Studies and Pedigrees of *Shangshu* in China in the First Half of the 20th Century (1900–1949)

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**Keywords:** The 20th Century, The Study of Shangshu, Pedigree, Method.

**Abstract.** By the 20th century, *Shangshu* studies had divided into three main schools: scholars of the traditional school whose research methods remain traditional ways took Zhang Taiyan as the center of this group. The “Xin-zheng” school, Wang Guowei as the central figure of it, attached great importance to the unearthed literature. The “Ku-shih-pien” school centered on Gu Jiegang, which examined the authenticity of ancient Chinese historical documents and used modern subject knowledge to interpret the text of *Shangshu*, achieved great results. In addition, scholars from Anhui, Sichuan, Hunan and other places also contributed. On the one hand, on the basis of fully absorbing the outstanding achievement of predecessors, systematic studies of *Shangshu* have been launched in different schools. At the same time, the debates between them also have further promoted the research progress. On the other hand, the contribution of the *Shangshu* research in modern times lies more in that has brought together a large number of outstanding scholars and has covered many different fields and academic ideas. For this reasons, it sets a perfect example for the research of the newly unearthed bamboo and silks documents and extraterritorial literature.

1. **Introduction**

Taking it by and large, modern scholars have sorted out the academic development history of *Shangshu* study. The works of scholars such as Gu Jiegang, Jiang Shanguo and Liu Qiyu have established a model for the *Shangshu* study history. As an essential part of the academic history of *Shangshu* in modern times China, it still lack of systematic academic combing and theoretical construction. As a microcosm of the modern times scholarship history, it can reflect the change of Chinese academic thought objectively. It not only involves the development and evolution of schools, but also epitomizes the academic exploration of modern scholars.

2. **The Main schools and Distribution of Shangshu Studies in Modern China**

With the changes of history and academic context, *Shangshu* research has undergone a tremendous transformation in modern times. On the one hand, constantly collating and studying of the unearthed literature, for example, inscriptions on oracle bones and Dunhuang manuscripts, gave birth to the “Xin-zheng” school in *Shangshu*. Marked by the establishment of the institute of Chinese Classics of Tsinghua university in 1925, under the guidance of Wang Guowei and Liang Qichao, many talents have been cultivated, especially Yang Junru, Wu Qichang and Gao Heng.
the other hand, the traditional school that was represented by Zhang Taiyan and Huang Kan inherited the academic tradition of the Qing Dynasty. At the same time, the “Ku-shih-pien” school represented by scholars such as Gu Jiegang, Qian Xuantong mainly focused their attention on discriminating pseudograph and examining unreliable historical materials. Geographically speaking, most studies in Anhui, Sichuan and Hunan all showed significant geographical features. Moreover, the study of Shangshu in this period also showed concern for non-humanities and social sciences.

In modern times China, the main scholars engaged in Shangshu research came from Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Anhui and Guangdong and had close teacher-student relations between them. Especially the “Tsinghua University School” and the “Beijing University School” were the most prominent. The characteristic of the former based on Wang Guowei, Liang Qichao, Yang Junru from the Tsinghua Chinese Classics Institute was to use newly unearthed documents to examine and correct Shangshu. The latter took Zhang Taiyan as a key figure. While he did not directly teach at Peking University, the student he had taught in Tokyo returned to Peking University one after another and made it became a distinctive school in modern academic history. Gu Jiegang also from the “Beijing University School” held the high banner of “historical skepticism” to suspect the reliability of historical documents and to examine pseudograph. His book, Gushibian, had a profound influence in the 20th century.

3. Shangshu Study of Traditional School Centered on Zhang Taiyan

Zhang Taiyan studied the Shangshu at an early age. However, it was in his late academic career that he focused on the study of Shangshu. In his later years, he initiated the “Zhangshi Guoxue Jiangxihui” and many of his books about Shangshu were completed during this period.

