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A good son is sad if he hears the name of his father : the tabooing of names in China as a way of implementing social values

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CHAPTER NINE: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONSEQUENCES AND THE BASICS OF THE DISCIPLINE OF NAME TABOOING

So far this work has discussed at great length the general phenomenon of name tabooing through the centuries and its enormous impact on Chinese people in their history. Of course, it has had and still has an equally important impact on modern historical scholarship as well. In order to be able to use original Chinese sources, the historian needs a full awareness of this phenomenon and its implications, such as the fact that names of people, places and titles were often changed for a shorter or longer period of time because of the practice of name taboos. Knowledge of these changes will enable the historian to get more information out of the sources, so this chapter begins with a brief typology of the kind of name changes that we encounter in historical evidence. On the other hand, name taboos can usually be dated very precisely in time, because they were inspired by concrete events, such as the name of an emperor or of his relative. This means that we can also use name taboos to date texts or manuscript copies more precisely. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will be devoted to the use of name taboos in textual criticism.

9.1. Historiographical Consequences of Name Tabooing

First it is appropriate to present to the reader examples of the negative influence of tabooing for Chinese historiography. There are numerous changes of texts, facts and names: primary changes – made by an author for tabooing, and secondary changes – made by revisers, copyists and later historiographers.

The custom of name tabooing had an enormous impact on written documents. We should bear in mind that practically every author had to observe the official taboos of his time in addition to his personal taboos. Although we can find the principle that “in (reading) the (classic) books of ‘poetry and history,’ there need not be any avoidance of names, nor in writing compositions” (cf. 3.5.9) already in the *Records of Ritual (Liji)*,¹ this principle was in fact virtually forgotten and changes because of taboo names were very common. Probably only a small fraction of the most evident cases of tabooing is known until now. Usually, it is not easy to determine for sure the presence of a change caused by taboos in a given text. It is still more difficult if the method used for tabooing was the concealment of certain words.

¹ *Liji*, j. 1, p. 39b. Translation according to Legge 1968, Part III, p. 93.

We can only speculate why, for example, the great Chinese poet Du Fu 杜甫 (712–770) did not use the character *xian* 閑 even once in all of his 3000 poems and also never wrote about flowers of the crab apple tree *haitanghua* 海棠花, which were very popular in China.² If we believe Chinese historians, this could be attributed to the taboo names of the father (Xian 閑) and mother (Haitang 海棠) of Du Fu.³ Yet, there are still numerous cases considered as verified which show how important the consequences of name tabooing were for historiography. As we will discover in this chapter, because of that custom, not only new texts were written observing taboos, but also thousands of existing texts were copied with changes made to them. In that process many historical facts were modified, names and titles of people changed, and geographical names replaced. As later historiographers of subsequent dynasties tried to correct the modified texts, they often caused still more confusion, making many mistakes because of ignorance. This was the destructive impact of name tabooing.

On the other hand, taboo examples and later mistakes can be an important help for historians. We can use concrete taboo instances to reconstruct facts, determine original names and old pronunciations reveal later editions and forgeries as well as date texts more precisely. If we learn more about the tabooing of names, this will be a significant advantage we can have in researching Chinese historiography. Therefore, the discipline of name tabooing (*bihuixue* 避諱學) was established by Chen Yuan,⁴ who compiled a list of basic principles to try to understand numerous aspects of that custom. After a renewal of research in the last twenty years, this discipline is today considered an important part of Chinese historiography and applied in many other fields, such as Dunhuang studies (*dunhuangxue* 敦煌學) or Hongloulou studies (*hongxue* 紅學).⁵

9.1.1. Historiographical Changes because of Taboo

So what happened if historical names of persons or of places were written using the taboo character of an author or his time, or if such a character was discovered in an older text? They were often changed. There was, for example, a Zhen prefecture (禪州 in the Guangdong province of today) in the Southern Han Kingdom (917–971). When the *New*

² Cf. Wang Zhongyong 1992, pp. 6–12.

³ For the taboo name of Du Fu's father see *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 43. For the taboo name of Du Fu's mother see *Xianjulu*, p. 3.

⁴ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

⁵ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. III.

History of the Five Dynasties (Xin Wudaishi) was written by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) about that period, he had to observe the taboo of Emperor Renzong (Zhao Zhen 趙禎, r. 1022–1063). Therefore, he used the name of the prefecture of his time, and wrote about a fictitious Hui prefecture 惠州 of the Southern Han dynasty which did not exist at that time.⁶ Cases, like this alteration of historical facts, caused much confusion for later historiographers, and are often a problem to this day.

9.1.1.1. Change of People's Names and Titles

The names of historical persons form the largest group of words changed in historical records and documents because of taboo. Numerous examples of such changes in given names, family names, and official titles of people can be found in historical sources, composed during every period of Chinese history. Who would have known that a certain Kuai Tong 蒯通 from the *Book of Han (Hanshu)* was, in fact, Kuai Che 蒯徹 (3–2 c. BC), whose name became later the taboo name of Emperor Wu of Han? Fortunately, the case was explained later by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645).⁷ It is also impossible (without research or advice) to recognize that Wei Yao 韋曜 from the *Records of the Three Kingdoms (Sanguozhi)*⁸ means Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204–273), tabooed because of the name of the father of Emperor Wu of Jin (Sima Zhao 司馬昭, 211–265). Wei Yanquan 魏彥泉 from *The Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu)*⁹ was, in fact, Wei Yanyuan 魏彥淵 (6–7 c.), tabooed because of the name of Emperor Gaozu of Tang, who lived long after him. The real name of a Li Zun 李遵, quoted as such in the *Songshi*¹⁰ was Li Zunxu 李遵勗 (988–1038), tabooed because of the name Xu 頊 of the Emperor Shenzong of Song (r. 1067–1085). Many further examples of such changes can be derived from the sources.¹¹

Changes similar to those in given names of people of the past were also made in their family names. Therefore, Shang Zhongmao 商仲茂 and Shang Fan 商璠 from the *Songshi*,¹² should be written Yin Zhongmao 殷仲茂 and Yin Fan 殷璠 (*yin* was the taboo of

⁶ Cf. *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 60, p. 12b; *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 112, p. 1b.

