled before one has any merits; one is punished before one has committed a crime.⁶²

The authors are unequivocal: a person’s reputation is related neither to his abilities nor to his uprightness but is rather fabricated by one’s partisans. These partisans, the despised “peripatetic eaters” (*youshizhe* 游食者) who travel from one court to another and get emoluments in exchange for their skillful argumentation, are singled out in the text as “caterpillars” (*ming* 螟) who confuse the ruler with their doctrines, mislead the population at large and endanger the social and political order.⁶³ Since one’s reputation is created by these unscrupulous individuals, it clearly cannot serve as a means of selecting and promoting officials. Those “who are appointed on account of their reputation or [after] having requested an audience” should never “be allowed to become rich and noble.”⁶⁴

Han Fei echoes these sentiments: one’s reputation should not serve as the basis of one’s appointment and promotion. Rather, the ruler should promote his subjects exclusively in accord with strict and uniform rules: “discuss them according to their tasks, check them according to their performance, assess them according to their merits.”⁶⁵ These rules will

62 *Book of Lord Shang* 25.1 (Pines 2017a: 240).

63 See e.g., *Book of Lord Shang* 3.6, 3.10 (Pines 2017a: 137–140).

64 任譽、清濁(=請謁)，不可以富貴。 *Book of Lord Shang* 17.4 (Pines 2017a: 211).

65 論之於任，試之於事，課之於功 (*Han Feizi jijie* XIV.38: 375 [“Nan san” 難三]).

replace the misguided reliance on one's renown with objectively observable criteria that will allow the evaluation of one's real merits and determine one's career.⁶⁶

The opposition of Shang Yang and Han Fei to the idea of promotions based on an individual's reputation is not surprising; but does this mean that these thinkers are opposed in principle to an individual's quest for a name? Not necessarily. Actually, Shang Yang put forward a brilliant and counterintuitive idea: the individual's quest for a name (and riches) should become the foundation of a good political order. Insofar as one is motivated by the desire to attain renown, the ruler may be able to direct this motivation to socially and politically acceptable goals. Mozi might have been the first to outline this idea. In his promulgation of the controversial concept of "universal love" (or "caring for everyone," *jian ai* 兼愛), he reminded the rulers that they are able to direct people even to "kill themselves for the sake of a name" 殺身而為名; so, naturally, it would be easier to encourage subjects to engage in such a beneficial way of life as caring for everyone.⁶⁷ Yet this idea was never developed in full in the *Mozi*. For Shang Yang, by contrast, it became the cornerstone of a new social order.

The *Book of Lord Shang* postulates that individuals are selfish, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. It is precisely the selfishness of individuals and their covetous inborn nature (*xing* 性) that can be utilized so as not to jeopardize but rather to strengthen political order. The authors explain:

民之性，饑而求食，勞而求佚，苦則索樂，辱則求榮，此民之情也。民之求利，失禮之法；求名，失性之常。奚以論其然也？今夫盜賊上犯君上之所禁，下失臣子之禮，故名辱而身危，猶不止者，

66 For Han Fei's opposition to promotions based on reputation, see, e.g., *Han Feizi jijie* V.18: 118 ("Nan mian" 南面), V.19: 127 ("Shi xie" 飾邪); for Han Fei's recommendations about the appropriate ways of promotion, see *Han Feizi jijie* XIX.50: 460 ("Xian xue" 顯學). See also Yuan Lihua 2005; Pines 2013: 182–184.

67 *Mozi jiaozhu* IV.15: 160 ("Jian ai 兼愛 zhong").

利也。其上世之士，衣不煖膚，食不滿腸，苦其志意，勞其四肢，傷其五臟，而益裕廣耳，非性之常，而為之者，名也。故曰名利之所湊，則民道之。

The nature of the people is to seek food when they are hungry, to seek respite when they work hard, to seek joy when they are embittered, to seek glory when they are humiliated: this is the people's disposition. In seeking benefit, the people lose the standard of ritual,⁶⁸ in seeking a name (=repute), they lose the constant of their nature.⁶⁹ How can I demonstrate this? Now, criminals violate the prohibitions of rulers and superiors above, and lose the ritual of subjects and sons below; hence their name is dishonored and their body endangered, but they still do not stop: this is because of benefit. In the generations of old, there were men-of-service (*shi*) who did not have enough clothes to warm their skin, nor enough food to fill their bellies. They exerted their four limbs and injured their five internal organs, but behaved ever more broad-heartedly: this is not the constant of [human] nature, yet they did it because of a [good] name. Hence it is said: wherever the name and benefit meet, the people will go in this direction.⁷⁰

