Contested Cultural Transmission and Historical Interpretation in Han Dynasty China:
The Nine Temples of Ban Gu and the Twelve Temples of Wang Mang

Timothy D. Baker, Jr. *

Abstract
This article considers a site from early imperial China, referred to historically as the Wang Mang Jiumiao, that has been archaeologically identified as a complex of twelve temples dedicated to the imperial lineage of the interregnum emperor, Wang Mang. I consider this site as both the physical construction employed by Wang Mang in an attempt to solidify his reign, and as its historical re-presentation by the historian Ban Gu. I do this, not to verify what was built or what was written, but rather as a consideration of the possible motives and results of the material and the written actions. In this paper, anthropologically and sociologically based theories on the use of space link this investigation of a historical site to contemporary debates on how spatial manipulation is related to cultural and political forces. Historians and archaeologists are frequently faced with examples of material culture whose identification is uncertain, and this paper is a demonstration of an approach to help understanding these problematic examples, especially in cases where there is discrepancy between the textual and the archaeological record.

* Assistant Professor, Department of History, National Dong Hwa University
Keywords: Wang Mang, Ban Gu, Jiumiao, ancestral temple, historical archaeology, cultural capital, manmade landscape
1. Introduction

In this paper, I consider ways in which the imperial ancestral temples of Wang Mang functioned to propagate views about the nature of imperial government, both as built form while he was on the throne and as textual history in the years following the fall of his dynasty. To do so I employ the framework of concepts of cultural reproduction or communication, analyzing this reproduction within two different fields – the political and the historical, through two corresponding media – architectural and textual, and from two aspects – that of creation and that of apperception. Each of these media is considered as a means of performance, that is to say, propaganda, within its particular field: propaganda that has a mutual relationship between its broadcasting and its reception. Rather than a clarification of historical fact, this study is put forth as illustrations of the interaction of forces within this particular context and for an interpretive modus operandi. In the first section of this paper I present the reasons for believing that the historical description of the Wang Mang Jiumiao differ from the temples actually built by Wang Mang, and in the second section I propose a theoretical structure for understanding how the original construction and the later textual description both act as means of cultural transmission by manipulating the manmade landscape and its historical representation.

2. Historical Background - The Discrepancy between Building and Text

The Nine Temples of Wang Mang were a significant landmark in the development of the imperial ancestral temple, even though these buildings lasted phys-
ically only from 22 AD until their destruction in 25 AD, when Chang’an fell to the Red Eyebrow 赤眉 rebels at the end of Wang Mang’s reign. The temple complex is known today primarily due to its detailed description in the *Han hu* 《漢書》 of Ban Gu 班固 at the end of the final chapter, the “Wang Mang Zhuan” 《王莽傳》. Here, he describes their construction, mentions that there were eight temples the same size and one twice as large, and lists the individual ancestors of Wang Mang to which each of the temples were dedicated. But it is perhaps less well-known that when the site of these temples was excavated from 1956 to 1958 the archaeologists in fact found the remains of twelve temples, not nine; eleven of which were identical and one of which was twice as large.¹ There have been various explanations put forth to explain, if the lineage for which the Jiumiao was built as described in the *Hanshu* did not apply to the temples as actually built, what would have been the lineage figures for which the twelve temples were built. But there are no generally accepted explanations, and in his rebuttal of the explanation in Huang (1989), Michael Loewe has expressed doubt that the identification of the twelve temples could ever be satisfactorily resolved (Loewe 1994:221).

Various reasons can be put forth for this discrepancy: 1) Ban Gu may have simply been incorrect in his count of the temples; 2) the original records from which Ban Gu was working may have been mistaken; 3) the archaeological site may not have been correctly identified and it was for another institution built at that time, such as the Taixue 太學; or 4) Wang Mang built three extra temple buildings that were not considered part of the ancestral lineage mentioned in the

¹ Though preliminary reports were published in journals at the time, the complete excavation report was not published until much later, as 中國社會科學院考古研究所, 《西漢禮制建築遺址》 北京：文物出版社，2003. For a more complete discussion of the sequence of archaeological papers on this site and alternate attributions of the temples, see Baker (in press) or Liu (2011).
Contested Cultural Transmission and Historical Interpretation in Han Dynasty China

Hanshu. But on examination, it seems that none of these explanations are particularly satisfactory.