Guwen Shangshu Shiyi and Guwen Shangshu Shiyi Dingben were two works that Zhang Taiyan invested more time and energy on in his later years. Xu Shoushang recalled, “Looking back on his last lecture, it was less than ten days before his death. Guwen Shangshu Dingben, his posthumous work, was revised by himself when he was in danger. His teaching is so admirable that later generations will rarely match it.”[1] This book whose categorization is based on Guwen Shangshu of Ma Rong and Zheng Xuan in the Eastern Han Dynasty discussed the related problems from Yaodian to Lizheng.[2] by using the Dunhuang manuscripts, the stone scriptures of Han and Wei Dynasty, the Japanese ancient hand-copied book, etc. Zhang Taiyan interpreted Shangshu in a traditional textual research method. In addition, he also made extensive use of the new Santi Stone Classics to compare with Shangshu. “today, if you want to get a credible version of Guwen Shangshu, there may be no choice other than to use the Santi Stone Classics.”[3] Zhang Taiyan was a typical old text scholar. In his later years, he said that he had mastered Shangshu nine out of ten. This is due to his solid foundation of traditional Chinese language science. Compared with previous scholars, his linguistic awareness is particularly sensitive, which can make him notice what others overlook. Secondly, his Shangshu research can turn complex problems to simple messages. He clearly pointed out that “reading Shangshu should begin with Erya”. Furthermore, he instructed disciples how to study Shangshu. In addition to the ancient annotations, if you read Jingyi Shuwen, Shangshu Pianzhi and Guwen Shangshu Shiyi, you can almost understand the meaning of the book. Finally, he paid attention to Shangshu because the unearthed Santi stone Classics provided an opportunity for solving key problems of Shangshu. Therefore, Zhang Taiyan placed a high value on the words used in Shangshu. The contents discussed in his notes and letters with others are mostly related to the words of Shangshu. It cannot be denied that Zhang Taiyan still sincerely believe in Shuowen Jiezi.
instead of valuing the Inscriptions on Bones and tortoise shells and the inscriptions on ancient bronze objects in his later years.\[^4\]

_Taiyan Xiansheng Shangshu Shuo_ written by Chu Zugeng was a handout to teach his disciples in Zhang Taiyan’s later years. Although not long, but what it talks about is the core of the study of _Shangshu._

Zhang Taiyan’s _Shangshu_ study concentrated on the lecture period in Suzhou in the 1930s. During this period, he and his disciples showed great enthusiasm in studying _Shangshu._ Guided by him, his disciples dig deeply into the words of _Shangshu_ and almost all of them have published related monograph and they also can carry forward to the strength of them teacher.

4. **Shangshu Study of the Xin-zheng School Centered on Wang Guowei**

The newly unearthed ancient writing material such as Oracle-bone scripture, bronze inscriptions and some on were used by the “Xin-zheng” school. The impact of the double evidence law advocated by Wang Guowei has been far-reaching. In his book, _Yu Youren Lunshishu Zhong chengyushu_, Wang Guowei argued that “although the book of songs and Shu must be recited and be familiarized by everyone, they are the most difficult among the six arts.” He further explained why those books are difficult to read: “Firstly, we find even more mistakes and missing parts in those two books, especially in _Shangshu_. Secondly, the Ancient written language is different from today. Thirdly, even scholars of the past dynasties all liked to use idioms in their writing, but, the meaning of idiom is far different from the single word that make it up.”\[^5\]

Wang Guowei, around the 1917, wrote a book named _Guwen Shangshu Kao Shizhuan Huijiao_ (manuscript), which contains seven kinds of handwritten version of Weiguwen shangshu, including Japanese ancient manuscript, Tang Dunhuang manuscript and so on.\[^6\] Thus, Wang Guowei had already used Dunhuang manuscripts and other new materials to study the text of _Shangshu_ before Zhang Taiyan and Gu Jiegang. Wang Guowei’s research method is a generalized “double evidence law”, extensively using oracle-bone scripture, bronze inscriptions and stone scripture, conduct comprehensive research. It also explains Wang Guowei’s important influence in modern times Chinese academic history. His collected papers on _Shangshu_, which be collected in Guantangjilin made an extensive use of the newly excavated texts. These articles extensively use the newly unearthed documents to verify ancient history. Although Wang Guowei did not leave any systematic writing of _Shangshu_ study, the primary part of his academic thought was inherited and carried forward in Yang Junru’s(1930-1946) book _Shangshu Hegu_.