⁷ *Hanshu*, j. 45, p. 1a. For Kuai Tong see Loewe 2000, pp. 212–213.

⁸ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 20, p. 6a. For Wei Zhao see de Crespigny 2007, p. 859.

⁹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 193, p. 5b. Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 38.

¹⁰ *Songshi*, j. 205, p. 5b

¹¹ For further examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 37–40.

¹² *Songshi*, j. 204, p. 6b; j. 208, p. 2b.

the father of Taizu of Song).¹³ And the strange Yanzi 嚴子 from the *Book of Han* (*Hanshu*)¹⁴ was, in fact, the well known Zhuangzi, whose name was changed because of the taboo name of Emperor Ming of Han.¹⁵

Official titles of people in the past, their functions, posthumous names and Era names of emperors were changed in written sources if they contained a taboo character. Among numerous instances,¹⁶ it is worth mentioning a case from the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*), in which the original title Secretariat Supervisor (*zhongshujian* 中書監)¹⁷ of Xun Xu 荀勗 (d. 289), used in the Jin dynasty, was recorded as *bishujian* 祕書監, because of a taboo of the Sui dynasty.¹⁸ In another case, Zhang Chengye 張承業 (846–922) was granted the posthumous name Zhenxian 貞憲, as recorded in the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*).¹⁹ But a later source on the same period from the Song, the *New History of the Five Dynasties* (*Xin Wudaishi*) noted his name differently, as Zhengxian 正憲, because this time they had to taboo the name of Emperor Renzong of Song (r. 1022–1063).²⁰ We also have to know that such unusual Era names as Chong'an 崇安,²¹ Mingqing 明慶,²² or Yongchong 永崇,²³ are in fact the familiar Era names of Long'an 隆安 (397–402), Xianqing 顯慶 (656–661), and Yonglong 永隆 (680–681), changed by later historiographers because of taboos of later dynasties.

9.1.1.2. Change of Geographical Names and those of Former Books

The tabooing of names affected, of course, not only names and titles of persons of the past, but also many other historical terms, which were therefore modified, and later confused or forgotten. Probably the greater part of these words were former toponyms containing characters which became tabooed later. This was, for example, the case from the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*), where it was said that the homeland of a scholar Zhang

¹³ The name Yin Fan is written in such way in *Songshi*, j. 209, p. 2b.

¹⁴ *Hanshu*, j. 100 shang, p. 5b.

¹⁵ Cf. also Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 36–37.

¹⁶ Numerous instances can be found in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 41–43 and 47–49.

¹⁷ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 193.

¹⁸ *Beishi*, j. 72, p. 4b (taboo of the father of the Emperor Wen).

¹⁹ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 72, p. 3a.

²⁰ *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 38, p. 2a.

²¹ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 46, p. 22a.

²² *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 30, p. 24a.

²³ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 76, p. 11a.

Zhan 張湛 was Shenquan 深泉.²⁴ The author of the *History of the Northern Dynasties* certainly knew that Zhang Zhan came from Yuanquan 淵泉, but had to avoid the taboo of Emperor Gaozu of Tang.²⁵ The same taboo character *yuan* 淵 was the reason that the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*, composed in 940–945) declared that Linqing county 臨清縣 was called Qingquan 清泉 in the Han time.²⁶ As known today, the original name of the county in the Han times was Qingyuan 清淵. It was called Linqing between 330 and 497 AD, then was divided in two – Qinyuan and Linqing – and finally became one Linqing county in the Tang period.²⁷

There are titles of former books that were changed because of later taboos. Therefore, the reader need not be puzzled to see quotations from the strange *Sun and Autumn Annals* (*Yangqiu* 陽秋) in the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*).²⁸ It was really just the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), changed because of the taboo of Empress Zheng Achun 鄭阿春 (about 290–326) of the Jin dynasty. Such examples can be found also in other periods. *Longkan shoujian* 龍龕手鑑, mentioned in the *Songshi*,²⁹ is in fact *Longkan shoujing* 龍龕手鏡, changed for tabooing the homonym of the name of the grandfather Jing 敬 of Emperor Taizu from the Song dynasty.³⁰

Modification of texts also affected the Five Classics as shown by the example of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) mentioned above. The same was also done with other canonical texts even if they were written or engraved in stone. While it is true that the principle of not tabooing the classics was often alluded to, and that characters in these works were often (especially in the Song dynasty) tabooed by just omitting a stroke, there are still many cases in which certain quotations were altered because of taboo. Examples given by Chen Yuan show that e.g. the character *bang* 邦 was changed to *guo* 國 in fragments of the *Classic of Documents* (*Shangshu*) of the Han stone classics, and the character *shi* 世 in the quotation from the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shijing*) was replaced by *dai* 代 in the *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu*).³¹

²⁴ *Beishi*, j. 34, p. 8a.

²⁵ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 582.

²⁶ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 39, p. 14b.

²⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 45.