First, Ban Gu rarely makes a mistake in his facts, even minor ones (Dubs 1946), and the construction of these temples was an extremely significant event at the end of the Western Han; it is also a topic in which Ban Gu took especial interest, as indicated by his inclusion of a protracted court debate on this issue that takes up much of the “Wei Xian Zhuan” 〈韋賢傳〉 in the Han shu, as I have discussed in an earlier article (Baker 2005). Since Ban Gu was so specific as to describe the construction process of the temples and the ancestors to which each is dedicated, it is highly unlikely that a discrepancy in numbers such as this would be due to either a mistake on his part or a later scribal error.

Secondly, the records for the Wang Mang reign period in the Hanshu are quite detailed, perhaps even better than those for other dynasties, despite the illegitimate status of his reign. Ban Gu notes that Wang Mang customarily employed five recorders to take notes on his statements and actions (Ban 4082), and the “Wang Mang Zhuan,” which is used in place of the benji 〈本紀〉 section for the legitimate Han emperors, is two and a half times the length of even the benji for Hanwudi 漢武帝, which is the longest of the benji. Thus, it seems unlikely that specifics about Wang Mang’s ancestral temples would have been misrecorded prior to Ban Gu’s compilation.

Thirdly, it is unlikely that the site has been incorrectly identified by archaeologists. From remains found in the excavations, the site can be positively identified as having been constructed during the time when Wang Mang was emperor.2 The various alternative identifications of this site have recently been considered

---

2 See Zhonguo (2003:64-73) for a discussion of place names from the Wang Mang era found inscribed on column bases excavated from this site as a means of dating the construction of this complex.
by Liu (2011), who concurs with the conclusion that it was indeed the complex recorded by Ban Gu as having been built during the reign of Wang Mang (Liu 2011:168). It is true that the arrangement of the temples differs in some respects from other sites that have been identified as ancestral temples. But due to the immense size, the very formal layout of the ensemble, and the fact that the floor plan for eleven of the temples is exactly the same, with the twelfth being very similar, it is clear that it is a state ritual complex of considerable importance. Essentially, we know that Wang Mang constructed a temple complex of this scale, and despite more than fifty years of archaeological work in the vicinity of Han Chang’an, no further candidates for the site of the Wang Mang Jiumiao have been discovered. In addition, this site is located south of Chang’an and west of the site currently identified as the Mingtang 明堂, as noted in the Hanshu (Ban: 4062), between that and another of the state ritual structures constructed by Wang Mang, the Altars of the Grain and Soil 社稷.

Fourthly, although the idea of constructing extra temples for some unspecified use might appear a plausible candidate for a simple explanation, we should note two aspects about the complex. First, each of the eleven smaller temple remains are completely identical, which indicates that they must have all been constructed for the same ritual purpose, not with some for other ancillary use. And furthermore, in the Qin and Western Han period ancestral temples were built for an individual emperor only after his death; while the Eastern Han established the later practice of constructing a fixed temple site, within which the emperor’s me-
memorial plaques would be installed. There is simply no example of an independent ancestral temple being constructed for a Han emperor before his death, and it would be especially peculiar to construct only a few temples for the next few emperors. Liu (2011:209) does contend that there is textual evidence indicating that the Qin tradition of seven imperial ancestral temples could also include extra temples for future use. Without considering the textual evidence in detail, I would point out that the tradition of constructing imperial ancestral temples had developed over the two centuries of the Western Han with no evidence of constructing such extra temples, and variations on the number of ancestral temples are considered a highly significant political issue by Ban Gu in his “Wei Xian Zhuan.” Had Wang Mang constructed extra temples for future use, this would have been an even more fundamental break with tradition than simply increasing the number of temples, and could hardly have escaped notice and comment by Ban Gu.

