

Proclaiming Intellectual Authority Through Classification: The Case of the *Seven Epitomes*

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Lee, Hur-Li and Lan, Wen-Chin. Proclaiming Intellectual Authority Through Classification: The Case of the *Seven Epitomes*. *Knowledge Organization*, 38(1), 25-42. 55 references.

ABSTRACT: The study investigates the main structure of the classification applied in the *Seven Epitomes* (*Qilue*), the first documented Chinese library catalog completed a few years before the Common Era. Based on a close examination of the partially extant text and structure of the catalog, other historical records and secondary sources, the authors identify two principal classification methods in the scheme being studied: dichotomy and ranking. It is theorized that the compiler of the catalog, Liu Xin, used *ru* classicism, or Confucianism, as the principle for guiding the construction of three sets of ranked dichotomies that manifested into the six main classes in the set sequence. As a result, he successfully achieved the chief goal he intended for the catalog—to proclaim classicism as the intellectual authority. This design made the catalog, and its numerous successors in imperial China for two thousand years, an effective aid for intellectual, political, and social control.

Received 21 November 2009; Revised 23 March 2010; Accepted 31 March 2010

1.0 Introduction

According to extant historical records, the *Seven Epitomes* (*Qilue*; sometimes translated as the *Seven Summaries*) was the first classified library catalog in China. This catalog was one of the by-products of a large-scale collation project commissioned by Emperor

Cheng (r. 33-7 B.C.E.) of the Former Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-9 C.E.). The project aimed to salvage deteriorating books stored in the depository of the inner court, to search widely for other "lost" books from around the country, and to organize the collated books into a usable dynastic library collection. (The "book" evolved over a long period of time in ancient China. As

a matter of fact, this collation project resulted in many books as we know them today that did not exist before that time. For a history of early Chinese books, see Tsien (2004)). In his attempt to organize the library collection, Liu Xin, the second principal on the collation project who completed the work, created the classified catalog. The classification of this catalog established a bibliographic philosophy and a model classificatory structure that influenced other Chinese bibliographic tools for approximately two millennia. To understand the Chinese bibliographic classification tradition, it is imperative to make the study of the classification in the *Seven Epitomes* a first priority.

Unfortunately, the knowledge about the classification theory of this 2,000-year-old tool with such a broad influence is inadequate. The common postulate of Chinese bibliographers is that *ru* classicism was the guiding ideology behind this classification. Beyond this, other theoretical and methodological issues have yet to be systematically explored and analyzed. Some thus come to view the classification as crude, unscientific, biased, inferior, and no longer relevant. Even those who recognize its positive value have only stated the obvious without providing a detailed analysis of how the classificationist planned the structure and categories to achieve his intended goal. Such a superficial treatment of the classification has become an enormous roadblock to an informed understanding of the intellectual force of bibliographic classification and how this tool played a role in shaping the intellectual discourse of the time.

The current study takes on the task of investigating the main structure of this classification with special attention to its main classes and their order. More importantly, it intends to examine and theorize, through the use of the partially extant text of the catalog, other historical records and secondary sources, how the classificationist used an ideology (i.e., classicism) to guide the structuring of the classification and, as a result, successfully exalted the ideology as the intellectual authority. It is worth noting, however, the classification under consideration is complex and no longer extant in its original form. To arrive at a comprehensive knowledge of it requires a research approach that is multi-dimensional and takes into consideration a plethora of historical, social, intellectual, and technological factors. The current study represents a first step toward that comprehensive knowledge by examining one of the fundamental dimensions of the classification.

To provide context, the next section presents a brief introduction to the *Seven Epitomes*. It includes the circumstances surrounding the compilation of the cata-

log, the personal background of its author, and its classificatory outline. Section 3 reviews the literature on the catalog's classification. Section 4 considers methodological issues pertinent to the study. The following section examines the classificatory structure of the catalog at the level of its main classes and attempts at a reconstruction of the classification's theoretical and methodological basis. Finally, the study concludes with a reiteration of the classificatory philosophy established by the *Seven Epitomes*, considers the social and cultural significance of the classification model in Chinese history, and reflects on its likely relevance in broad classification research. In this article, we use *pinyin* for the Romanization of Chinese characters and follow the United States Library of Congress's periodization of Chinese history.

2.0 The *Seven Epitomes* and Its Classification

In the present day, traditional Chinese bibliographic classification is virtually unknown to most people; even Chinese librarians and information scientists are unfamiliar with the *Seven Epitomes*. It is thus necessary to first provide some background information about the catalog and its classification. The *Seven Epitomes* is generally recognized as the first national library catalog in China, and its classification the first broad bibliographic classification scheme documented in Chinese history. According to the literature, Liu Xin compiled the *Seven Epitomes* on the foundation of his father Liu Xiang's *Separate Résumés (Bielu)*. The completion of the *Seven Epitomes* was dated to sometime during the reign of Emperor Ai (7-1 B.C.E.) of the Former Han.

2.1. The Han Imperial Library Collection and the Collation Project

Chinese books went through two man-made disasters before Liu Xin's time. The first was a ban on books decreed by Shihuangdi (i.e., First Emperor, r. 221-210 B.C.E.) of the Qin dynasty. As part of the ban, the classics, historical records from former states other than the Qin in the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 B.C.E.) and the Warring States era (403-221 B.C.E.), and other nontechnical writings were burned; only technical books on medicine, divination, agriculture, and forestry were spared. The state became the sole place to keep all kinds of writings and the only source of learning and education. When the Qin fell in 207 B.C.E., the imperial library, together with the palaces, was burned to the ground. This was the second disaster in the fate of early Chinese texts.

After overthrowing the Qin, the Former Han lifted the ban on books in 191 B.C.E. Then, the Han emperors continuously collected writings and records for the imperial library. The Preface to the “Bibliographical Treatise” (Han Treatise or Treatise hereafter) of the *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (one of the twenty-four canonical histories of China, written by Ban Gu) concisely described the official book collecting activities during that time (Translated by Lewis 1999, 327; bracketed insert in the original translation. This is a partial quote from the Preface generally believed to be either the original or a modified form of the original in the *Seven Epitomes*.):

The Qin ... burned and destroyed writings in order to make idiots of the common people. The Han arose and reformed the damage wrought by Qin. On a large scale they assembled texts and strips, and they broadly opened the path for the offering up of documents. When it reached the time of Emperor Wu ... he established a policy of storing writings and set up officials to copy them, including even the [writings of] the various masters and transmitted sayings. They were all stored in the secret archives. When it reached the time of Emperor Cheng, because the writings were dispersed or lost, he sent the Internuncio Chen Nong to seek for missing books throughout the empire.

Meanwhile, people were encouraged to donate or offer the texts or records they owned, all hidden by their ancestors from the reach of Qin officials, to the imperial depository. As a result, the collected and donated texts, mostly on bamboo or wooden slats, piled up like “hills” in the imperial library, and it became obvious that these texts needed urgent care. In 26 B.C.E.,

Emperor Cheng summoned Liu Xiang and other scholars to collate and manage these texts. They developed and employed a series of procedures to collate the texts and to put them in order. It became a tradition since then that most dynasties in the Chinese history took on such a collation/cataloging project to build a dynastic library and to exert government’s control over written texts.