²⁸ *Jinshu*, j. 88, p. 4b.

²⁹ *Songshi*, j. 202, p. 16b.

³⁰ Further examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 46–47.

³¹ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 20.

9.1.2. Problems and Mistakes of Later Historiographers and Copyists

Historiographical changes made because of taboo caused many difficulties for copyists and historiographers of later periods, and often resulted in mistakes. Copyists created errors as they tried to repair texts changed because of taboo, and historiographers sometimes drew the wrong conclusions and were confused due to cases of taboo observance. Their mistakes became fixed in the texts and consequently became a problem for modern scholars.

9.1.2.1. Mistakes Caused by Various Methods of Tabooing

Different problems can be identified corresponding to various methods used for tabooing. We can take, for example, the case of tabooing with the help of a substitute character: There was a book called the (*Zhenyuan*) *Report to the Throne about Imperial Orders and Edicts* (*Zhenyuan zhichi shuzou* 貞元制敕書奏, written at the end of the Tang period), which was recorded as *Zhengyuan zhichi shuzou* 正元制敕書奏 in the *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目³² (composed about 1031–1041), because of the taboo of Emperor Renzong. When historiographers compiled the Encyclopedia *Tongzhi* 通志 about 120 years later (published in 1161), they apparently did not understand this substitution and copied the title with an additional mistake as *Wangyuan zhichi shuzou* 王元制敕書奏.³³

Another method of tabooing as well as source of errors in identification was the omission of strokes. There is, for example, the work *Treasured-up Explanations of the Book of the Han* (*Hanshu shaoxun* 漢書紹訓), written by Yao Ting 姚珽 (641–714),³⁴ mentioned in the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*). His name was written (or perhaps rewritten) without the last stroke because of the taboo of the great grandfather Ting 珽 of Emperor Taizu of Song, in the Song and Ming editions.³⁵ Compilers of the Qing edition read this “deviant” character as *ban* 班.³⁶ In that way, the name of the author was changed to Yao Ban 姚班, and was adopted as such in other works.³⁷

If a name was concealed because of a taboo, and substituted by an empty place or a universal character – such as an empty frame □, and the characters *mou* 某 (a certain...) or *hui* 諱 (taboo), this could generate confusion, too. There is in the *Book of the Southern Qi*

³² *Chongwen zongmu*, j. 5, p. 327.

³³ *Tongzhi*, j. 70, p. 826.

³⁴ For Yao Ting see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1799.

³⁵ *Jiu Tangshu* (b), j. 89 („Liezhuàn”, j. 39), p. 15a.

³⁶ *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 89, p. 13b.

³⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 52.

(*Nan Qishu*) a note about general Xiao hui 蕭諱, where the given name was tabooed.³⁸ We are told in an explanation in the *Sibu beiyao* edition of that work that his full name was Xiao Luan 蕭鸞 (i.e., Emperor Ming of the Southern Qi dynasty, r. 494–498).³⁹ But this attribution was false. In fact, the name of the general was Xiao Shunzhi 蕭順之, father of Emperor Wu of the Southern Liang dynasty (502–557).⁴⁰ The confusion was caused by the taboo character. The blank place left because of taboo could also be overlooked or ignored when copying.⁴¹

Still another kind of confusion could be generated by annotations made in texts to explain taboo. There was, for instance, the now-lost work of Sun Sheng 孫盛 (302–373)⁴² called *Jin Yangqiu* 晉陽秋 – a title given instead of *Jin Chunqiu* 晉春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of the Jin*) in order to avoid the taboo of Empress Zheng Achun (see 5.3).⁴³ But in the collection of Chinese poetry entitled *Selected Literature* (*Wenxuan* 文選, compiled around 520), and later in the *Songshi*, we find it written as *Jin Yang Chunqiu* 晉陽春秋.⁴⁴ Chen Yuan presumes correctly that the character *chun* 春 was noted down in order to signalize the originally intended title, and was then reinserted into the main text by copyists without eliminating the taboo character *yang* 陽.⁴⁵

9.1.2.2. Names and Titles Lost or Falsely Identified

The ignorance and inaccuracies of historiographers and copyists, when confronted with taboo instances of the past, has caused much confusion and damage. Additionally, they had to observe their own taboos which brought about even more problems. Numerous cases are known in which the names of persons, places or books have been lost, or they appear with two different names.

It is practically impossible to understand why, according to the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜, geographical names such as Changyue 嘗岳 or Changzhou 嘗州 were changed to Zhenyue 鎮岳 and Zhenzhou 鎮州 because of the taboo of Emperor Muzong of Tang (r.

³⁸ *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 24, p. 6a.

³⁹ *Nan Qishu*, j. 24, p. 3a. For Xiao Luan see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 702.

⁴⁰ This can be also proved by cross-checking with the *Songshu*, j. 74, p. 16a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 54.

⁴¹ See examples of such changes in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 54–56.

⁴² For Sun Sheng see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 775.

⁴³ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 24, p. 389.

⁴⁴ *Wenxuan*, j. 38, p. 838; *Songshi*, j. 203, p. 2a.

⁴⁵ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 57.