Furthermore, the complex itself is referred in the Han Shu as the Jiumiao, with the number of temples forming the title of the complex. Liu (2011:204) contends that this number should be considered as a general term indicating numerous temples, not that there were exactly nine temples in the complex. Although this is certainly an attractive explanation to resolve the discrepancy in numbers, it relies on the assumption that there were extra temples constructed for later use, which as I note above, is not likely.

So it appears that the most likely explanation for the discrepancy between Ban Gu’s recording of the number of temples and what was actually built by Wang Mang may lie in what might be referred to as an independent authorial action, a writing that lies outside the normal scope of what we consider to be the historian’s role in recording facts. The responsibility for this action cannot be definitely ascribed to Ban Gu himself, but the summary at the end of the “Wang
Mang Zhuan” begins in the form associated with other chapters attributed to Ban Gu, rather than his father or sister.

3. The Temples as Cultural Communication

Although I would not contend that the account of the Wang Mang Jiumiao contained in the Hanshu was a deliberate misrepresentation of historical fact, I would like here to suggest a conceptual framework for understanding how this discrepancy might have come to be: what were the forces at work leading to it, and how each of these two versions of the Jiumiao – the built and the textual - could have operated as a means of social propaganda. In this discussion, I rely primarily on concepts of cultural analysis developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, approaches that enable us to develop a clearer understanding of this complex interaction between an actual architectural construction and its subsequent textual description. The two main perspectives from which I analyze this situation are the notions of field, habitus, and cultural reproduction.

3.1 Field

The first notion we could use to understand this situation, the idea of field, indicates an arena in which a particular phenomenon - a text, an individual, a building - is operating, or in which this phenomenon is being considered – either by those active in the field or by those observing it. A field itself is composed of “objective social relations,” (Bourdieu 1993:39) and the fields can be subdivided and quantified in a number of ways, according to which social relations are being considered. It may be described as an arena in which actors engage one another, either competitively or supportively, acting within a set of rules that is intuitively understood (Hillier and Rooksby 2005:23). Fields can also be delimited by the
The concept of field as means of analyzing how spaces are used, both in the present and historically, and what types of spaces are significant to which groups of people is fundamental to a deeper understanding of human space, both manmade and natural landscapes. Along these lines, Caroline Humphrey has posited a basic split between two types of natural Mongolian landscapes (Humphrey 1999). On one hand, she sees centralized, chiefly landscapes of the open grass steppes, and on the other, there are shamanic landscapes of peripheral areas with mountains and lakes. The first of these systems is based on the patriline structure of society (comprising a field), while the second is based on a view of society that is centered on the individual. Each of these landscapes is, in turn, the locus for its particular aspect of Mongolian culture. As she points out in this example, the fields provide a cultural space, within whose context individuals can take action, and within which these actions can be understood by others participating in these fields.

In our case of the fields of the conflicting representations of the Wang Mang temple complex, the situation can be understood from the standpoint of two fields. First, for the temples that were actually built under Wang Mang, we should consider the relations between the emperor, Wang Mang, and his subjects, here broadly defined as any who would be aware of this architectural construction, be they commoners or officials, at the capital or in other areas. These temples were built towards the end of Wang Mang’s reign, as I present in my discussion of the literary field, below. At this point, the empire was afflicted with natural disasters such as floods and famines, along with rebellions; Wang Mang’s control of his empire, and indeed the empire itself, appeared to be crumbling around him.

Within this field, the primary agent, Wang Mang is acting to reinforce what
Bourdieu refers to as symbolic capital, which is the means by which power is exercised or expressed through symbolic means.\(^6\) In this case, by building the Jiumiao, Wang Mang is manifesting the degree of apparent power that he commands. The Jiumiao in this case derives its symbolic potency on one hand from the extensive genealogy that it is based on, stretching back to the Yellow Emperor himself; and this genealogy is clearly an attempt to give Wang Mang’s dynasty a legitimacy that was otherwise highly questionable. An illustration of the degree to which this manipulation of symbolic power was perceived by observers at the time the temples were constructed is the passage in the *Hanshu* that describes the beginning of the construction of the Jiumiao in the year 20 CE:

九月甲申，莽立载行視，親舉築三下。司徒王尋、大司空王邑持節，及侍中常侍執法杜林等數十人將作。崔發、張邯說莽曰：

「德盛者文縟，宜崇其制度，宣視海內，且令萬世之後無以復加也。」 (Ban 4161)

In the ninth month on the *chia-shen* day, standing in a chariot, Wang Mang went to inspect the work and in person began it by pounding three times on the earthen walls. (A list of people) went to oversee the work. Cui Fa and Zhang Han said to Wang Mang, “For those with abundant virtue, the ritual practices should be elaborate. It would be proper to make the arrangements of these temples magnificent and to make this plainly known to all within the four seas so that even after ten thousand generations, nothing in them should be changed or altered. (Dubs 1938:397)

\(^6\) Although Bourdieu’s discussion of symbolic capital relates to accumulation of economic capital, it more importantly describes the accumulation of what might be referred to as the capital of political legitimacy, which is essentially another form of social capital (Hillier and Rooksby 2005:23).
Here where two of Wang Mang’s ministers, Cui Fa and Zhang Han, state that the elaborateness of the temples (the elaborateness of their construction and the elaborateness of the rituals they house are not distinct) is a demonstration of the emperor’s virtue (de 德), which may be considered the ultimate basis of the right to rule. The strong connection between dynastic legitimacy and the ancestral temples during the Han is discussed in Liu (2010) for the Western Han prior to the Wang Mang period.

The Jiumiao also derives symbolic potency and thereby political legitimacy from the fact that the temples are constructed especially for making offerings to the lineage of imperial ancestors. The tradition of the ancestral offerings as one of the most important state rituals had taken form and been given proscriptive textual limits in Pre-Qin times. Then, during the Han it had been an extremely important means of defining the imperial lineage: which emperors and which imperial relations were included in it, and what was their status within this lineage. In the early years of Wang Mang’s rule, he had made ancestral sacrifices; however, he performed the ceremonies in a ritual structure of long pedigree but uncertain purpose, referred to as the Mingtang, whose construction he had ordered while serving as the prime minister under (or over) the last emperor of the Western Han. The dynastic situation under which Wang Mang constructed his set of ancestral temples was similar to that of Han Gaozu, who during his reign constructed an ancestral temple posthumously for his father, who had received a title of nobility after the accession of Gaozu. But the grandiosity of Wang Mang’s gesture may be taken as an indication of how tenuous was his grasp on the reins of the state at this point.

For further details on the connections between the imperial ancestral temple system and legitimacy of state rule see: Guo 2007.
In the second aspect of field at work in this case, the textual description contained in the *Hanshu*, and social relations surrounding the production of this text are distinctly different from those surrounding the construction of the actual buildings. Although, as I note above, we can not be completely certain that this description of the Wang Mang Jiumiao was definitely authored by Ban Gu, an analysis of this field in which the textual description is operating can still stand. In this case, Ban Gu, or whoever was the author of this passage, was acting to produce a text that was itself involved in establishing political legitimacy, but in this case by textual means. The tradition of official dynastic histories as prepared by government historians was not yet well defined at the time that the *Hanshu* was completed, but this history was prepared under the auspices of the Eastern Han government and the Ban family was closely connected with the government administration.

At the time that Ban Gu began to compile this history, the Eastern Han was not yet completely politically settled. The arrangements for the ancestral temple had gone through several revisions under the first Eastern Han emperor, Guangwudi and the imperial lineage, though it remained within the Liu clan, had become tenuous in the transition between Eastern and Western Han. Thus, preparing the history of the first half of the Han history had the potential for being a highly significant act in terms of justifying the restored imperial clan. The field here is structured differently than that for Wang Mang since here there is a three-way relationship between the actor (whoever the author was who described Wang Mang’s ancestral temple complex as having nine temples), the imperial lineage (Guangwudi and his descendent, who sponsored the writing of the history and stood to benefit from it), and the subjects of the empire (broadly speaking, the extended community of readers of this text, and in this sense parallel to the per-
sons who would have observed or heard of the built Jiumiao).