As mentioned above, the collation project led by Liu Xiang and Xin produced two bibliographic tools, the *Separate Résumés* and the *Seven Epitomes*. Both regrettably are no longer extant. Some scholars suspect that the *Seven Epitomes* was lost during the first half of the tenth century (e.g., Lai 1981). However, there is little doubt that an abbreviated and somewhat altered version of the *Seven Epitomes* has survived as the Han Treatise, with most of its titles and its classificatory structure intact. See Figure 1 for the textual history of these three related works. Some aspects of their relationships pertinent to the study are addressed in the following sections. For additional information in English about the *Seven Epitomes* and its relationships with the other two works, see Lee and Lan (2009).

2.2. Liu Xiang and Liu Xin

Liu Xiang (79-8 B.C.E.) was a famous scholar, editor, and bibliographer. In 26 B.C.E., Emperor Cheng (r. 32-7 B.C.E.) of Han commanded Liu Xiang to lead a team of scholars and specialists to collate and organize texts stored in the imperial depository. The texts belonged to six broad categories: 1) the six so-called Classics (i.e., *Changes*, *Documents*, *Odes*, *Rites*, *Music*, and *Spring and Autumn Annals*) and their commentaries, 2) texts written by the masters, 3) poetry, 4) military texts, 5) divination manuals, and 6) medical texts. (Although the six Classics were mostly regarded as

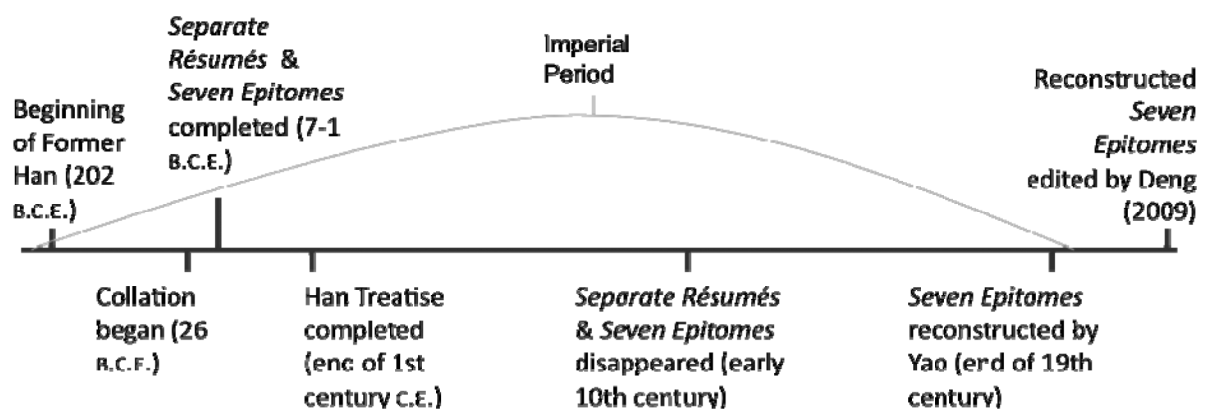


Figure 1. Timeline of textual history of the *Separate Résumés*, the *Seven Epitomes*, and the *Han Treatise* (not to scale)

part of the general heritage by the educated elite in earlier times, they became the state canon a century before Liu Xin's time (Nylan 2001). The *Music* was already lost when the other five were canonized and made the textual basis for "official learning" by Emperor Wu in 136 B.C.E.) For each text in the collection, Xiang not only established an authoritative version with help from other expert collators, but also wrote a résumé to describe the text, its collation details, author's background if known, intellectual lineage, and its value and weaknesses. Individual résumés, some quite lengthy and informative, were later assembled into what is believed to be the first annotated bibliography in China, titled *Separate Résumés*.

Liu Xin (53 B.C.E.-23 C.E.) was Xiang's youngest son. Just like his father, Xin was multi-talented and known as a distinguished scholar, bibliographer, and astronomer. When the collation project began, he was an assistant on the project. After Xiang's death, Xin took his father's position and completed the work, including writing the last résumés. Some scholars speculate that Liu Xin was the one who gathered all the résumés from the collation project to produce the *Separate Résumés* (Lai 1981). Near the completion of the collation, all finalized texts were to be moved into the imperial library. Liu Xin then created a retrieval aid, or catalog, for the collection, by condensing the *Separate Résumés* into a concise version. To organize entries in the catalog and the library collection, the original six text categories were expanded into a full-fledged classification. The *Seven Epitomes* was thus born.

This father-son team played a decisive role in shaping the early Chinese textual heritage, being credited with creation of the canonical forms of classical texts. Shaughnessy (2006, 2) concludes:

It was they [i.e., Liu Xiang and Xin] who actually rewrote the texts stored in the imperial library, sorting them into discrete books and chapters, deleting redundancies, translating the various archaic characters into a standardized script, and producing definitive fair copies on which all subsequent editions of these earliest texts have been based.

2.3. The Classification Scheme in the *Seven Epitomes*

Since the *Seven Epitomes* is long lost, the following description is based on a version of it reconstructed by Yao Zhenzong, derived mainly from the *Treatise* and supplemented with fragments of the catalog cited in other sources (Liu 2008). The title of the *Seven*

Epitomes seems to suggest its classification to have seven classes. In fact, it comprised six main classes (i.e., epitomes) and 38 divisions or subclasses. Ruan Xiaoxu (2002), who had access to the catalog, counted the total number of volumes in the catalog as 13,219. However, readers must keep in mind how difficult it is to gain accurate counts given the history of the catalog. Table 1 displays estimated volumes in individual classes and divisions in the *Treatise* (Zhang Shunhui 1990) and in the *Seven Epitomes* (by Wen-Chin Lan), respectively.

Preceding the six classes was the Collective Epitome—thus the title *Seven Epitomes*. The *Treatise* included no indication of this epitome and provided no explanation for it. Because those who had seen the extant *Seven Epitomes* gave very vague descriptions of the Collective Epitome (e.g., Ruan 2002), a consensus of the nature or content of this "lost" epitome has not been reached yet. One thing indisputable is that the Collective Epitome was not a class. A commonly accepted opinion says that the contents of the Collective Epitome became the Preface to the catalog and the introductory summaries (*xiaoxu*) scattered under individual classes and divisions in the *Treatise* (Chang and Pan 1986). And the name of the epitome seemed to be indicative of the epitome being a collection of introductory summaries.

3.0 Literature Review

Research on traditional Chinese bibliographic classification seems to have remained a predominantly regional activity. Besides Chinese works published in China and Taiwan, a search on WorldCat resulted in no books on the topic in other languages. Only one dissertation produced in the United States covers the development of modern Chinese classification in Communist China (Li 1992). Also, there have been few relevant scholarly articles in international library and information science journals. The few in English either give narrow attention to modern systems (e.g., Liu-Lengyel 1987), or provide a historical overview summarizing opinions from the Chinese scholarship (e.g., Jiang 2007). Thus, for the purpose of the current study, this literature review focuses on what has appeared in Chinese that deals with the classification in the *Seven Epitomes* or the *Treatise*.