This discussion is one of the earliest systematic analyses of human nature in Chinese history. Two major factors influencing human behavior are the quest for riches and the quest for a name. The first causes the people to transgress against moral and legal norms; the second even transcends their quest for life and causes them to endanger themselves. Yet while the “name” here may refer to a transcendent force that causes the people to sacrifice their bodily well being, this usage is of secondary importance in the *Book of Lord Shang*. Generally, the text equates “name” as fame and

68 The combination *li zhi fa* 禮之法 (“standard of ritual”) is peculiar to the *Book of Lord Shang*; it implies here the essential norms of behavior embedded in the broader concept of ritual. For different meanings of the term *li* 禮 (ritual) in pre-imperial discourse, see Pines 2000b.

69 The “constant of one's nature” (*xing zhi chang* 性之常) refers here to the fear of death. In seeking name, the people are ready to sacrifice their lives.

70 *Book of Lord Shang* 6.4 (Pines 2017a: 160).

repute with “name” as social status. The quest for a name is in the final analysis the quest for social prestige and the ensuing social and economic benefits. Shang Yang considers this quest entirely legitimate, as long as it is realizable exclusively through routes approved by the state. The historical Shang Yang famously replaced the aristocratic social order with a new one based on ranks of merit.⁷¹ These ranks—and the adjacent social, economic, and political privileges—were bestowed by the ruler on meritorious soldiers and diligent tillers. The text explains how this system should turn the quest for a name into the foundation of social order:

主操名利之柄，而能致功名者，數也。……夫農，民之所苦；而戰，民之所危也。犯其所苦，行其所危者，計也。故民生則計利，死則慮名。名利之所出，不可不審也。利出於地，則民盡力；名出於戰，則民致死。

When the sovereign holds the handles of a (good) name and benefit and is able to bring together the name [only] to the meritorious, this is the method. ... Farming is what the people consider a hardship; war is what the people consider dangerous. Yet they brave what they consider bitter and perform what they consider dangerous because of the calculation [of a name and benefit]. Thus, in [ordinary] life, the people calculate benefits; [facing] death, they think of a (good) name. One cannot but investigate whence the name and benefit come. When benefits come from land, the people fully utilize their strength; when the name comes from war, the people are ready to die.⁷²

The idea that the name “comes from war” refers to Shang Yang’s policies of granting ranks primarily (or exclusively) for merit attained on the

71 The system of ranks of merit had been studied intensively in China, Japan, and in the West, especially since new paleographic discoveries that clarified aspects of its functioning and the magnitude of its social impact. I discuss this system in the context of the ideology of the *Book of Lord Shang* in Pines 2016b; q.v. for further references.

72 *Book of Lord Shang* 6.5 (Pines 2017a: 161).

battlefield.⁷³ Yet the point is not only to bestow ranks on meritorious soldiers (or, elsewhere, diligent tillers), but also to prevent the people from attaining a “name” outside the state-mandated rank system. This understanding stands in the background of the *Book of Lord Shang*’s assault on privately gained reputation. When “those who have privately established a name are deemed illustrious” (*siming xian zhi* 私名顯之), this is “a licentious way” (*yin dao* 淫道). The text recommends the unification of “the gates of prominence and glory” (*xianrong zhi men* 顯榮之門), preventing anybody outside the state-mandated system of ranks to enter these gates. Those “who do not fight but attain glory, who have no rank but are respected” (不戰而榮，無爵而尊) are called “villains” (*jianmin* 姦民).⁷⁴ Glory, respect, renown—all should be inseparable from the ranks of merit bestowed by the state.