The way the textual version manipulates symbolic capital within its field should be considered from two standpoints. First, there is the standpoint of the imperial lineage. Similar to the physical construction, the textual construction has the potential to support the imperial legitimacy of the newly restored Eastern Han polity. In this sense, it can support it negatively, by emphasizing the lack of legitimacy for Wang Mang’s preceding interregnum dynasty since his ancestral temples did not conform to one of the more accepted traditions of the imperial temples. It can also support it positively by illustrating that the tradition of the imperial ancestral temple was going through a transition, a continuation of the back-and-forth changes that are described in the “Wei Xian Zhuan,” a transition that led to the very significant revisions to the ancestral temples that had in fact already taken place under Guangwudi. The second standpoint from which we can consider the development of symbolic capital by this textual version is the question of what the author might stand to gain from his work. In this sense, by supporting the symbolic capital of the imperial lineage, the author is working within the field of textual production to bolster his own symbolic capital, and perhaps that of his family.

3.2 Habitus

The term habitus most generally refers to patterns of behavior, patterns that can be manifested in many ways, from manners of speaking or styles of clothing, to the ways in which traditional houses are arranged or cities are built, to the ways

8 It should be noted that the production of symbolic capital through the built Jiumiao could similarly be considered from the standpoint of Wang Mang’s supporters who observed and contributed to its construction, as noted in the quotation from the *Hanshu* above. I do not consider their point of view in this essay since they were not a central part of the divergence between the two versions of the Jiumiao.
that crowds behave. It can pertain to a person or a class of people, and it can indicate the means that an individual distinguishes himself from his peers, or the way in which his peer group distinguishes itself from other groups. It can also be defined as a “sense of one’s…role in the world of one’s lived environment (Hillier and Rooksby 2005:21).” It can manifest itself in artistic, literary, and scholarly (in this case historiographical) arenas, and it must be considered in the context of the fields in which it is operating (Bourdieu 2005:47).

Although the term habitus is, of course, strongly associated with the sociological work of Bourdieu, it has been and continues to be a significant concept for understanding how spatial constructions are deployed and perceived. From its early use in Bourdieu’s translation of Erwin Panofsky’s _Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism_ (Bourdieu 1974), it has been used in analyzing historical and archaeological sites. For example, it is the basis of Stephen Lumsden’s discussion of the way in which the placement of palaces and royal gardens in the Babylonian city of Ninevah relate to a new perception of the way that city – and its society – were structured (Lumsden 2004). The concept of habitus also has been deployed as a means to develop a philosophical understanding of geography (Casey 2001).

As a means of understanding the strategy underlying the Wang Mang ancestral temples, habitus can indicate the common tendencies of a social group, in this case at a basic level the political leaders who construct spaces that demonstrate and reinforce their political legitimacy and authority. But it also can describe the practices or habitual actions by which the individual leader, Wang Mang, sought to define himself as distinct from his social group, or field; in this case by constructing a ritual complex that was a distinct break with established tradition. The notion of habitus is especially useful in this context since it can provide an under-
standing of consistencies that underlie behavior, without relying on the use of rules or proscriptions. In this sense, we can see how Wang Mang’s actions, though they were in contravention of the established “rules” for establishing ancestral temples, were at the same time consistent with his own habitus, and more broadly, with the habitus of a the ruler of a newly established dynasty.