3.1. Research in Chinese

The Chinese literature on traditional bibliographic classification has a long history. Before the last dy-

Epitome (Class)	Division	Han Treatise Volumes	<i>Seven Epi- tomes</i> Volumes
Six Arts	Changes	294	294
	Documents	422	421
	Odes	416	415
	Rites	607	452
	Music	165	172
	Spring and Autumn Annals	901	905
	Analects	230	230
	Book of Filial Piety	56	56
	Philology	45	42
Masters	Ru Classicists	847	809
	Daoists	801	1038
	Theorists of Yin-Yang (Naturalists)	368	368
	Legalists	217	217
	Logicians (Sophists)	36	36
	Mohists	86	86
	Diplomatists (Strategists)	107	107
	Eclectics (Syncretists or Generalists)	393	418
	Agronomists	114	114
	Novelists	1390	1390
Lyrics and Rhapsodies	Rhapsodies 1	361	361
	Rhapsodies 2	275	267
	Rhapsodies 3	136	136
	Diverse rhapsodies	233	233
	Lyrics	316	316
Military Texts	Military Tactics	272	684
	Military Terrain	102	102
	Military Yin-Yang	249	227
	Military Skills	207	194
Divination and Numbers*	Patterns of Heaven	419	419
	Chronology	566	566
	Five Phases	653	654
	Milfoil and Turtle Shell	485	485
	Diverse Prognostications	312	312
	System of Forms	122	122
Formulae and Techniques	Medical Classics	175	175
	Pharmacology	295	295
	Sexology	191	191
	Longevity	201	201
Total		13,269	13,510

* According to the Han Treatise seen today, the name of this class in the *Seven Epitomes* was the “Epitome of Divination and Numbers” but the “Epitome of Numbers and Divination” in the Treatise itself. The switch might be done intentionally by Ban Gu or could be an unintentional mistake in hand copying that occurred sometime in history.

Table 1. Main classes and divisions of the *Treatise* and the *Seven Epitomes* with estimated counts

nasty (the Qing, 1644-1912), however, the effort to study classification was sporadic. Even since then, classification research has been mostly a marginal field, often a secondary topic within the study of bibliography in general, despite the importance of classification in bibliography. Studies that have an exclusive interest in bibliographic classification are limited in numbers. It is also necessary to note that Chinese writers do not view intellectual properties as privately owned and customarily reiterate others' opinions without citations. As a result of all these issues, the progress in Chinese classification research is slow and the literature scattered. The following is a summary of major achievements made by not only the small number of pertinent works, but also those noteworthy opinions, arguments, and discussions spread throughout the larger literature in Chinese.

First, acknowledgement is due to generations of scholars whose diligent work in annotating and providing critical and exegetical notes leaves us an incredibly rich and useful body of information for understanding and decoding the *Seven Epitomes* and traditional Chinese bibliography, much of which might not be intelligible to current researchers without those notes. Yan Shigu (6th-7th centuries), for example, quotes from a resume written by Liu Xiang as a note under the entry "daizhaochenraoxinshu" in the Han Treatise (i.e., six characters with no punctuation) that helps the reader interpret the entry (meaning roughly, "*Xinshu* written by an Expectant Official named Rao"). The quote is deemed credible because the *Separate Résumés* was, without a doubt, extant in Yan's time. Another type of contribution made by these scholars is their numerous citations of other related historical texts for supporting or challenging statements in the catalog (Fu 2007). This kind of contextualization of the *Seven Epitomes* and cross-referencing are especially valuable to those studying the classification.

An overwhelming majority of scholars recognize the classification of the *Seven Epitomes* as the first to establish the traditional classificatory model in bibliography that distinguished various branches of learning and traced their origins and developments. Notable texts and prominent scholars to have expressed such a view include the *Suishu* (1986) in the 7th century, Zhang Xuecheng (1965) in the 18th century, and Xu Youfu (2009) in the 21st century. It is common for them to praise this approach to classification as the most helpful in guiding students to pursue a step-by-step course of study. In their descriptions, they use a number of random examples or go over a class in the

scheme one at a time to explain the intellectual appropriateness of a class or division without applying a systematic framework. The best example of this group of works is a recent book by Xu (2009) that devotes an entire chapter on the six main classes of the Treatise, pooling together a wealth of textual evidence and opinions with regard to issues of intellectual origins and developments. Standing in opposition are a few who criticize the catalog's haphazard classification (Yao 2005) or condemn its emphasis on intellectual history as deviating from the "real" function of bibliography (i.e., information organization and retrieval) and driving Chinese bibliography in the wrong direction for too long (Wang Guoqiang 1991). This latter position advocating a narrow definition of bibliography has been rightfully denounced (Wang Xincai 2008). Disappointingly, both Yao and Wang evaluate the classification out of its historical and cultural context.

The catalog's emphasis on delineating intellectual history was, Chinese scholars all agree, guided by an ideological principle. Evidently, the catalog's classificatory structure reflected the perspective of *ru* classicism (i.e., Confucianism). Yu and Wang (1998), among others, refer to two facts to illustrate the classicist principle in Liu Xin's classification. The first was Liu's placement of the Classics at the beginning of the scheme and the second the listing of Classicists (*rujia*) as the lead division in the Epitome of the Masters. Commonly called a Confucian in sinology, a classicist was one who devoted himself to the learning based on the Classics. Nylan (2001, 364) discusses various connotations of *ru* in length; the definition used here is the most suitable one in this case.) This classicist overtone in the *Seven Epitomes* has elicited both praises and criticisms from Chinese scholars since then. On the one hand, traditional classicist bibliographers understandably view this approach positively (e.g., Zhang Xuecheng 1965). On the other hand, Marxists are critical of the ideology, pointing out that proponents of classicism like Liu Xin aimed to assist Han rulers in dominating and controlling people (e.g., Wang Zhongmin 1984).

A small number of authors attempt to provide an integrated framework for the main structure of the classification in question. Li Guoxin (1991), for example, suggests that the *yin-yang* and Five Phases theories formed the basis of this classificatory structure. His premise states that the Epitome of the Six Arts leads the other five epitomes in the classification just like *yin-yang* leads the Five Phases in the natural law. Unfortunately his idea has no textual base, for the

Seven Epitomes itself did not link its own structure to *yin-yang* and the Five Phases. Li also offers no explanations for how the five lesser epitomes match the Five Phases and how the relationships among these five epitomes resemble the relationships among the Five Phases. Additionally, three other authors have proposed different hypotheses. Fu (2003) argues that six was a popular number in the Han, and it was common for Han people to categorize by six. Zhang Sheng (1994) asserts that Liu Xin got the idea of the six classes from the six offices (*liu guan*) in the *Zhou Rites* (*Zhouli*), one of the three parts of the *Book of Rites* (*Lijing*, i.e., one of the Classics). On the other hand, Zou (2008) proposes that the six classes originated from the “six rules” (*liu dian*) in the *Zhou Rites*. None of them have presented corroborative evidence from any extant texts including the Treatise. In other words, they use speculations that are difficult to prove or disprove. There is nevertheless strong consensus in recent scholarship refuting Zhang Sheng’s accusation that Liu Xin forged the *Zhou Rites* (Shaughnessy 1997), which is supposed to bear out Zhang’s hypothesis. (The claim that the *Zhou Rites* was a forgery by Liu Xin started in the late 19th century and has generated continual controversy.) It has thus become clear that his hypothesis is unwarranted.

“Was the six-fold scheme Liu Xin’s own creation?”—is a central question asked by many. Some of the cited authors above obviously believe so. On the other hand, other scholars hold the opposite opinion. A statement in the Preface to the Treatise (believed to be part of the original Collective Epitome) is the key to answering this debate (Translated by Lewis 1999, 327; bracketed inserts in the original translation):

Emperor Cheng ... summoned the Imperial Household Grandee Liu Xiang to check the canons, their commentaries, the masters, lyric verse, and rhapsodies; the Commandant of Infantry Ren Hong to check the military writings; the Grand Historian/Astrologer Yi Xiang [*sic*] to check [writings on] numbers and divination ... and the Attendant Physician Li Zhuguo to check [writings on] formulae and techniques.