It should be noted that Luo Zhenyu has written _Dunhuang Shishi Shumuji Fajian zhi Yuanshi_ (1909), _Mingshashan Shishi Milu_ (1909) and so forth. It can be said that he provided Wang Guowei with important support in academic research. Liu Shipei was also a scholar who early paid close attention to the mutual verification between the newly unearthed documents and the _Shangshu_. In 1911, he wrote a series of articles for the Journal of the quintessence of Chinese culture, such as _Ligu Shangshu Kongshizhuan Xiashu Canjuan_, introduced the newly unearthed Tang manuscripts in Dunhuang, which is a guide for Wang Guowei to study Shangshu.

Yu Xingwu is the important representative personage of the “Xin-zheng” school and _Shuangjianyi Shangshu Xinzeng_ is his magnum. Under the background of the Chinese paleography, he used the oracle-bone inscription and the bronze inscriptions to examine the history recording in
books. Other scholars, such as Yang Shuda, Guo Moruo, Ding Shan and Tang lan are also the typical. Specially, Wu Chengshi and Qu Wanli focused on the rearrangement and research of Shangshu carved on stone; Wang Zhongmin, Pan Chonggui, Xu Renfu palced emphasis on Shangshu of the Dunhuang handwritten version.

The academic research of the “Xin-zheng” school embodied the academic method of attaching importance to historical materials and stressing comparing the newly unearthed literature and the handed-down documents with each other. This school whose historical chain of descent is clear and methods are mature has already became the mainstream of academic research in the 20th century.

5. Shangshu Study of the Ku-shih-pien School Centered on Gu Jiegang

Before Gu Jiegang launched the movement (a group of scholars and writers doubts the uncertainty of records of ancient classics during the New Culture Movement), the theories related to criticizing these records had quite matured, and many treatise had been formed. Under the influence of Hu Shi, Gu Jiegang determined to thoroughly clean up the misunderstanding of ancient books. “Ten Projects of Shangshu” was thought to be his representative steps in order to study Shangshu. Emphasizing theoretical construction, exploring new methods, and taking into account the scientific spirit are the distinguishing features of his examination of ancient books.

In 1921, in a book Lun Bianwei Gongzuoshu, Gu Jiegang suggested that to examine the authenticity of Shangshu, the most important things is keeping your eyes on the grammar errors in the book. In 1928, under the guidance of Gu Jiegang, He Dingsheng used Western grammatical theories to write Shangshu’s Grammar ant It’s Time, which was both widely discussed and highly praised. Gu Jiegang’s disciples Yang Xiangkui, Tan Qixiang and Shi Nianhai all have performed brilliantly. Relying on the semimonthly Yugong, the “ku-shih-pien” school published a large number of papers, which greatly advanced the research on historical facts recorded in ancient books. On the other hand, Gu Jiegang is also worthy to be referenced in annotating and sorting out the text of Shangshu. The serious of articles collected in the Shangshu Jiaoshilun was mainly annotated and checked the Jinwenshangshu. After that, Liu Qiyu followed his style to interpret the remaining chapters one by one. Liu Qiyu also wrote Shangshu Qiyuan and Chuanben Kao, Shuangshu Xueshi, Shangshu Yanjiu Yaolun, and other books, which can also be regarded as a response to “Ten Projects of Shangshu.”

The focus of the “ku-shih-pien” school is to examine the authenticity of Shangshu. Gu Jiegang once wrote Shuxubian(1933) to distinguish and analyze books such as Weikongzhuan, Zhuciyulei, Shujizhuan, Xinxueweijing Kao and other books. After this, Dai Junren wrote articles Yan Mao Guwen Shangshu Gongan, Guwne Shangshu yuancai Zai Pingyi, Guwen Shangshu Zaozhe Yanjiu and other articles, which made a concrete analysis of the disputes between Qing Dynasty scholars Yan Ruoqu and Mao Qiling about the identification of the unreliable content of Guwen Shangshu. Zhang Xitang’s book(1901-1960), Shangshu Yinlun(1958), in combing the circulation of Shangshu and authenitcating the authenticity of Shangshu also had achievement.