821-824), which was Heng 恆.⁴⁶ Only after cumbersome deduction can we recognize that the original names of these places in the beginning of the Tang period were Hengyue 恆岳 and Hengzhou 恆州 and thus they would have been changed in the time of the Emperor Muzong to Zhenyue and Zhenzhou. Unfortunately, at the time when the *Cefu yuangui* was compiled (1013 AD), the character *heng* 恆 was once more taboo and was replaced by *chang* 常. Therefore, the names of the Tang period were written as Changyue 常岳 and Changzhou 常州, in order to taboo the name of Zhenzong of Song (r. 997–1022). When a new printed edition was prepared at the end of the Ming period, this character *chang* 常 also had to be avoided as the taboo of Emperor Taichang (r. 1620), and was replaced by *chang* 嘗. In this way, original names of places, repeatedly rewritten because of subsequent taboos, were finally lost and can only be restored with great difficulty today.⁴⁷

Different cases are also known in texts where the same person is referred to by different names in different works, or even in the same book, because of the consequences of taboo. Such differences are caused by local (not complete) restitutions of taboo characters by later copyists. We can see, for example, two names: Zhao Shi 趙世⁴⁸ and Zhao Dai 趙代⁴⁹ in the same *Book of the Later Han (Hou Hanshu)*. The taboo character *shi* 世 was probably changed to *dai* 代 in the beginning of the Tang dynasty, when the *Book of Later Han* was commented on. And only in the first fragment was it corrected by later revisers.⁵⁰ In the example from the *Book of the Sui (Suishu)*, there are two different names for the same man: Xu Yemin 徐野民 and Xu Guang 徐廣.⁵¹ The original name was Xu Guang (352–425).⁵² When the taboo name Guang 廣 of the Emperor Yangdi (r. 605–617) of Sui was avoided, his name was changed to his courtesy name, Yemin. When the character *min* 民 also became taboo as the name of the Emperor Taizong of Tang (r. 627–649), this courtesy name was changed once more to Yeren 徐野人.⁵³

As consequence of these various changes related to taboo, different names, persons, places and books have been mixed and confused. One of many examples of such mistakes can be found, for example, in the work *Collection from the Pavilion of Book Exposition*

⁴⁶ *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 13a. Note that the last stroke is omitted in the character *zhen* 鎮.

⁴⁷ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 71. See other examples of such cases in Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 68–71.

⁴⁸ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 4, p. 10a.

⁴⁹ *Hou Hanshu*, j. 117, p. 10b. For Zhao Dai see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1626.

⁵⁰ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 61.

⁵¹ *Suishu*, j. 33, p. 1a; j. 32, p. 8a;

⁵² For Xu Guang see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1925.

⁵³ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 63. More examples see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 57–64.

(*Pushu tingji* 曝書亭集) of Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709).⁵⁴ He wrote in a passage on the work *Extended Description of Stone Inscriptions* (*Shike puxu* 石刻鋪敘) about its author, Zeng Hongfu 曾宏父, from the time of Southern Song, who – according to him – was also Administrative Clerk (*zhishi* 知事)⁵⁵ of Taizhou. Moreover, he explained that the original given name of Zeng was Dun 惇, and was changed to his courtesy name Hongfu 宏父 because of the taboo of the Emperor Guangzong of Song (r. 1189–1194).⁵⁶ In fact, there were two persons: the Administrative Clerk of Taizhou Zeng Dun with the courtesy name Hongfu, and the author Zeng Hongfu with the courtesy name Youqing 幼卿. Zhu Yizun’s misunderstanding was caused by ignorance in the discipline of taboo observance.⁵⁷

As we can see, the custom of tabooing of names has had many historiographical consequences. Numerous changes in texts were caused by the observance of taboo. Numerous additional mistakes were made by revisers and historians trying to recover the original text.

9.2. Basics and Implementation of the Discipline of Name Tabooing

After the impact of name tabooing on the lives of people (see 8), and historiographical consequences (9.1), the reader can surely understand how dangerous ignorance in the field of the tabooing of names can be, and how important it is to possess knowledge about taboo and its principles. This is especially important for the fields of historiography and textual criticism. Acquisition of the basics of name tabooing is really an essential and indispensable aid for research on Chinese history. Therefore, the formation of a new “discipline of name tabooing” (*bihuixue*) was proclaimed by Chen Yuan in his work *Shihui juli*, and this field was significantly developed in the last twenty years in China. Below, in a short outline, the basics, principles and utilisation of this discipline shall be summarized. With the help of the “discipline of name tabooing,” errors and confusions can be avoided and eliminated. Moreover, it can be used as a valuable aid for verification of authenticity, determination of age, uncovering of additions, omissions, changes and errors, identification of names, persons, facts and different editions, and also for analysis of old meanings and pronunciations.

⁵⁴ For Zhu Yizun see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. I, p. 575.

⁵⁵ Hucker 1985, p. 162.

⁵⁶ *Pushu tingji*, j. 43, p. 10a.

⁵⁷ Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 64–65. Further examples of such errors see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 64–67.

9.2.1. Recognition of Taboo

The fundamental problem of the “discipline of name tabooing” and the first step in this field is to determine whether or not taboo observance was applied in a concrete case or in a fragment of text. We have to remember that fragments of texts can have different stories: Taboo characters could have been avoided or not. They could have been incompletely observed (especially until the Three Kingdoms period). They could have been restored or not, and they could have been incompletely changed back (see 9.1.2).⁵⁸ In order to recognize a taboo instance, we should be aware of the methods and principles used in a concrete period.

The diagnosis of a potential taboo case should not be made hastily. We should not judge too fast whether a character was tabooed, but the presence of a taboo character should also not be, on the other hand, too quickly rejected. The general principle which should be followed is that supposed instances of taboo should not be isolated. The occurrence of only one taboo character in a text is suspicious. If there are many similar cases of taboo, the recognition of the practice of taboo can be more reliable. Furthermore, methods and principles used in a supposed example of taboo should be appropriate for the concrete period under research (for example, omission of strokes was practiced as a method of tabooing only since the 7th century AD (cf. 3.4.3)).