A few scholars posit that the text after the word “summoned” was part of the original imperial decree (Zhang Sheng 1994). Except for the first one, the other five categories of texts mentioned in the decree were identical to the terms used as the labels of the second through sixth classes. (Lewis uses slightly different wording to make the statement read more

smoothly in English.) The first only differed slightly from the label of the first class—“*jing zhuan*” (i.e., the Classics and their commentaries) as opposed to “*liuyi*” (i.e., the Six Arts, referring to the six branches of learning centering on the Six Classics). It is then said that the six main classes of texts could not have been an invention of Liu Xin, or even his father. Regardless of whether the statement is an extraction from the decree or not, one fact remains—one scholar and three specialists were summoned by the emperor to collate texts in six categories, indicating that some categorization of texts existed before the beginning of the collation project and Liu Xin did not start from scratch.

The *Seven Epitomes* was indisputably the catalog of the Han imperial library and its classification was no doubt a library classification. However, the catalog was at the same time used outside the library as a bibliography because the imperial library was accessible only to the emperor and, on rare occasions, a few government officials given special permission by the emperor. In fact, the ancient Chinese often made no distinction between library classification and classification applied in other types of bibliography precisely because catalogs of imperial and private libraries, all in the book form, were indeed circulated as bibliographies. This indiscrimination also blurs the line between library classification and classification of knowledge for some. The problem with this view, especially in the case of the *Seven Epitomes*, is that a library classification is meant to organize only books stored in the library, thus never a true classification of knowledge. Besides the matter that the unit for this classification was an individual book rather than a topic, the Han imperial library did not even collect texts on all subjects in the written culture of the time. Liu Yizheng (1982), for one, has pointed out the omission of elementary mathematical texts from the *Seven Epitomes* (more advanced mathematical texts for calendar making and harmonics were in the Epitome of Divination and Numbers). In the 1980s, archeologists excavated a bamboo text, which they named the *Writings on Reckoning* (*Suanshu shu*), from an early Han tomb—the very first such text that is currently extant and dated before Liu Xin’s time (Cullen 2007). It and many extant fragments of other mathematics texts are solid evidence that elementary mathematical texts indeed existed then and were excluded from the *Seven Epitomes*. Mathematics (or arithmetic) is said to be part of general elementary education for aristocrats in early China, and the *Writings on Reckoning* seems to be a text used by government employees at low ranks to learn basic skills needed for tax collection and other

accounting purposes. Obviously the absence of such texts from the catalog and the imperial library was not accidental. Another category of texts, legal codes and documents, was also excluded from the catalog; both newly excavated texts and historical records have proved that there were many written legal codes in Han and pre-Han times (Hulsewé 1986). Without a question, the imperial library collection, by design, had a limited scope which served as the literary warrant for drawing up the boundary of the classification being studied.

Some believe that literary warrant also influenced the balance among the main classes and divisions. The first person to bring up this point was Ruan (2002), who suggested that Liu Xin did not establish a “history” class because there were few writings of history and that the large number of poetic texts made it necessary to have a separate class for them. For over 1,400 years since Ruan suggested it, this opinion has been accepted by some and countered by others. A few scholars even consider the lack of a class devoted to history to be a weakness of Liu Xin’s classification as the later mainstream classification schemes in China all included such a class (Tan 2003). In enumerating many works of history from the division of the Spring and Autumn Annals (traditionally believed to be where history texts belonged in the *Seven Epitomes*) and from various divisions of the other classes, Wang Zhiyong (1998) refutes the premise of literary warrant. His own view is that Liu Xin failed to recognize the new landscape of scholarship, as history was only an emerging field of study in the Former Han. Another Chinese historian (Lu 2000) holds a similar point of view, but dates the maturing of the field of history towards the end of the Later Han (around 200), suggesting that Liu Xin could not have foreseen it. On the other hand, all these arguments for literary warrant’s function to balance the main classes become irrelevant because the same six categories of texts already existed before the collation began.

The order of the main classes and divisions is a prominent theme in the literature. Besides the discussion above of the classicist influence on the choices of the Six Arts as the lead class and Classicists as the first division in the following class, there have been many more opinions on the topic. Chinese scholars by and large agree that the value of a category and age of a text were two major factors in arranging the classes and divisions in the *Seven Epitomes* (e.g., Lü). Classicism had its hand in both assessing values and establishing timelines—the latter often problematic when dealing with early texts. For instance, Han classicists

were convinced that the Classics were not only the most valuable, but also the oldest texts, thus deserving the top spot in the classification. In their attempt at fathoming the class order, researchers seem to consider a couple of classes at a time. Rarely has a single, integrated framework emerged for understanding the classification as a coherent scheme. It is thus not difficult to detect contradictions in their opinions. For example, Xu Youfu (2009) cites some scholars hundreds of years before him to explain that the last three classes could in fact also be considered writings by the masters. The reasons for their separation from the Epitome of the Masters were, according to Xu and others like him, that the large volumes of the texts in the three latter groups justified their becoming individual classes and that three other teams collated the latter texts. A question then arises: why did the class for poetic writings come between the Epitome of the Masters and the other three classes that were closer to the masters’ writings in nature? The implication seems to be that the labor division in the collation project trumped the nature and values of text contents in ordering the classes—a position that surely contradicts traditional thinking.

3.2. Discussions in English

Although traditional Chinese bibliographic classification is an overlooked subject in Western classification research, the scheme in the *Seven Epitomes* has received considerable coverage in works on early Chinese intellectual history, written in English. One work by Lewis (1999) deserves special attention in this review. Despite the fact that the book is not about classification or even bibliography, its short section on the *Seven Epitomes* provides some useful thought. The *Seven Epitomes*, he notes, exhibits five features; four are relevant here (Lewis 1999, 326-27):

First, it presumes unity of knowledge as the ideal Second, it sets apart the official canon and related texts as uniquely authoritative. These texts are granted a hierarchical and a temporal preeminence, as both models for all forms of writing and the origin from which the lesser categories derived. Third, the structure of the textual field is derived from the state apparatus. The canons are identified with the sage king and each category of texts traced back to a department or office Fifth, the account of the composition of the catalog emphasizes its collective nature, and it reproduces the division between the general,

encompassing skills claimed by the philosophical traditions and the specific, limited skills attributed to the technical ones.

Emerging from these statements are several suppositions that are instructive for our study of the classification:

- The scheme was intended to present knowledge as a unity.
- Classicism informed the scheme and the scheme validated the Classics as the intellectual authority.
- The state apparatus also influenced the classificatory structure.
- There was a discernible division between the first three classes (i.e., the philosophical traditions) and the later three classes (i.e., the technical traditions).

None of these are new ideas. But Lewis anchors his discussion in a thoughtful analysis of the introductory summaries found in the *Seven Epitomes* and, appropriately, in view of the intellectual development of the time. It is hence uniquely insightful and inspirational for the current study.

Numerous English writers have studied the intellectual landscape in early China, often with an emphasis on the philosophical traditions as described in the Epitome of the Masters in the *Seven Epitomes*. Typically their analyses of original texts lead them to draw conclusions differing from that of Liu Xin. Csikszentmihalyi (2002, 90), for example, argues, “Because the [bibliographic] categories of the Han dynasty reflect various earlier institutional and interpretive categories filtered through a generic framework determined by Han organizational forms, they are clearly not a reliable guide to the sociology of Han thought.” His approach is representative of those taken by intellectual historians who try to emancipate themselves from the received categories of philosophical texts imposed by Liu Xin’s scheme. While this scholarship provides helpful information about the intellectual development of the time, it does not shed much direct light on the theoretical foundation of the classification.