An instrumentalist approach to the quest for name and its equation with the quest for social status in the *Book of Lord Shang* may appear simplistic, but Shang Yang’s insight into the mechanics of human motivation was validated by the success of his reforms. The system of ranks of merit introduced by Shang Yang reshaped not just Qin’s social structure but even social mores, becoming the major motivating force for Qin’s soldiers. As soldiers knew that valiant fighting and cutting off enemy’s heads would bring about not just material but social, legal, and even political privileges, they exerted themselves, contributing to Qin’s eventual supremacy. In retrospect, Shang Yang’s reform, based as it was on the state’s monopolization of both the sources of material wellbeing (“benefit”) and social prestige (“name”), appears as a singularly successful—albeit morally dubious—experiment in social engineering.⁷⁵

73 See more in Pines 2016a.

74 See respectively *Book of Lord Shang* 22.1, 6.10, and 18.6 (Pines 2017a: 228–29, 164–65, and 218).

75 See more in Pines 2016b.

6. Status or Repute? *Ming* in Politics and Historiography

The military-based system of ranks of merit introduced by Shang Yang outlived its usefulness by the time of imperial unification in 221 BCE, and it atrophied under the Han dynasty (206/202 BCE–220 CE). Nonetheless, the idea that the state can use the people's quest for a name (viz., social status and prestige) so as to direct them towards desirable modes of behavior retained its validity. The *Book of Lord Shang* anticipates the potential utilization of its insights for different ends: it mentions that by manipulating the bestowal of benefits (and by extension of the “name”), the rulers would be able to direct the subjects to any ends—from tilling and fighting to studying the canonical *Poems* and *Documents*.⁷⁶ This observation was prophetic. In the Han dynasty, as universal military service was discontinued,⁷⁷ and the sociopolitical system changed profoundly, the Qin goal of turning the entire population into tillers cum soldiers was no longer relevant. Rather, the Han rulers, starting with Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) were in need of a new *modus vivendi* with the reviving local elites. This *modus vivendi* was based on the promulgation of certain virtues associated with Confucian teaching. The nascent system of recommendations cum examinations encouraged the people to adopt norms of behavior that the state singled out as socially desirable, viz. filiality and incorruptibility (*xiaolian* 孝廉). From then on, following these norms, rather than displaying military valor, opened the routes up the social ladder.

The results of this experiment were no less remarkable than Qin's introduction of the system of military-based ranks of merit. Members of the Han elites were ready to go to great extremes to be named filial and incorruptible.⁷⁸ Excessive mourning periods for deceased parents,

76 *Book of Lord Shang* 23.3 (Pines 2017a: 233).

77 Lewis 2000.

78 See Makeham 1994: 99–111; Nylan 1996.

lavish burials, acts of self-denial, such as refusals to accept government nominations—all these became inseparable parts of the new political ethos, especially under the Latter Han dynasty (25–220 CE). As these “eccentricities, distortions, and outright abuses”⁷⁹ became commonplace, they generated heated debates about the correspondence (or the lack thereof) between the “name” (*ming* 名) and “actuality” (*shi* 實) in sociopolitical life. Criticism notwithstanding, attempts to utilize the quest for a name to generate politically or socially desirable behavior continued throughout the imperial period. This can be exemplified by the practice of bestowing tokens of status and honor on filial sons and chaste women. This practice continued throughout the imperial millennia and accelerated under the Qing dynasty (1636/44–1912). Whether or not these tokens of honor and commemoration (both physical—such as towering arches—and literary, most notably commemoration in local gazetteers, as discussed by Epstein in Chapter 6) were the primary motivating force that prompted excessive displays of chastity and filiality is debatable, but surely at least some filial sons and chaste widows were enticed by the desire to attain immediate and lasting fame.⁸⁰

The imperially orchestrated bestowal of ranks and tokens of honor remained a potent means by which rulers utilized their subjects’ quest for a name in ways that suited their own agenda; but this was neither the only, nor, arguably, the primary way of attaining a good name. In the long run, Shang Yang’s desire to maintain the state monopoly over *ming* as both repute and as social status was unattainable. The court could determine one’s status; but one’s reputation was established primarily by other members of the educated elite, most notably those involved in history writing. From the Han dynasty on, it was up to historians to provide “commemorative immortality,” which proved to be of exceptional importance for the literati, and even for many rulers themselves.