And approaching this issue from another direction, the notion of habitus can provide a conceptual understanding for the work of historians; for the ways in which they create or rewrite history, presenting textual recreations of material things that will then replace the original in our view. In the case of Wang Mang’s ancestral temples, it is in the interest of Ban Gu to recreate and partially erase some of the radicalness of the changes that were instituted under Wang Mang, to create a history that is more evolutionary than revolutionary. In this sense, although he certainly would not have wished to convey legitimacy on Wang Mang’s reign, minimizing the degree of radical change that a complex of twelve ancestral temples would have presented could present the process of history as being one that was more intelligible, that conformed to the historian’s notions of historical process. When we examine Ban Gu’s arrangement of the materials he presents in the extended debate on the proper number of ancestral temples, as described in the Han shu “Wei Xian Zhuan” (韋賢傳), we can see that the classical scholar and imperial advisor Liu Xin (劉歆 46 B.C.E. – 23 C.E.) entered this debate with a proposal to Wang Mang in 7 B.C.E. that one of the traditionally accepted numbers of ancestral temples, seven, could be augmented by temples for specially honored ancestors, bringing the total up to nine (Baker 2006:261). This debate, however, was never resolved, but rather terminated by Wang Mang’s radical break, and Liu Xin’s proposal was never acted on. But in his summary to this section, after noting the broad diversity of views that had emerged within the debate, Ban
Gu concludes by stating that of all the scholars quoted therein, Liu Xin was the “most widely read and sincere.” (Ban 3127; Baker, 2006:273). Thus in this sense, when Ban Gu presents Wang Mang’s ancestral temple complex as having nine temples, it is presenting this arrangement as a further step in the historical evolution of this institution, a position that can be seen as consistent with Ban Gu’s habitus as a historian.

3.3 Cultural Reproduction

In addition to the perspective of distinct fields in which cultural activities take place through actors’ patterns of habitus and convey meaning within these fields, we can also consider the two versions of the Jiumiao from the standpoint of cultural reproduction. This refers to the means by which culture is transmitted between generations or different socio-cultural groups. From the standpoint of field, as I have indicated above, there is almost inevitably an underlying sense of conflict over different types of capital, whether they be symbolic, cultural or economic. From the standpoint of cultural reproduction, the emphasis is on developing a consensus that is continued or passed down with changes through time in the process of its development. There is, however, also the tendency for conflict over cultural reproduction when newcomers with differing views and goals, such as Wang Mang, enter the cycle of reproduction (Bourdieu 1993:57).

In the case of the built environment, constructing the Jiumiao Wang Mang is - on the most basic level - continuing the tradition that had developed through the Western Han of dedicating temples to the worship of the imperial lineage. In that sense, he is placing himself in the position of one who is preserving tradition. The fact that the temples are constructed all at one time and in one place, instead of at the death of each emperor and in different locations, can be understood as a further step in the evolution of this tradition.
At the same time, Wang Mang is presenting himself as exceeding the limits of tradition since the Western Han concept of the proper number of emperors who should have active ancestral temples was either five or seven and additions beyond this number were highly controversial. Regardless of whether there are twelve temples or nine, Wang Mang has taken the model of the ancestral temples to a new level. Furthermore, the lineage for which the temples was built, at least as described in the textual version of the *Hanshu*, extends Wang Mang’s pedigree back even beyond that of Han Gaozu, to the semi-mythical Yellow Emperor.

九廟：一曰黃帝太初祖廟，二曰帝虞始祖昭廟，三曰陳胡王統祖穆廟，四曰齊敬王世祖昭廟，五曰濟北愍王王祖穆廟，凡五廟不墮云；六曰濟南伯王尊禰昭廟，七曰元城孺王尊穆廟，八曰陽平頃王戚禰昭廟，九曰新都顯王戚穆廟。殿皆重屋。太初祖廟東西南北各四十丈，高十七丈餘廟半之為銅薄櫐，飾以金銀琱文，窮極百工之巧。帶高增下，功費數百钜萬，卒徒死者萬數。(Ban 4162)

Wang Mang moreover saw that the thieves and robbers in the four quarters were many and wanted to make it appear that he himself was tranquil and able to be the founder of a dynasty enduring for ten thousand generations. So he issued a message which said, “I have received the Mandate of Heaven and am now meeting with the distresses of the nine dry years and the untoward occurrences in the 106 years, when the government treasuries are empty and the people are exhausted. The imperial ancestral temples have not yet been prepared, and hence I have temporarily made common ancestral sacrifices in the Grand Temple of the Mingtang.” (Here a description of
his divining for the proper time and location for constructing the new temples is omitted.) Wang Mang...began the work in person by pounding three times on the earth for walls....Wang Mang summoned widely the artisans of the empire and plans were calculated by means of geometry. The officials and people who voluntarily paid cash or grain to assist the work came and went on the roads and highways without interruption. Wang Mang tore down...in all more than ten palaces and took their material and tile to build the Nine Temples...The expense of the work was several ten thousand millions, and the conscripts and criminals who died numbered in the tens of thousands. (Dubs 1939:395-400)