To summarize, previous research has covered a rich variety of interests and issues germane to classification research. What is clearly needed in the next stage is an analytical framework for examining a classification that was a result of a monumental project sponsored

by the throne. Because the project took more than twenty years to complete, the personnel involved were the most renowned scholars and specialists in the empire, and the catalog itself demonstrated outstanding scholarship, the classification must have taken a great deal of thought and planning. This investigation, and any further inquiries, of the classification in question must not treat it as a haphazard invention.

4.0 Methodological Considerations: The Text and Context

Two perennial problems have plagued research on the *Seven Epitomes*: one associated with the catalog itself and the other with the context. First, the catalog is no longer extant. Scores of scholars have chosen instead to study the Treatise. Second, researchers often neglect to place the catalog in its own historical context. The aforementioned controversy concerning a history class is a telling example.

In this study, we follow mainstream scholars, taking the position that the Treatise indeed was a simplified version of the *Seven Epitomes* with the major features and components intact. The text we use for analysis is a nineteenth-century reconstruction of the *Seven Epitomes* by Yao Zhenzong, heavily based on the Treatise, newly edited and supplemented by Deng (Liu Xin 2008). Due to our inability to find any explanation for the classification by the classificationist himself or by his contemporaries, we constantly refer to the catalog’s own text, in English translation, for support or justification of our points and postulates. The reader may also want to consult the timeline of the three interrelated works presented in Figure 1.

The catalog by itself is a limited source because of its age and condition. Any serious research on its classification must consult additional sources. To avoid potential mistakes in studying the catalog out of the appropriate historical context, we apply a systematic framework to contextualize the data from secondary sources. The multidimensional framework consists of four types of contextual information: 1) Liu Xin’s biography (and to some extent his father’s as well); and, the 2) intellectual, 3) political, and 4) technological history up to the Former Han.

5.0 Foundation of the Main Classes

We begin with a few aspects of the classification of the *Seven Epitomes* on which scholars across the board generally agree. First, the collation project was initiated and commissioned by the throne; as one of

the end-products of the collation project, the *Seven Epitomes* and its classification were thus intended to serve the emperor and government. Second, the classification’s basic structure consisted of six main classes originating from six categories of texts in the collation project. Third, the six classes and their divisions were placed in a well-planned order, with the most valuable on top. Fourth, Liu Xin was a distinguished *ru* classicist, and the entire *Seven Epitomes* had a distinctive overtone of classicism, exemplified by having the Six Arts as the lead class and Classicists as the lead division in the second class.

Built on this rudimentary and partial understanding of the classification, the following analysis takes the approach that views the classification as one holistic scheme consisting of six classes as well as a systematic expression of the relationships among the classes. A careful examination primarily focusing on the target classification plus introductory summaries of the catalog and secondary sources finds compelling evidence of two principal methods of classification working jointly; one of them is dichotomy and the other ranking. Both are common in human categorization behavior across time and civilizations.

5.1. Dichotomy

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines “dichotomy” as “division of a class or genus into two lower mutually exclusive classes or genera; binary classification.” Chen Guoqing (1983, Preface), among oth-

ers, maintains that the Treatise clearly expresses a dichotomy in its title, “Yi wen zhi”—*yi* referred to the Classics and *wen* was for all other writings represented in the Treatise (literally, *zhi*) itself (in Chinese, there is no differentiation made between singular and plural nouns). Even if this claim is accepted, it indicates only the intention of Ban Gu who was born nine years after Liu Xin’s death. Lacking extant historical records to prove that Ban followed Liu’s exact rationale, this dichotomy should be more appropriately considered as one of the probable theories for interpreting the design behind the classification of the *Seven Epitomes*. From the classicist point of view, a straightforward dichotomy like such made perfect sense. As a matter of fact, formal education systems in the Han dynasty, either at the Imperial Academy (*tai xue*) or in local schools, focused primarily on the learning of the Classics and their commentaries once a man passed elementary education (Yu and Shi 2000). The Classics indeed enjoyed a special status above all other texts.

In an attempt to better interpret the classification in the *Seven Epitomes*, we propose an expanded view based on a careful examination of the reconstructed text of the catalog (Liu Xin 2008) and other historical records about the catalog and its surrounding context. Our hypothesis contends that three dichotomies, instead of one, underlay the main structure of the classification (Figure 2). This view, however, is not a negation of the dichotomy between the Classics and the others. Rather, it builds on the as-

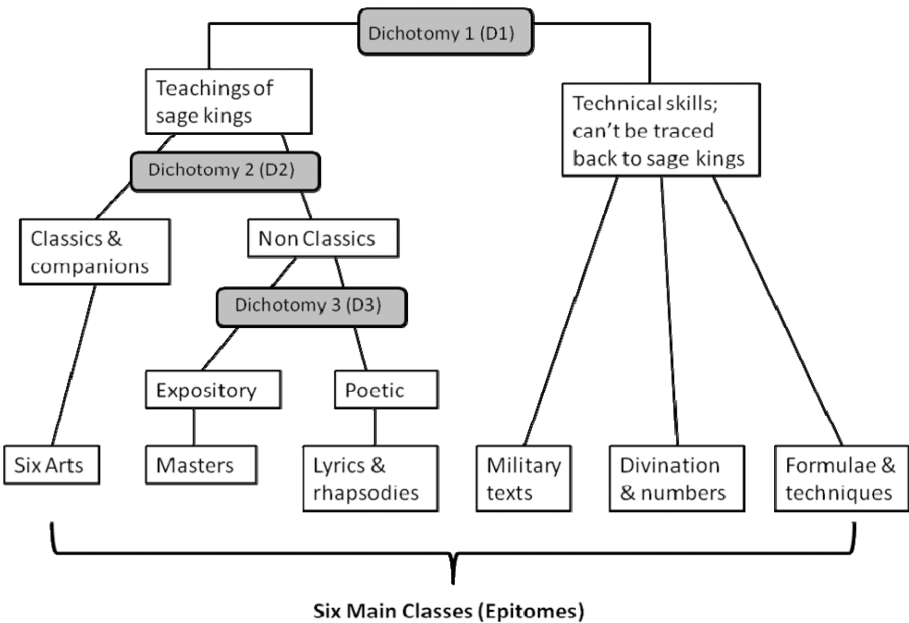


Figure 2. Three dichotomies in the *Seven Epitomes*

sumption that the Classics were the principal factor in structuring the classification and expands to consider more complex issues.

5.1.1. *The First Dichotomy and Its Historical Context*

The first of the dichotomies (D1) in Figure 2 reflects the labor division created in the collation project. According to the Preface to the Han Treatise, Emperor Cheng ordered Liu Xiang and three others to collate texts stored in the depository of the inner court. The wording of the Preface identified six main categories of texts and four groups of collators, led by a scholar (Liu Xiang), a military officer, a scribe/astrologer, and a physician, respectively. However, it was really Liu Xiang and the others, or, the scholar team versus the specialist team. The three categories of texts collated by Liu Xiang's team differed from the other three categories in one critical regard—texts in the first three categories were central in the education and intellectual pursuit of a statesman and scholar, and the other texts, collated by the teams led by the three specialists, recorded applied, technical skills. Such a dichotomous theory has been accepted by Chinese bibliographers at least since Zhang Xuecheng (1965, originally written in the 18th century). Lewis (1999) describes the division as one “between the general, encompassing skills claimed by the philosophical traditions and the specific, limited skills attributed to the technical ones” (327). The texts in the first part of D1, including the Classics, philosophical writings of the masters and poetic compositions, were said to all have roots back to the teachings of the sage kings in idealized ancient times while the other texts could not claim such roots.