79 Makeham 1994: 107.

80 See Elvin 1996; for a different view, see Epstein, this volume.

Using history writing to determine one's reputation can be linked to the *Annals*, but the real rise in the importance of historical texts in this context starts with Sima Qian's *Shiji*. Specifically, Sima Qian's invention of the biographic genre was of primary importance. Since this invention has been discussed in the past, including by the present author, I shall confine myself to a few brief observations.⁸¹ First, it is highly likely that Sima Qian was the first to systematically commemorate outstanding individuals in his "Arrayed traditions" (*Lie zhuan* 列傳).⁸² Second, among many reasons for his apparent invention of this genre, the primary one—discussed by Sima Qian in the first chapter of the "Arrayed traditions"—can be called religious. By commemorating outstanding individuals whose fate was often cruel and unjust, the historian compensates them for injustice inflicted on them by Heaven. In Stephen Durrant's words, "the historian thereby becomes the savior, those attached to him are saved, living on through the power of his writing brush."⁸³ An afterlife in a historical text is viewed as a compensation for under-appreciation or failure in real life. Third, Sima Qian's invention of the biographic genre shaped China's history writing for millennia to come. Commemoration in a historical text became the major means of attaining a sort of transcendent justice. It turned composing biographies into the most thriving part of history writing. Not incidentally, the lion's share of historical texts recorded in the bibliographic section of *Suishu* 隋書 (History of the Sui dynasty) (discussed by Durrant, Chapter 3) consisted of biographies.

81 See Pines 2009b: 333–340. For a sample of earlier studies to which I am particularly indebted, see Li Wai-ye 1994 and Durrant 1995. For a focused study on the concept of "name" in Sima Qian's work, see Ruan Zhong 2003.

82 Li Wai-ye (1994: 378–79, n. 55) raises the possibility that the biographic genre first appeared in the now lost late Warring States compilation, *Shi ben* 世本; cf. Twitchett 1962: 96.

83 Durrant 1995: 25. The first of Sima Qian's "arrayed traditions" tells the fate of two legendary righteous hermits, Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, whose failure in real life illustrates Heaven's injustice. For a brilliant discussion of this chapter, see Durrant 1995: 20–27; see also Shan Shaojie 2005.

If my view of the *Shiji* is correct, it may be surmised that by creating commemorative immortality through recording a person's deeds in a historical book, Sima Qian solved the problem outlined with the greatest clarity in the *Xunzi* passages cited in section 2 above. Xunzi was aware of the impossibility of many "Great Ru," like himself, to fully realize their potential, and promised to compensate them with a noble name that would not be destroyed either by Heaven and Earth, or by other humans. Yet Xunzi did not clarify how this name would be formed and be perpetuated for generations to come. By recording people's deeds in his *Shiji* whose material appeared to be perishable but eventually proved to be indestructible, Sima Qian realized Xunzi's dream. Immortality enshrined in a historical text became more vivid than any other way of commemoration. Henceforth participants in historical spectacles—be these audacious assassin-retainers, brave remonstrators, or zealous purists who preferred death to filthy service—could rest assured: they would die but would never decay. Eight centuries after Sima Qian, the great critic of historical writings, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721) summarized:

夫人寓形天地，其生也若蜉蝣之在世，如白駒之過隙，發端庸淺。猶且恥當年而功不立，疾沒世而名不聞。上起帝王，下窮匹庶，近則朝廷之士，遠則山林之客，諒其於功也、名也，莫不汲汲焉，孜孜焉。夫如是者何哉？皆以圖不朽之事也。何者而稱不朽乎？蓋書名竹帛而已。

As a human finds a refuge between Heaven and Earth, his life is as short as that of a mayfly, or like a white colt's passing a crevice—its starting point is mediocre and shallow. In any case, he is ashamed that even at his prime he has failed to establish merit, and by the time of his demise, he has failed to make his name well known.⁸⁴ From thearchs and monarchs above to commoners below, from the men-of-service who stay close to the courts to the farthest sojourners in mountains and forests—everybody anxiously and incessantly thinks about his merit and name. Why is this?

84 A reference to *Lunyu* 15.20 discussed above in the text.

Because everybody thinks of how to avoid “decaying.” What is called “not decaying”? It is to be recorded on bamboo and silk, and that is all.⁸⁵

Liu Zhiji’s passage reflects a consensus that crystallized in the aftermath of Sima Qian’s magnum opus. One’s immortality (“not decaying”) is attainable primarily in a historical text. According to Liu Zhiji, the very formation of scribal offices in the past came to respond to the people’s existential angst. Being recorded on bamboo and silk saves mortals from oblivion and makes their life meaningful.