But in this quotation from the textual version of the Jiumiao, it is worth noting the basic division between fixed temples for distant ancestors, here labeled from one to five, and the four temples for the more recent ancestors, which would be eliminated one by one as emperors passed away, in order to provide temples for the immediately deceased emperors but remain within a limit of four close relatives. In structure, though not in total number, this is essentially the same as the concept of the ancestral temple that had developed by the end of the Western Han. The difference between the textual version of the Jiumiao and the historical precedent is simply that in the textual version Wang Mang includes one more pair of distant ancestors to receive permanent shrines beyond even the largest numbers in the Western Han precedents.

Comparing the built version to the textual one, the essential difference becomes clearer: the way in which the temples of the version of the Jiumiao that was actually constructed cannot relate to this division between fixed and distant relatives, with permanent shrines, and closer ones, whose shrines would be re-
placed. In fact the eleven temples that are in addition to the main temple, cannot be evenly divided into the alternating generational categories of zhao and mu. In comparison with the textual version, the built version - even if we overlook the question of who might have been the forbears to be honored by the twelve temples - was a much more radical departure from the previously established protocol for the imperial ancestral temples.

As such if Ban Gu, or whoever was the author of the passages describing the Jiumiao, were to consider the evidence from the physical Jiumiao, he might be inclined to present it in a way that both preserved the iconoclastic notion of an illegitimate ruler who had expanded set of imperial ancestral offerings to exceeded the previous limits, and yet attempted to resolve the major discrepancies between the line of development with the tradition of imperial ancestral temples and the Jiumiao as it had actually been constructed. Thus in this sense Ban Gu as the author of this passage in the Han shu may have interpreted this complex in order to provide a textual reconciliation between his understanding of what was comprehensible within the limits of the tradition prior to Wang Mang and with what had actually been constructed under the emperor’s direction. In doing so, he would have been reinforcing the process of historical reproduction that had been challenged by the constructed version of the Wang Mang Jiumiao.

4. Conclusions

This essay seeks to extend several of the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu relating to the sociology of culture, connecting these to the historical context of textual history and history. In doing so, it explains how the textual and the constructed versions of the Wang Mang Jiumiao worked as means of communication within different fields. Bourdieu’s views are generally founded on a perception of un-
derlying conflict over limited resources, be they economic or cultural status, which also characterized the material studied here. In contrast to Bourdieu, however, the degree to which these issues are related to economic capital is not considered since the framework of economic exchange during this historical period differs too greatly from that of even the more traditional societies that Bourdieu considers in some of his works. But the implications of those concepts within this framework provide a theoretical basis for a possible strategy that may have influenced Ban Gu in preparing the textual description of the Jiumiao, altering it by his interpretation from a more radical rupture of tradition to a change that was more a means of evolution within an accepted structure.

In this study we have seen different views expressed around the creation, historicization, and archaeology of a critical site for Chinese imperial ritual. First there was Wang Mang, the advocate of radical return, abrogating current traditions in order to return to a past that is revisited to serve his present goals. To do this, he grafts tradition to his own revolutionary political authority. The European historian J.G.A. Pocock, referring to the Chinese historical context, expresses the situation as: "The strategist of return, supposed to be making his departure like Mo Tzu from a situation of pure traditionalism, cannot invest the past...with the authority of tradition. He therefore borrows elements of charismatic or rational authority either from the tradition which he is criticizing or from some other strand in his society’s inheritance... and concentrates them wholly in his “past,” in such a way as to deprive subsequent tradition of what now becomes a predominant form of authority...." (Pocock 1989: 252) This was the tactic taken by Wang Mang when he constructed, in a radical break from the tradition that immediately preceded him, his grand complex of ancestral temples, whose attributions will probably never be completely understood but which gestured to his own ancient
Contested Cultural Transmission and Historical Interpretation in Han Dynasty China