9.2.1.1. Problems Related to Methods of Applying Taboo

If it is assumed that tabooing was observed by a concrete method, problems related to these methods should be considered and confusions checked and avoided.

For example, in the method of omitting strokes, a presumed “taboo character” without strokes can sometimes be revealed as a lapse by chance, or a mix-up of parts of characters. Mistakes are, of course, not the same thing as taboos. Especially in texts engraved in stone during Northern and Southern Dynasties, but also in the Tang period, numerous characters are often confused, such as e.g. *xiu* 脩 and *xun* 循.⁵⁹ Lapses made in the past (e.g. in the Tang period) could have been continued later, and are not necessarily examples of name tabooing. Thus, we should take great care to distinguish taboo characters from erroneous characters.

⁵⁸ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 84-91.

⁵⁹ The *Bei Qishu*, j. 20, p. 6b used the character *xun* in the name of Xue Xunyi 薛循義. The *Beishi*, j. 53, p. 9b in the same passage has the character *xiu* (Xue Xiuyi 薛脩義, 478–554, for him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2545). The case was described in the *Nienershi kaoyi*, j. 31, p. 599.

Different parts of characters were used interchangeably, such as *cao* 艸 and *zhu* 竹, *mu* 木 and *shou* 才, *ren* 亻 and *chi* 彳, *shi* 礻 and *yi* 礻. There are cases, e.g., in stone inscriptions of Northern Wei (386–535) with characters written as 師 and 裕, or 校 in place of ordinary *shi* 師, *yu* 裕 and *jiao* 校,⁶⁰ where it seems that one stroke is missing. However, these characters are in fact not cases of observing the taboos of Sima Shi 司馬師 (d. 255, see 5.3.2), Liu Yu 劉裕 (Emperor Wu of Song, r. 420–422), and of course not of Zhu Youjiao 朱由校 (Emperor Tianqi of Ming, r. 1620–1627, see 7.2.4) but variants of commonly known forms of these characters. Besides, characters such as *xiu* 秀, *zhuang* 莊, *long* 隆, *zhi* 志 in the monuments of Han dynasty, written in a different way, were not changed because of taboo.⁶¹

Sometimes a “character with a missing stroke,” assumed to be a taboo, is in fact another character. This is so especially if more than one stroke is omitted. Thus, characters changed because of taboo can become undistinguishable from other “normal” characters. This needs special proof. We know, for example, that the last character of the name of the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang (r. 712–756) – Li Longji 李隆基 – was tabooed by omitting three strokes and was written as *qi* 其. In the edition of the *Records of Ritual (Liji)* from that time, we find the sentence “Night and day he enlarged its foundations by his deep and silent virtue” (*suye qiming youmi* 夙夜其命宥密).⁶² Here the character *qi* is the tabooed form of the character *ji*. Similarly, the character *li* 曆 was tabooed in the Qing period because of the name of the Emperor Qianlong (given name Hongli 弘曆): two *he* 禾 elements were written without the top stroke, as *mu* 木 (曆, cf. 7.3.2). But when we find similar truncated characters in the editions of the *Records of the Historian*, *Records of the Three Kingdoms* and *Book of the Southern Qi*, published during the reign of the Emperor Wanli 萬曆⁶³ (r. 1572–1620) of the Ming dynasty, they cannot be considered as taboo.⁶⁴

If a given taboo method is through substitution by words such as *hui* 諱, *mou* 某, *moujia* 某甲, or an empty spot □ – a wide range of taboo words can be presumed. Every case should be carefully re-examined, because there can be numerous men or women with

⁶⁰ Cf. texts of the Tomb Epitaph of Yuan Huan (*Yuan Huan muzhi* 元煥墓誌) and the Tomb Epitaph of Li Rui (*Lirui muzhi* 李蕤墓誌) quoted in Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 181.

⁶¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180–181. The taboo avoidance of these characters in the monuments of Han dynasty was erroneously presumed by Huang Benji 黃本驥 in his *Bihuilu* 避諱錄.

⁶² *Liji* (b), j. 15, p. 12a.

⁶³ Era name Wanli was not tabooed.

⁶⁴ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 182.

the same family name and there will therefore be different possible candidates. There are many examples of historiographers drawing erroneous conclusions. We can see, for example, in the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*) a few fragments with the name Li hui 李諱.⁶⁵ Most of them designate the grandfather of the Emperor Gaozu of Tang – Li Hu 李虎. Because of this editors of the *Jiguge* edition of *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*) hastily changed all “Li hui” instances in identical passages to Li Hu.⁶⁶ In fact, one of them designated somebody else: the father of Emperor Gaozu – Li Bing 李昺.⁶⁷

If it is assumed that the words *mou* 某 or *moujia* 某甲 could be used as a substitute for tabooed names, it should be checked if this is not a manner of writing or a rhetorical structure. This is the case when we find, for example, in the anthology *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wenxuan* 文選) by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) a sentence like “Now I send You my envoys (with such-and-such names and titles) together with a hundred lower officials” (*jīn qiān mǒuwei mǒujiā dēng lǚ zǐ bǎi bīren* 今遣某位某甲等率茲百辟人)⁶⁸ Such cases are not examples of tabooing.⁶⁹

Furthermore, if there is a character covered with ink or an empty frame □ in the inscription, it should be precisely checked to see if it is really a taboo instance. Such indications could also mark illegible characters, and do not necessarily mark taboos.