Going from an individual to a political level, we may notice that the proliferation of historical commemoration altered the balance of power between the state and the educated elite. It effectively undermined Shang Yang’s vision that the state alone would control one’s “name.” From Sima Qian on, one’s transcendent name was determined neither by officials, nor by the court, but by historians, who—even if acting in their capacity of court historians—usually spoke on behalf of broader concerns of the educated elite rather than on behalf of narrow court agendas. This means that one’s posthumous repute was in the final analysis determined by peers, not by rulers. The state remained an important source of social prestige, but it was no longer the exclusive determinant of a person’s *ming*.

7. A Surrogate for Morality? Imperial Debates over Name-Seeking

This essay suggested a great variety of usages of one’s “name” in early Chinese political and ethical discourse: from a means of encouraging personal self-cultivation, to an instrument of political control, to a transcendent category that compensated some of the zealous men-of-service for the inability to realize their lofty desires. We have seen that aside from moral loftiness,

85 *Shitong* 11.1: 303 (“Shiguan jianzhi” 史官建置).

the quest for a name generated manipulations and persistent attempts to fabricate a good reputation. The highly divergent usages of the term “name” and the differences in their social, political, and moral consequences explain why the quest for a name and for commemorative immortality, as well as debates about the legitimacy of this quest as a prime-mover of one’s action, continued throughout the imperial millennia.

Criticisms of the manipulative search for reputation by undeserving individuals were voiced as early as the Han dynasty.⁸⁶ They can be illustrated by a single example: the “Yang Zhu” 楊朱 chapter of the *Liezi* 列子, probably produced after the Han (in the 3rd or 4th century CE). The opening paragraph of this chapter ridicules the self-destructive quest for a name. It concludes with the following lines:

實無名，名無實。名者，偽而已矣。昔者堯舜偽以天下讓許由、善卷，而不失天下，享祚百年。伯夷、叔齊實以孤竹君讓，而終亡其國，餓死於首陽之山。實偽之辯，如此其省也。

Reality has no name [in it]; a name has no reality. A name is just pretension. In the past, Yao and Shun pretended to yield All-under-Heaven to Xu You and Shan Juan, but they did not lose All-under-Heaven; rather they enjoyed ruling for a century.⁸⁷ Boyi and Shuqi really yielded the position of the lords of Guzhu, and in the end lost their state and died of starvation on Shouyang Mountain.⁸⁸ The distinction between reality and pretension should be examined in this way.⁸⁹

86 See Makeham 1994.

87 According to the late Warring States period legend, paragon rulers Yao and Shun were ready to yield worldly rule to lofty hermits, but those refused to accept the gift (see, e.g., *Zhuangzi jinzhu* 1:18 [“Xiao yao you” 逍遙遊]; 28: 744–745 [“Rang wang” 讓王]). For a subversive reading of this story as that of fake yielding, see discussion in Pines 2005; cf. Allan 2016.

88 Boyi and Shuqi were sons of the ruler of Guzhu. The father bequeathed his rule to the younger, Shuqi, who then yielded to Boyi; yet Boyi refused to violate the father’s will. Thus both sons fled their state and lost it forever. Eventually, they starved themselves to death to avoid eating “contaminated” grains of the Zhou house, the legitimacy of which they questioned. See *Shiji* 61: 2123.

89 *Liezi jishi* 7: 218 (“Yang Zhu” 楊朱).

Yang Zhu's conclusion is clear: name-seeking is deceptive by its nature; a name is just a matter of pretension, and the former paragons who got renown for their selfless behavior were nothing more than skillful manipulators. This discourse, which clearly borrows from the Warring States-period texts, such as *Zhuangzi* and *Han Feizi*, is reflective of the low esteem of the quest for a name among some of the critical-minded literati.

The assaults against name-seeking continued from the Latter Han dynasty and beyond, often combined with polemics over the so-called Doctrine of Names (*mingjiao* 名教), identified by Makeham as “ethos based on fostering reputation/name.”⁹⁰ However, mainstream political thought rejected this assault. Throughout the entire imperial period, despite their awareness of inevitable abuses, the majority of thinkers remained adamant in their insistence that it is better to motivate the people through promises of fine reputation rather than through other, more dubious means. Three examples from three different periods suffice to demonstrate this persistently favorable view of the ongoing quest for a name.