Second we have the historian, Ban Gu, who in his record presented a number of temples that differed from those actually built and thereby revised the lineage that Wang Mang’s ancestral temples originally represented: an act of erasing through rewriting, leading to an account plausible enough to be accepted but wrong enough to invalidate the lineage of an usurper. As a historian working under the newly restored Eastern Han dynasty, Ban Gu placed Wang Mang’s biography outside the category of emperors in his arrangement of historical materials and repeatedly highlighted both practical failings of Wang Mang’s programs and moral failings of the man himself (Bielenstein 1987). Though Ban Gu’s actual strategy in choosing this particular number of temples cannot be verified, it is in line with his conclusions for this problem that he alluded to in his summary of the Western Han debate on the proper number of imperial temples. This action also fits much more closely to the pattern, we might say habitus, of the historian as one who presents history as a meaningful progression of events that leads up to and presents a mirror for the present.

Overall, this investigation presents way of interpreting the intimate connection between material remains and the textual historical tradition, especially within a cultural system such as China’s, in which the ancient historical record is an inherent part of the ethnic and national identity. In this context, Wang Mang’s Nine-Twelve Temples were appropriate vehicles for the investment of differing views on how political legitimacy is maintained and displays itself.

Acknowledgements

Financial and technical support for this research has been provided under Grants 97-2410-H-259-045-MY2 and 99-2410-H-259-029 from the National
Science Council of Taiwan. Support for the field trip to inspect the site and interview the lead archaeologist was provided by the Academia Sinica Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy and by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Institute of Archaeology. This material was initially presented and discussed at the 2008 National Dong Hwa University conference on “Literature: Transmission and Reception” 文學傳播與接受. The revised paper has also benefited considerably from the comments of the three anonymous reviewers for this journal.


——. in press. An archaeology of history: the Wang Mang nine temples from early imperial China as reconstructed by history and by archaeology. *History and Anthropology*.


——. 2004. Luelun xihan xuandi yongguang nian jian huang di zong miao li zhi gai ge [A discussion of changes to the system of the imperial ancestral temples in the *yong guang* reign period of the Western Han Emperor Yuan]. *Yantai shifan xueyuan xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 21.4:54-65.


Huang Zhanyue. 1960. *Han chang’an cheng nan jiao lizhi jianzhu de weizhi ji qi*
youguan wenti [The site and related issues concerning the ritual buildings in the southern suburbs of Han Dynasty Chang’an]. Kaogu. 1960.9:53-58.


Luo Zhongru. 1957. Xi’an xi jiao faxian han dai jianzhu yizhi, [Site of a Western Han Building Discovered in the Western Outskirts of Xi’an]. *Kaogu*. 1957.6:25-30.


責任編輯：蔣竹山
漢代的文化傳播衝突與歷史詮釋：
班固「九廟」與王莽「十二廟」

貝克定*

提要

本文討論了出现在早期帝制中國的一個遺址：王莽九廟，一個用來展示身為帝王的王莽為其政權過渡期建構的帝王世系，是由十二個廟組成的複雜建築群。我認為這個建築群是一個有形建築，被王莽利用來試圖鞏固他的統治，同時它又被歷史學家班固歷史性地再現，而班固是為東漢中興政權工作的。本論文的目的不在於討論這個建築群的形貌，或有關它的歷史紀錄的內容，而是為了考察這一建築與後來的歷史書寫行為，其可能的動機及後果導致的結果。人類學與社會學的基本理論中關於空間的理論運用，將本研究中的歷史景觀議題連結上一個當代的辯論，亦即空間的操作，與社會和政治的力量是息息相關的。歷史學家和考古學家在處理許多物質文化時，往往面臨到許多無法重建、無法解釋的重要問題，而本論文則是表現了面對此類疑惑例子，如何獲取有用的理解方法的一個示範。

關鍵詞：王莽、班固、宗廟、九廟、歷史重建、文化首都、人造景觀

* 國立東華大學歷史學系暨研究所助理教授