In analysing the pronunciation of taboo characters as a reason for tabooing, we should note that the homonyms of taboo characters can have a few pronunciations,⁷⁰ and only the character with the same pronunciation as a taboo character is tabooed.⁷¹ The same character with different pronunciation is not a violation of taboo. This principle is also noted explicitly in the taboo prescriptions, e.g., in the prescription from the *Pattern for Revision of Documents of the Chunxi Period* (1174–1189) (*Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式): Because of the taboo name of Emperor Guangzong of Song – Dun 惇 – the

⁶⁵ Cf., for example, *Beishi*, j. 9, p. 5b; j. 9, p. 7b.

⁶⁶ The Bainaben Edition 百衲本的 of the *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*) has “Li hui” (*Zhoushu* (b), j. 5, p. 17a). *SKQS* has already “Li Bing” (*Zhoushu*, j. 5, p. 8a).

⁶⁷ *Beishi*, j. 10, p. 5a. See Chen Yuan 1958, p. 54.

⁶⁸ *Wenxuan*, j. 36, p. 823. For translation see Zach 1935, p. 115. The fragment is not translated in Knechtges 1982.

⁶⁹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180.

⁷⁰ For the phenomenon of “broken sound characters” (*po yin zi* 破音字) or “polyphonic characters” (*duo yin zi* 多音字), where a given character has more than one reading, see Hannas 1996, p. 214; Wilkinson 2000, pp. 423–424.

⁷¹ Of course, we should first recognize the exact phonetic value of characters in the concrete historical time. It is not allowed to do this from present-day pronunciation.

character 鶉 had to be tabooed if it was pronounced as *dun* and was not tabooed in cases where it would be pronounced as *chun*.⁷²

One other issue which should be considered is that specific characters could have had an identical or similar pronunciation to taboo characters in the past. If we read that in the 9th century AD, the pronunciation of the character 戊 was changed to *wu* for observing the taboo name of an ancestor of Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠 of the Later Liang dynasty – Maolin 茂琳 (852–912)⁷³ – we understand that the change was made because the pronunciation of the character 戊 at that time was *mou*,⁷⁴ and was a homonym of the taboo name Mao 茂.⁷⁵ The pronunciation of today can be quite different. The same was the case with the tabooing of the character 許, which is pronounced today as *xu*. It is quite difficult, for example, to understand why the town Xushi 許市 was tabooed because of the taboo name Hu 虎 (grandfather of Gaozu of Tang), if we do not know that its former pronunciation was *hu*.⁷⁶

If there is an assumption that one character of a composite name was cut because of a taboo, we should check it and distinguish it from the old stylistic custom of writing only one character of a name. For example, in the *Youtongfu* 幽通賦 of Ban Gu (32–92 AD) we can find the following sentence: “Ju defied Heaven and destroyed the dynasty” (*Ju tao tian er min Xia xi* 巨滔天而泯夏兮).⁷⁷ While there is only one character *ju* 巨 instead of the courtesy name of Wang Mang 王莽 (emperor of the short-lived Xin dynasty, r. 9–23 AD) – Jujun 巨君, it is still not a taboo instance, only a stylistic custom.⁷⁸

Finally, if the method of replacing characters is assumed, it should be considered that in old writings, especially in popular texts, homophone characters were often used interchangeably, because texts were read aloud, not silently, and are thus not necessarily chosen on account of taboo.⁷⁹

⁷² *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 338.

⁷³ *Shiqishi shangque*, j. 94, p. 1067.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 339.

⁷⁵ Also pronounced at that time as *mou* (Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 953–954).

⁷⁶ Cf. *Kangxi zidian*, p. 1079; Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 184.

⁷⁷ Cf. *Wenxuan*, j. 14, p. 253; For translation see Knechtges 1982, Vol. 3, p. 83.

⁷⁸ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 184.

⁷⁹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 180.

9.2.1.2. Other Problems in Recognizing Taboo

During the process of identifying taboos, various other problems and contradictions can be encountered. Texts, originally written observing contemporary taboos, were often “detabooed” by later dynasties. But such editorial changes were often done incompletely, or were affected by the current dynasty’s own taboo practices. In this way, the original text became deformed, facts were changed and the reconstruction of tabooing practice becomes very difficult or even impossible.

It is confusing to discover, for example, in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*) these two characters in one sentence: *yao* 曜 (the standard equivalent character of *zhao* 昭 at the time) followed almost immediately by the taboo character *zhao* itself.⁸⁰ We may be uncertain as to whether the text is tabooed or not, unless we assume that later editors changed the second character back, but obviously forgot to replace the first one.

The practice of changing back (or trying to reconstruct) tabooed characters probably started in the Jin dynasty and flourished especially in the Tang period.⁸¹ If the original text was copied in successive epochs, the relevant taboos of that period were observed, which sometimes deformed the text in another way. But the opposite situation was also possible and should be considered: compilers could have left the taboo characters of the past, or even taboo characters of their own dynasty, if they were a part of a quotation, out of respect, especially for classic texts. It can be confusing, particularly if the quotation is not marked.

For example, the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*) mentions a “grandson of the Commander-in-chief Wang Yifu” (*taiwei Wang Yifu waisun* 太尉王夷甫外孫).⁸² In this case, the given name of Wang Yan 王衍 (256–311) was tabooed and changed to his courtesy name Wang Yifu 王夷甫. We could ask why the author of the *Book of the Jin* (*Jinshu*), Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648) of the Tang period, tabooed the given name of the Emperor Cheng of Jin (r. 325–342) – Yan 衍. Fortunately, we know that the author/compiler of the *Book of the Jin* used an old chronicle of that time, where the courtesy name was used intentionally in order to observe a taboo. He left the tabooed form in the text apparently out of the respect for the original.⁸³

⁸⁰ *Sanguozhi*, “Wuzhi”, j. 8, p. 10b.