In fact, Liu Xin explained the close connection between the canonical texts and the writings of the masters (The introductory summary for the Epitome of the Masters, translated by Lewis 1999, 328-29):

The masters form ten traditions, of which nine can be observed ... Now the different traditions all cling to their own strong points. They know them thoroughly and reflect on them exhaustively in order to make clear their meanings. Although they are obstructed or weak, if you join their essential conclusions they are all branches or channels of the Six Canons. If their followers encounter an enlightened king or sage ruler who finds their common points, then they all have the ability to serve as his limbs ... If one can cultivate the methods of the Six Arts

and observe the words of the nine traditions, eliminate their weakness and take their strong points, then one can thoroughly comprehend the epitome of the myriad methods.

Liu Xin also tied poetic writings in the Epitomes of Lyrics and Rhapsodies to the *Odes* in the canon (The introductory summary for the Epitome of Lyrics and Rhapsodies, translated by Lewis 1999, 329; emphases in original):

In ancient times when the feudal lords and hereditary officials had interchanges with neighboring states, they used subtle words to move one another. When saluting with bows, they invariably cited an *Ode* to make known their deepest aspirations, and they thereby separated the worthy from the unworthy and observed flourishing or decline. After the Spring and Autumn period, the Way of Zhou was gradually ruined, and odes of paying respects and making inquiries were no longer practiced among the states. Men of honor who studied the *Odes* were lost among the commoners, so the *fu* of worthy men disappointed in their aspirations arose. The great *ru* Xun Qing and the Chu minister Qu Yuan were separated [from rulers] by slanderers and worried for their state, so they wrote *fu* to covertly criticize or influence. They both had a righteousness that included concern for the ancient odes.

In his *Zhongguo sixiangshi* (Chinese intellectual history), Ge (2001) asserts that Chinese intellectual activities went through a gradual shift in ancient times (roughly starting in the 8th century B.C.E.) from archaic mysticism controlled by a small group of rulers and diviners to more rationalized knowledge pursuit undertaken mostly by an intellectual elite (i.e., *shi*). The latter were a new social group whose emergence was a catalyst for the intellectual shift. Borrowing from Max Weber, Chen Lai (2005) calls this shifting process “rationalization.” Ge (2001) points to several differences between the two traditions. One of the differences was the phenomenon in the new tradition that separated abstract thinking from technical skills.

In discussing the origins of “science” in ancient China, Sivin (1995) and Harper (1998) describe its practitioners after the rationalization took place but before the Warring States Era (403–221 B.C.E.) as mostly illiterate people outside the *shi* group (for example, craftsmen, government clerks, astrologers, and shamans/physicians) who learned their skills as a

family trade orally and passed down what they knew from father to son over generations. Some of the practitioners put their skills down in writing as literacy further spread in the Warring States Era. The so-called “science,” labeled as “natural history and occult thought” by Harper, consisted precisely of the topics represented in the last two classes of the *Seven Epitomes*: the Epitome of Divination and Numbers and the Epitome of Formulae and Techniques. This helps explain how technical writings differed from philosophical and literary writings composed by the elite, especially in the eyes of the latter.

5.1.2. Dichotomies 2 and 3

The second dichotomy (D2) is the Classics/non-Classics divide within the texts collated by the scholar team. However, Part One of D2 incorporated more than the Classics. People in the Han period were unable to comprehend the Classics without the help of exegetical notes and commentaries written by scholars who had studied one or more of the Classics for years. Taking an approach based on individual Classics, Liu Xin created six divisions in the foremost class for the Classics (Epitome of the Six Arts), each of which contained the text (or various versions of the text) of a Classic as well as its interpretations, commentaries and other related works. Liu Xin also augmented this class of texts with three other divisions. Two of them were designated for two other collections of texts (i.e., the *Analects* and the *Book of Filial Piety*) that were said to be recordings of Confucius’s teachings by his disciples and the interpretations and commentaries of the two collections. The last one was the division of philology. Some have speculated that the texts in these three divisions formed the basis of elementary education at Han times, and Liu Xin’s inclusion of them with the Classics indicated his belief that all men must acquire basic skills of philology and a mastery of the *Analects* and the *Book of Filial Piety* (obviously the foundation of classicism) before they could embark on a study of the Classics (Wang Guowei 1959; Yu Jiaxi 2004). Another general assertion is that the inclusion of the two texts associated with Confucius in the Epitome of the Six Arts was an attempt by Liu Xin to elevate the status of Confucius (Wang Mingsheng 1992). The summaries of the six divisions for the six Classics also unequivocally connected Confucius to all the Classics, claiming that he had either edited or transmitted individual Classics.

Part Two of D2 formed a third dichotomy (D3) between texts that pertained to expositions of the sage

kings’ teachings in various perspectives and those that applied literary or poetic expressions. The former became the Epitome of the Masters and the latter the Epitome of Lyrics (*shi*) and Rhapsodies (*fu*).

Lastly in the second branch of D1 (i.e., the so-called technical writings), the texts—about one third of the total count—fell into three specialty areas: military strategies, skills dealing with divination, and medicine. The introductory summaries of these three classes traced the origins of those texts to a number of government offices in earlier times, pointing out a history of technical specialization in the political machine. Because their contents were technical, Emperor Cheng appointed three specialist practitioners to lead their own teams in collating those texts. The three specialties thus naturally resulted in three classes of texts. Interestingly, both Liu Xiang and Xin were polymaths whose works on chronology, just to name a subject belonging to the Epitome of Divination and Numbers, were well known (Xu Xingwu 2005). So why did they not participate or even lead the collation of the texts on chronology? This could seemingly be further support for the theorization of the first dichotomy in asserting the split between the scholar team and the specialist team taking precedence over consideration of expertise.

5.1.3. Concerning a Missing “History” Class

Interpreting the basic classificatory structure of the *Seven Epitomes* through the preceding three sets of dichotomies centered on classicism is especially useful for addressing the controversy over the so-called “history” class. As discussed in the literature review section, some researchers criticize the *Seven Epitomes* for failing to establish a history class. Others have come to Liu Xin’s defense. One group says that there were not enough writings of history in Liu’s time to justify such a class. On the other hand, a couple of scholars argue that Liu did not do so because history was not an established field of study. It is the authors’ contention, however, that “fields of study” were never an intended consideration of Liu Xin for classifying texts.

In the Epitome of the Six Arts, the first eight of the nine divisions were centered on eight important texts respectively. Liu maintained in the introductory summaries that the ten divisions in the Epitome of the Masters originated from individual government offices and represented various and fragmented perspectives for interpreting sage kings’ teachings. Although it is difficult to know exactly how the divisions came about in the Epitome of Lyrics and Rhapsodies due to

a lack of summaries written for the divisions, there is no question that poetry was not seen as a field of study in Han education (Yu and Shi 2000). Overall, texts in the first three epitomes were grouped in regards to their relationships with the Classics. Alternatively, the last three epitomes originated from three types of government offices established to perform particular technical functions, thus having no hint of them being fields of study. Providing “history,” a field of study, as a separate class or division would have been a deviation from the existing classificatory design of the catalog.