Gu Jiegang’s Shangshu study is for the analysis of the historical materials. His research combines the knowledge of modern disciplines, which not only provides a new perspective for the study of Shangshu, but also starts a new filed in Shangshu researching and makes it a Shangshu research in a modern sense. After the liberation, Gu jiegang’s most disciples engaged in the study of ancient history and historical geography, and became an important force in the academic research of modern China.
6. Shangshu Study and other Reginal Scholars

Scholars of the Tongcheng school all attached great importance to *Shangshu*. They research method embodied the characteristics from complexity to simplicity, and focused on interpreting classics from the aspect of the article study. So they cleverly avoided many disputes in academic history. The traditional Confucian classics annotations of the Tongcheng school is accepted by Wu Yulun, Ma Qixuan, Wu Kaisheng and others. *Shangshugu, Shangshu Yilue* have concise annotations, which are in line with literary criticisem of Tongcheng school. After that, Ma Qichang’s *Shangshu Yiguo*, Chen Yan’s *Shangshu Juyao*, Wang Shunao’s *Shangshu Shangyi* also inherited the traditional reasearch methods of Tongcheng school.

Since the late Qing Dynasty, there have been a number of scholars in Sichuan, such as Fan Taiheng, Liao Ping, Liu Shipai, Meng Wentong, Liu Xianxin and others, all of whom have published works on the study of *Shangshu*.\(^7\) Liu Yuan(1786-1855) once wrote *Shujing Hengjie* to interpret the classics based on argumentation. In order to refute Wang Mingsheng’s *Shangshu Houan*, Wang Jie(1808-1903) wrote *Shangshu Houan Bozheng* and he believed that the text of *Guwen Shangshu* in the Eastern Jin Dynasty was credible. So he delivered a strong counterblast to Yan Ruqiu and Hui Dong claims. Liao Ping’s(1852-1932) book on Shangshu included *Shangshu Jinwen Xinyi, Shangshu Datong Fanli, Shangshu Zhouli Huangdi Jiangyu Tubiao* and so on. Liu Shipai’s *Shangshu Yuanliu Kao* and Meng Wentong’s *Shangshu Chuanxie Yu Tili* also showed the research characteristics of scholars in Sichuan.

Since the late Qing Dynasty, the achievements of Hunan scholars in this field cannot be ignored. Wei Yuan(1794-1857) explored how the new text proponents in Western Han Dynasty interpret *Shangshu*, and at the same time he believed that *Guwen Shangshu* and *Shangshu Kongshizhuan* of the Eastern Jin Dynasty are pseudograph. Wang Kaiyun wrote Shangshu Jin Gu Wen Zhuan and Shangshujian. “He was good at poetry and prose but was not familiar with the study of Confucian classics.” his book *Shangshujian*“although there was some gains; there was still areas to consider.” Pi Xirui’s *Shangshu Dazhuan Jian* and *Jinwen Shangshu Kaozheng* are classics in academic history, and many predecessors have discussed them. Zeng Yunqian’s *Shangshu Zhengdu* broke through the research method of the Qian Jia school and gradually applied linguistic theories to interature interpretation. In addition, Jian Chaoliang (1851-1933) was a scholar in Guangdong. His book *Shangshu Jizhu Shushu* compiled various theories about *Shangshu* and made an important contribution to the field.

7. Conclusion

The study of *Shangshu* in modern times serves as a connecting link between the historic and the current. Each school of *Shangshu* research carried out systematic research on the basis of fully absorbing the results of the previous research. On the other hand, the modern *Shangshu* research has brought together a large number of outstanding scholars and covered many different fields and academic ideas, so that it sets a perfect example for studying other ancient documents, newly unearthed bamboo and silks documents and foreign documents.
Acknowledgement

This article is social science research project of the 13th five-year plan of Jilin provincial education department "The Study of Shang Shu in china in the first half of 20th Century(1900-1949)" Ji Jiao Ke Wen [2016] No. 571.

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