⁸¹ Cf. Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 187.

⁸² *Jinshu*, j. 32, p. 2b.

⁸³ *Nianershi kaoyi*, j. 21, p. 413.

Every text with taboo instances should be read in consideration of its historical context and the prevailing tradition of the period. We know, for example, that the tabooing practice in the Qin and Han periods was relatively inconsistent and partial. In the *Records of the Historian*, *Book of Han* and *Book of Later Han*, taboo characters were sometimes avoided and sometimes not (see 4.4.2 and 5.1.2.1). In the Three Kingdoms period (for example in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms*), however, titles were often used instead of a name. Both Sima Yi 司馬懿 and Sima Zhao 司馬昭 are called King (*wang* 王),⁸⁴ and only once the name of Sima Yi was used directly.⁸⁵ In the latter case, the taboo character was used because the text was a direct quotation of the Emperor's words, and therefore could not be changed.⁸⁶

Finally, we should also know that a taboo character could be left untabooed, if the composition of the text did not allow such a change. There is, for example, the character *heng* 恒 left untabooed in the *Records of the Historian* in the phrase “in order to establish constant procedures” (*yili hengchang* 以立恒常).⁸⁷ Normally this character *heng* should have been changed to *chang* 常, but then the expression *changchang* 常常 would not have suited stylistic rules. Therefore, it was left unchanged.⁸⁸

9.2.2. The Verification of the Authenticity of Texts

Changes caused by name tabooing can be used in order to scrutinize the authenticity of a text, and knowledge about these processes may serve to correct former erroneous opinions. It was used, for example, by Zhou Guangye in order to check and criticize the historical analysis of Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019–1079) concerning an old tile. The latter described and analyzed a tile found in the region of what is today Xi'an. He wrote in his *Chang'an zhi* 長安志 that the character *chu* 楚 engraved in it indicated that the tile came from the Qin period. He thought the character *chu* was used to distinguish palaces of different regions of the Qin state. But Zhou Guangye analyzed the taboo system of Qin and recognized that it was impossible in that period to use openly this particular taboo character because its appearance in the given name Zichu of the father of the First Emperor (see 4.4.1). Therefore, he concluded that the tile was not made in the Qin time, but came from the

⁸⁴ Cf., for example, *Sanguozhi*, “Weishu”, j. 3, p. 9b: “Sima Prince Xuan” (*Sima Xuanwang* 司馬宣王).

⁸⁵ *Sanguozhi*, “Weishu”, j. 3, p. 16b.

⁸⁶ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 190.

⁸⁷ *Shiji*, j. 6, p. 22a. For translation see Watson 1993, p. 60.

⁸⁸ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 190.

(early) Han period, when taboos of the Qin were no longer observed.⁸⁹ He used the tabooing of name in order to verify the authenticity of the tile.

A similar example is described in the *Tingshi* 程史 by Yue Ke 岳珂 (ca.1183–1243),⁹⁰ in the story of a cither called Bingqing (*bingqing guqin* 冰清古琴). It was presumed to have been carved in 768 and repaired in the 11th year of the period Zhenyuan 貞元 (795), according to the inscription made on the lute. The forgery would have remained undiscovered were it not for a small detail, detected by Yue Ke: the character *zhen* 貞 was written without the last stroke, which was a clear example of tabooing with respect to the Emperor Renzong of Song (r. 1022–1063). Because of that, he concluded that the inscription on the cither had to have been made during his rule or later.⁹¹

If we analyze taboo characters in order to determine forgery or the authenticity of a text, it is also important to be aware of some additional problems. One of them is a potential change made in the text by later generations. Thus we find, for example, in the text of the *Book of the Liang* (*Liangshu*), composed in 628–635, the character *dai* 代 instead of *shi* 世, which was for tabooing the given name of the Emperor Taizong (r. 627–649).⁹² If we presume that his name probably became a real taboo only after his death (as discussed in 6.2.4), the copy from which the extant edition of this text was made must postdate the year 649.⁹³

In the analysis of a text, we should avoid overly hasty judgments as to whether the text is an original or an erroneous copy. There are many examples in which an alleged equivalent of taboo characters can be explained as an “innocent” one. For example, the first character of the name of the Chinese goddess of the moon Chang’e 嫦娥 has been interpreted as changed from original *heng* 姮 (hence the name Heng’e 姮娥 can be seen),⁹⁴ because of the taboo (Heng 恒) of the Emperor Wen of Han. Only the Ming scholar Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488–1559) realized in his *Danqian zonglu* 丹鉛總錄 that the original name of woman (and later goddess) was Changyi 常儀.⁹⁵ The characters *yi* 儀 and *e* 娥 were

⁸⁹ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 5, p. 86.

⁹⁰ For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1502.

⁹¹ *Tingshi*, j. 13, pp. 10a–11b. For further examples of the use of name tabooing for verification of texts’ authenticity see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 120–125.

⁹² *Liangshu*, j. 35, p. 1b.

⁹³ *Nianershi kaoyi*, j. 26, p. 516.

⁹⁴ Cf., for example, *Dushu conglu*, j. 16, p. 5b. For Heng E see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1797.