5.1.4. Dispersion of Some Topics

This particular approach to explaining the main classes through dichotomies is also useful for addressing a criticism concerning the dispersion of some topics. One such topic that has puzzled researchers is the *yin-yang* and Five Phases theories. “Why were they dispersed in three classes?” they wonder. Even the *Seven Epitomes* itself adds to the perplexity by stating that the masters propagating the *yin-yang* theory (the third division of the Epitome of the Masters) originated from the offices of Xi and He, two among those in charge of divination (the Epitome of Divination and Numbers). By viewing the classification through the three sets of dichotomies above, Liu Xin’s rationale for classifying *yin-yang* writings becomes abundantly clear. He must have seen the texts in “Theorists of *yin-yang*” as being philosophical and the rest as technical, i.e., those in “Military *yin-yang*” as applied specifically to military strategies and those in “The Five Phases” as applied specifically to divination.

Similarly, we may consider mathematics through the same framework. Mathematics appeared only as applied to astronomy, chronology, and harmonics in the class on divination. Its absence from the first three classes suggests its detachment from ethical concerns and reflects its role as only a servant to technical knowledge in early Chinese intellectual development (Sivin 1995). In other words, not including elementary mathematical texts with elementary literacy texts (belonging to the Epitome of the Six Arts) might be related to the idea that mathematics was regarded as not relevant to *dao* learning but only a tool in *qi* learning (see below).

5.2. Ranking and Binary Opposition

The common dictionary definition of “dichotomy” usually mentions no preference given to one part or

the other in a dichotomy (see *OED* definition given in Section 5.1). Thus the two parts may simply be different. A circle, for example, can be divided into two equal halves by a straight line down in the middle, one half with the curved side to the left and the other to the right. In real life, or more pointedly in classification, it is often not the case. Classification theorist Henry Evelyn Bliss (1929) defines “dichotomy” as a divide between those that have a distinguishing characteristic and those that do not (151). Depending on the nature of the distinguishing characteristic, one part of the dichotomy may, and often does, become preferred to the other. In the Western tradition, such “binary oppositions” are popular in language and thought (Goody 1977). Each binary opposition comprises two parts that are opposite of each other, one being the preferred (or superior) and the other not preferred (or inferior). Frequently used examples of binary opposition include: self/other, masculine/feminine, present/absent, and inside/outside. The first in each pair is the preferred or superior in traditional Western culture. The opposition between self and other has especially been important in recent years for identifying social processes by which a group of people exclude or marginalize others (Beauvoir 1953; Said 1978).

In Chinese intellectual history, classicism is particularly recognized for its emphasis on moral hierarchy (Liu JeeLoo 2006). The *Seven Epitomes*’ introduction to the Rites division in the Epitome of the Classics states “husband/wife, father/son, ruler/subject, top/bottom;” the first in each pair is the dominant or superior. Classicists believed that this type of hierarchy (or ranking) was essential in maintaining social and political order. Throughout the classification of the *Seven Epitomes*, classicist hierarchical thinking is evident, and it demonstrates characteristics very similar to that of binary opposition in the West. Figure 3 exhibits the same three dichotomies in Figure 2 with added consideration of ranking; so the order of the six main classes is unambiguously top down. In other words, the preferred part is placed above the other in each dichotomy: teachings of the sage kings came before technical skills; the Classics before the non Classics; and expositions before non-expository writings.

Generations of scholars, especially classicists, maintained that all scholarship should be dichotomized as the learning of *dao* (the Way or the ultimate truth) and the learning of *qi* (the vessel or the skills for practical functions). By tradition, the former was always considered superior to the latter. Zuo (2004) cites this ranked dichotomy as the basis of the classification in

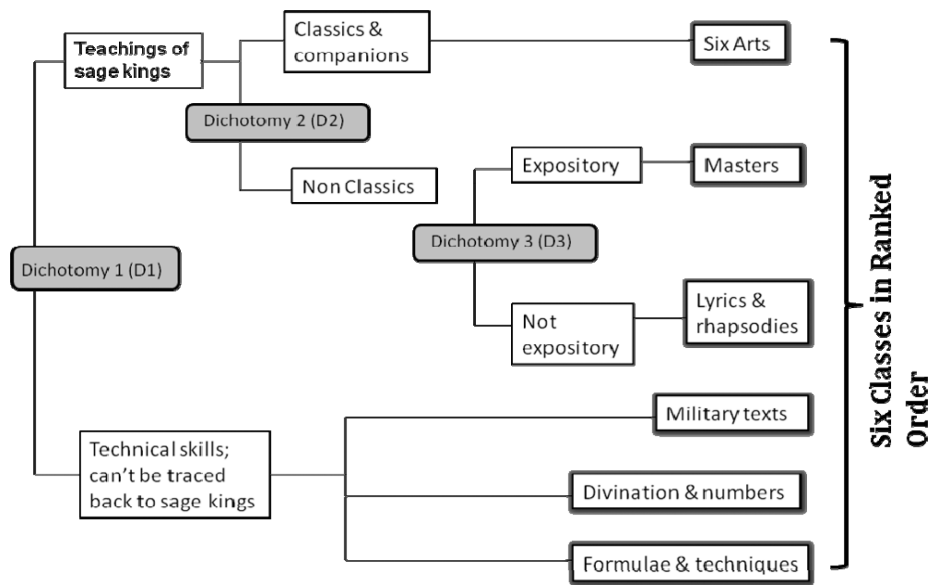


Figure 3. Three dichotomies with ranking order. In each dichotomy, the preferred is placed above the not-preferred.

the *Seven Epitomes*, explaining the priority given to the texts used for *dao* learning (i.e., the first three classes).

If read more closely, the summaries by Liu Xin quoted in the previous section also revealed the rankings within D2. In his words, writings by the masters were fragmented, and the points they each emphasized, though meaningful, were only branches or channels of the knowledge contained in the six Classics. He also made it clear that poetry in the Epitome of Lyrics and Rhapsodies was considered inferior to those in the poetic Classic, the *Odes*. By speaking of “[m]en of honor ... lost among the commoners” (referring to the fact that they lost their official positions at court) and those lost men’s writing of *fu* (rhapsodies) “to covertly criticize or influence” (emphasis added), Liu Xin unmistakably pointed out this type of poetry’s loss of important political functions at court (Connery 1998). In the same passage, Liu also asserted that the last group of works in the poetry class, including folk songs from various regions, provided useful information about the state of morality among regional commoners—obviously not the same kind of moral expressions made by the legendary kings. The texts in the second part of D2, in Liu’s opinion, were unquestionably inferior to those in the first part.

Within D3, the ranking between the two parts was also straightforward for one reason. The masters’ writings, “obstructed or weak” as they were, still “all have the ability to serve as his [i.e., the enlightened king’s] limbs” in Liu’s words. In contrast, lyrics and

rhapsodies had lost their court functions, were merely “beautiful phrases” with moral inferiority, or embodied regional rather than universal values. It is thus apparent that Liu placed this type of poetry below the rank of philosophical and expository works by the masters, for he viewed the former as morally and politically inferior to the latter—an opinion also expressed by later Chinese scholars such as Zhang Xuecheng (1973).

All of these preferences undoubtedly exalted the Classics and classicist values. With the use of ranked dichotomies, Liu Xin was thus able to convey the key message through his classification that classicism was the canonized “self” and the other textual traditions were simply the marginalized “other.” Ranked dichotomies in the *Seven Epitomes* operated under a presumption: the dominant does not exist without the dominated (or, the dominant and the dominated are interdependent). That is, ranked dichotomies assist us in identifying the preferred or superior and, in the meantime, labeling the rest as the less preferred or inferior. The very approach was taken broadly by the Han government to consolidate its ruling through intellectual control which was a marked departure from the destructive policy advocated previously by some legalists in the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.E.) who had many books burned. Over time, it proved to be a more effective means of intellectual control than book burning as the state sanctioned canons and their encompassing values became entrenched in the ranks of the intellectual, social and political elite.