Yan Zhitui 顏之推 (531–591) dedicated one chapter of his *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (Family instructions of Mr. Yan) to “Name and Reality” (“Ming shi” 名實). He starts with admitting that “the best *shi* forget about their name, medium-ranked *shi* establish their name, and inferior *shi* steal their name.”⁹¹ Namely, the best is to be intrinsically moral, “to embody the Way” (*ti dao* 體道): for such a man, a name is meaningless. The worst case is the one who maintains “an honest appearance but is wicked deep inside” 厚貌深姦: such a man strives to “steal a name,” yet he will ultimately fail. For the rest, the majority of the average men-of-service, the quest for a name is the most efficient incentive for moral action. In answering a hypothetical query about the reasons for which the sages made use of the Doctrine of Names, Yan Zhitui explains:

90 Makeham 1994: 172–183. For a systematic study of the Doctrine of Names and debates about it from the Latter Han dynasty on, see Liu Zehua 1996, vol. 2: 333 ff.

91 上士忘名，中士立名，下士竊名 (*Yanshi jiaxun* IV.10: 303).

勸也，勸其立名，則獲其實。且勸一伯夷，而千萬人立清風矣；勸一季札，而千萬人立仁風矣；勸一柳下惠，而千萬人立貞風矣；勸一史魚，而千萬人立直風矣。

This was done to encourage [people]. When you encourage them to establish [good] name, you get real [improvement]. So, you encourage [through an example] a single Boyi, and myriad people establish the mores of purity; you encourage [through an example] a single Ji Zha, and myriad people establish the mores of benevolence; you encourage [through an example] a single Liuxia Hui, and myriad people establish the mores of integrity; you encourage [through an example] a single Scribe Yu, and myriad people establish the mores of straightforwardness.⁹²

Yan Zhitui is unequivocal: one cannot expect an average man-of-service to attain the supreme moral qualities of former paragons; yet promulgation of these paragons' fame has a positive value of encouraging the people to behave morally. Even though this morality is motivated by a selfish desire to attain a good reputation, its real impact on one's behavior is highly positive. The quest for a name creates therefore a better and more moral world than would be possible otherwise.

Yan Zhitui's ideas are echoed in an essay "Jin ming lun" 近名論 ("On approaching the name") by the great Song (960–1279) statesman Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052). Fan polemicizes against Zhuangzi's dictum, cited above (p. 190): "The doer of good stays clear of a name." This view is a dead end of unruliness, asserts Fan. Rather, the former sage kings were right in making names into "a doctrine" (*jiao* 教). Although Fan admits that the best people are those who embody morality without considering their reputation, he recognizes the difficulty of attaining such a degree of selflessness:

92 *Yanshi jiaxun* IV.10: 312–313. For Boyi, see discussion above in the text; Ji Zha 季札 (fl. mid-6th century BCE) was a Wu 吳 prince renowned for his morality (he yielded the throne to his brothers) and sagacity; Liuxia Hui 柳下惠 (fl. late 7th century) was a Lu official, hailed as a paragon of modesty; Scribe Yu 史魚, Confucius' contemporary, was praised for his straightforwardness.

有性本忠孝者，上也；行忠孝者，次也；假忠孝而求名者，又次也。至若簡賢附勢，反道敗德，父叛君，惟欲是從，不復愛其名者，下也。人不愛名，則雖有刑法干戈，不可止其惡也。

The best are those whose natures are rooted in loyalty and filiality; second to them are those who act in accord with loyalty and filiality; then come those who borrow loyalty and filiality to seek name. The worst are those who despise the worthies and are attracted to power, those who oppose the Way and destroy virtue, those who assassinate their fathers and rebel against their lords, and those who follow only their desires and do not care about their name. When a person does not care for his name, neither punitive laws nor shields and halberds can stop his evildoing.⁹³

Once again we discover a thinker who recognizes that the quest for a name is not the best of all motivations for moral action, but that it is still efficient enough and is much preferable to the cynical situation in which no one cares for his reputation. The same understanding is presented in a clearer way by one of the major thinkers of the late imperial period, Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682). In exploring various factors that determine the social and political behavior of humans, Gu observes:

君臣上下懷利以相接，遂成風流，不可復制。後之為治者宜何術之操？曰，唯名可以勝之。名之所在，上之所庸，而忠信廉潔者顯榮於世。名之所去，上之所擯，而怙侈貪得者廢錮於家。……《南史》有云：「漢世士務修身，故忠孝成俗。至於乘軒服冕，非此莫由。晉宋以來，風衰義缺。故昔人之言，曰名教，曰名節，曰功名，不能使天下之人以義為利，而猶使之以名為利，雖非純王之風，亦可以救積污之俗矣。」

When the ruler and the minister, superiors and inferiors interact on the basis of the quest for profit, it becomes habitual, and the situation can no longer be controlled. So which techniques should be used to bring about order then? I would say: only [the quest for a] name can overcome it [the quest for profit]. Whoever has [a good] name is employed by superiors:

93 *Fan Zhongyan quanji* 7: 131 (“Jin ming lun” 近名論).

then loyalty and trustworthiness, incorruptibility and purity become prominent in the world. Whoever loses his good name is discarded by his superiors: then those who rely on extravagance and avariciously seek gain are not employed and are confined to their own homes.

The *Nan shi* (*History of the Southern Dynasties*) says: “During the Han dynasty, men-of-service strived to cultivate themselves, hence, loyalty and filiality became their custom. Without [displaying] these, one could never mount an official’s chariot and wear the official’s robes. From the Jin [265–420] and Song [420–479] on, these mores declined and righteousness was impaired. That is why the ‘doctrine of names’ or ‘names and principles,’ or ‘merits and name’ that the ancients spoke of—although none of these could cause the people to treat righteousness as benefit—could at least cause them to treat name as benefit. Whereas this was not the pure mores of the True Monarch, it still sufficed to correct increasingly sullied customs.”⁹⁴

Writing with the advantage of accumulated historical experience, Gu Yanwu comes even more forcefully to the conclusion promoted centuries earlier by Yan Zhitui and later by Fan Zhongyan. Seeking reputation is not an ideal of pure morality; but in a benefit-driven world it is better that noble men take care of their fine reputation than focus on material gains alone. Using one’s quest for a name as a prime mover for one’s behavior is preferable to reliance on coercive measures to protect social order. The idea originally promoted by Shang Yang—namely, to utilize one’s quest for a name so as to generate socially acceptable behavior—did not lose its appeal two millennia after it was originally put forward.

Yet this summary would be simplistic if it ignored the persistent skepticism regarding name-seeking. As I started with the greatest Ming (1368–1644) historical novel, *Sanguo yanyi*, which depicts Lord Guan’s self-sacrifice for the sake of preserving his name unsullied, it is appropriate to end with the sister novel, *Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳 (Water margins), which

94 *Rizhiliu* 13: 478–479 (“Ming jiao” 名教). Citation is from *Nan shi* 74: 1851.

adds a different perspective on the quest for a name. The novel's hero, Song Jiang 宋江, enjoys unparalleled fame among the gallant fraternity. At first, the reader appreciates this renown and does not expect an ironic turn in the narrative. But then we get to chapters 36 and 37, in which Song Jiang repeatedly falls into traps set by different brigands, and is going to be robbed and killed. Time and again, at the last moment the bandits learn of his name, at which point they immediately release him, express their admiration, and offer assistance. One cannot escape feeling that this excessive repetition of similarly structured plots is designed to create an ironic effect, undermining the validity of name-seeking, associating it with the underworld of brigands, and ultimately ridiculing over-reliance on one's name in social life.

This last note brings me to the lesson I learned from Andrew Plaks's seminal *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*.⁹⁵ Any noble value—or any philosophical and literary keyword—could be subject to scrutiny and potential deconstruction by the imperial literati. The quest for a name—the much hailed means of improving social mores under the less than perfect conditions of imperial rule—is not an exception. The counter-discourse that questioned, and at times ridiculed, the validity of lofty pronouncements can be considered subversive of the dominant ideology. Yet by highlighting tensions around pivotal social and political values, this counter-discourse might have allowed greater flexibility in the implementation of these values, ultimately contributing to the remarkable resilience of imperial political culture.

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95 Plaks 1987.

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