This does not mean, however, that the main classes of the *Seven Epitomes* were a unique and original creation by Liu Xin or his father Xiang. As suggested, those categories were in the general perception about scholarship at the time. The contribution made by Liu Xin, and possibly Xiang, was his consistent and persistent application of the classicist principle to articulating the classificatory structure through subcategories, introductory texts, and annotations. Namely, Liu Xin accepted an existing categorization of scholarship as the foundation of the classification and enhanced it with a classicist perspective.

5.3. The Last Three Epitomes

Bibliographic scholars have paid only cursory attention to the last three epitomes. In Xu Youfu's (2009) chapter on the Treatise, the review of issues concerning the classification spreads over thirty-four pages and only three of those pages cover the last three classes. Another obstacle particularly hindering better knowledge of the three technical classes is the fact that most works in them were lost long ago—only 2 out of 56 titles in the Epitome of Military Texts (partially; another two are uncertain), 1 out of the 110 titles in the Epitome of Divination and Numbers, and 1 out of the 36 titles in the Epitome of Formulae and Techniques have survived today. A few facts about these three classes are known today. First, the catalog itself clearly associated the writings in the last three epitomes with three types of government offices: military, divinatory, and medical. Second, texts in these epitomes were collated by three specialists: a military officer, a scribe/astrologer, and a physician. With regard to the order of these three epitomes, a general supposition is that military texts appeared before the other two technical classes, because “science” (i.e., topics in the last two classes that might or might not fit the modern definition of science) were considered least important in the Chinese perception of the knowledge universe before the modern era (Yu and Wang 1998). A different scholar claims that frequent military activities during the time contributed to the prioritization of military texts over other technical writings (Xu 2009). To understand these three epitomes and the order among them, an in-depth interrogation of the nature and history of those subjects and the bureaucratic offices during Han and earlier times is needed. This is a quest beyond the scope of this study.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

There is an old Chinese saying “gang ju mu zhang”—pulling up a net by its head rope opens all its meshes in an orderly manner. Often applied in bibliography, it means that upholding a principle will create a discernible (also implying plausible) order in the classified arrangement of a bibliography. This particular thinking in bibliography led to an approach with two requirements: 1) individual texts must be seen as all interrelated (like meshes in a net); and, 2) delineations of interrelationships among texts must be guided by a principle. The *Seven Epitomes* was the very first bibliographic tool that established such philosophy.

As demonstrated in this analysis, the catalog treated the entire library collection as one net. Its classification was a careful sorting and organization of the interrelationships among individual texts, and the principle guiding the sorting and organization was classicism. Expanding on the single dichotomy theory asserted by others, the study identified three sets of ranked dichotomies, all centering on classicism, as the classificatory basis of the *Seven Epitomes*. Texts for *dao* learning, some fragmented or implicit, were separated from and took priority over texts for *qi* learning (D1). The Classics, believed to have originated from sage kings, took priority over expository writings of the masters and poetic compositions by “lost” noblemen (D2). The expository writings of the masters took priority over poetic compositions (D3). With such philosophy in mind, this classification placed all texts stored in the dynastic library into a meticulously designed net to indicate the proper position of each text in the net and its relationships with other texts. In the mind of the classificationist Liu Xin, the arrangement of the classes and divisions would be abundantly clear and sensible to catalog users who were familiar with the classicist principles.

It needs to be kept in mind that the *Seven Epitomes* exhibited the dominant worldview of the Han elite in both government and intellectual discourse. The *dao-qi* dichotomy betrayed such elitism. Additionally, the endowment of moral and intellectual authority upon particular types of written knowledge reserved learning and power exclusively for the literate ruling class. Thus, researchers of Chinese classification must not consider this classification approach as the only one in Chinese culture.

Liu's scheme is said to have become the model for later bibliographic classifications in the following two thousand years in imperial China. This model dictated the perpetual placement of the “Classics” (or the “Six

Arts” in the *Seven Epitomes*) as the foremost class at the top of the classificatory structure, propagating the canonical status of classicism. Throughout imperial China, the classificatory model played a significant role in proclaiming and maintaining classicism as the intellectual authority and, in the meantime, othering writings that deviated from classicist ideals. The ultimate goal of establishing an intellectual authority was not an end by itself; it was intended to serve as part of the state apparatus for political and social control. Not until the end of the imperial period and the beginning of the republic era did challenges to this tradition start to emerge. Criticism of the classicist model is often contempt of its ideology or an attack on its unscientific nature. While the former has a valid point, the latter seems to possess a misinformed presumption that bibliographic classification ought to facilitate scientific pursuit, and a bibliographic classification not based on scientific principles is thus inferior and undesirable. This scientific view towards bibliographic classification is as ideological and single-minded as the classicist model it criticizes.

In their now famous 1903 essay about “primitive” classification, Durkheim and Mauss (1963) conclude their study by saying that categories and their relations in logical classifications “are represented in the form of familial connections, or as relations of economic or political subordination, so that the same sentiments which are the basis of domestic, social, and other kinds of organization have been effective in this logical division of things also” (85). Our findings seem to echo their theory. The origin of Liu Xin’s classification, however, was a mix of the social/institutional reality of his time, and the idealized polity as conceived by Han classicists through a partisan interpretation of early texts (Lewis 1999). The classificationist did not arrive at the classificatory structure through an observation of nature or the social world. Instead the scheme resulted from authoritarian, ideological and political thinking with a calculated purpose to shape minds. One can easily dismiss this approach to classifying as a thing in the distant past and in a remote culture. What will be more interesting is to use the insight learned from the study to examine intellectual forces embedded in other classifications, east or west, ancient or contemporary.

As reported above, the study limited its examination to only one of the major dimensions of the classification in question. Many dimensions and other related issues, some already mentioned, remain in need of investigation. One of the priorities in further research on the *Seven Epitomes* should be given to the

last three main classes that have been neglected by Chinese bibliographers and only superficially treated in the current study. Besides a thorough analysis of the nature of the three classes, future inquiries may include questions such as: Do these classes resemble in any way disciplines or fields of learning as perceived today? What factors did Liu Xin consider in determining the order of these three classes? In addition to the three technical classes, there are other aspects of the catalog calling for more study. For example, what were the determining factors in creation and ordering of subclasses? Besides dichotomy and ranking, what other classificatory methods were applied in the scheme? With the design of classes and subclasses, this scheme was obviously hierarchical to some extent. What was the nature of the hierarchies? Finally, how did this sixfold scheme evolve into other schemes? It is hoped that the tradition of Chinese bibliographic classification draws increasing attention from classification theorists internationally and an improved understanding of its features and achievements in turn significantly enhances classification theory.

Appendix

Some Chinese works cited in this article were originally written long ago, but republished recently. To help readers get a better sense of the timeline of these works, the following table provides the names and life spans of those authors whose cited works were first completed or published before 1949:

Name	Life Span
Ban Gu 班固	32-92
Liu Xiang劉向	77-6 B.C.E.
Liu Xin劉歆	53 B.C.E.-23 C.E.
Liu Yizheng柳詒徵	1880-1956
Ruan Xiaoxu阮孝緒	479-536
Wang Guowei 王國維	1877-1927
Wang Mingsheng王鳴盛	1722-1798
Yan Shigu 顏師古	581-645
Yao Mingda姚名達	1905-1942
Yao Zhenzong姚振宗	1843-1906
Zhang Xuecheng章學誠	1738-1801

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