⁹⁵ For Chang Yi see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2150.

apparently homonyms in the past⁹⁶ and it is very possible that the name we have today (Chang'e 嫦娥) is just a mistaken notation of Changyi, later perpetuated, and not a case of taboo.⁹⁷

Changes in toponyms can have many reasons and are not necessarily related to the tabooing of names. Some instances of name tabooing are connected with a concrete time and their observance has concrete limits. We have to think, for example, about the end of the tabooing period for distant ancestors and after abdication. Especially during the Song dynasty, there are examples in which the names of distant rulers were temporally not avoided and later tabooed again (e.g. the period of the Emperor Zhezong, see 6.4.6). We should also be cautious if there are examples of a continuation of tabooing after the end of a dynasty, bearing in mind that few dynasties shared the same taboo (see 10.4.2).

9.2.3. Determining the Age of a Text

Analysis of examples of name tabooing in the text of stele inscriptions or old works can also help in dating this text. Often, it is possible to establish the concrete period and sometimes even to pinpoint the specific month. Using this method in order to date a text was already done during the Song period, as indicated in the examples of Song Minqiu (although he was later corrected by Zhong Guangye) or Yue Ke (discussed in 9.2.2).

However, the first systematic application of numerous taboo cases to this aim can most probably be seen first in the works of the scholar Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804).⁹⁸ He analyzed, for example, stone monuments of the Tang and Jin dynasties, and found an inscription about the poem *Shilin ting shi* 石林亭詩 by Liu Chang 劉敞 (1019–1068). According to the inscription, it was erected on the 15th day of the 12th month of the 7th year Jiayou 嘉祐 (i.e. January 20, 1063). But Qian Daxin noticed that the title of Su Shi 蘇軾 mentioned in the text was *qianshu* 簽書,⁹⁹ and not the usually used *qianshu* 簽署. It means that the character *shu* 署, similar in structure and homophonous (present-day third tone) with the taboo name of Emperor Yingzong (Shu 曙), was avoided in the inscription. The time of creation of this inscription could therefore be dated at the 3rd month of the next year (March–April 1064, the time of Yingzong's accession) or even later.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 2150.

⁹⁷ *Danqian zonglu*, j. 13, p. 5a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 7, p. 103. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 148.

⁹⁸ For him see *Zhongguo lidai renming da cidian* 1999, Vol. II, p. 1911.

⁹⁹ Hucker 1985, p. 154.

¹⁰⁰ *Qian Yantang jinshiwen bawei*, j. 13 according to Chen Yuan 1958, p. 113.

Similarly, we can deduce the period when the work *Baoke leibian* 寶刻類編, being a list of stone inscriptions, is most likely to have been published/composed. Lacking any clues as to its author, we can only presume that if the content of the list ends in the Five Dynasties time, it should be a work from the Song period. We can determine the time more precisely, though, if we apply our knowledge of name tabooing. We find namely there the geographical term Ruizhou 瑞州 (in Jiangnan),¹⁰¹ and we know that only in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Lizong 理宗 of Song (r. 1224–1264) was the name of Yunzhou 筠州 changed to Ruizhou 瑞州, because of the homophone of his taboo name Yun 昀 (both present-day second tone). Therefore, the list was probably compiled after 1224.¹⁰²

9.2.4. Identification of a Person

One more useful application of precise knowledge about the tabooing of name is the identification of persons. As it was mentioned above, many names of individuals were changed because of taboo observances, and therefore one person could have been recorded with various names. However, we are able to identify a person if we know the principles of tabooing. There are, for example, two names recorded in different sources: Qian Rang 錢讓 mentioned in the *Old Family Genealogy of the Qian* (*Qianshi jiupu* 錢氏舊譜) and Qian Xun 錢遜 in the *Tongzhi* 通志 of Zheng Qiao 鄭樵 (1104–1162).¹⁰³ We know that they both were Governor of Guangling 廣陵 in the Eastern Han time. But only by considering name tabooing will we become aware of the fact that in the time of Zheng Qiao the name of the great-great-grandfather of Emperor Gaozong of Song (who reigned 1127–1162) – Zhao Yunrang 趙允讓 (995–1059) – was taboo. Furthermore one of the methods of its avoidance was to replace the character *rang* 讓 with the character *xun* 遜.¹⁰⁴ After that, it is plausible that there was only one historical person called Qian Rang in the first century AD whose name was changed to Qian Xun during the Southern Song.¹⁰⁵

We read the story of a certain Zhang Huan 張歡 in the *Book of the Zhou* (*Zhoushu*), who married a sister of Emperor Xiaowu of Northern Wei (r. 499–515) and was later executed by him.¹⁰⁶ After that we read the story of Zhang Qiong 張瓊 in the *History of the*

¹⁰¹ *Baoke leibian*, j. 5, p. 1b.

¹⁰² *Qian Yantang ji*, j. 25, p. 1a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 112.

¹⁰³ *Tongzhi*, j. 28, p. 468.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 358.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Shijia zhai yangxin lu*, j. 19, p. 277.

¹⁰⁶ *Zhoushu*, j. 9, p. 1b.

Northern Dynasties (Beishi) that his son Zhang Xin 張欣 was married to the Princess of Wei and subsequently injured by Emperor Xiaowu.¹⁰⁷ The same story is repeated in the *Book of the Northern Qi (Bei Qishu)*, this time referring to Zhang Xin 張忻.¹⁰⁸ Thus, we have the same story for three different names. Knowing from the discipline of name tabooing that the character *huan* 歡 was changed to *xin* 欣 or *xin* 忻 in the Northern Qi period, because of the taboo name of the father of Emperor Wenxuan (r. 550–559) – Gao Huan 高歡. Thus, we can identify all of these three names as those of one person – Zhang Huan, modified because of tabooing.¹⁰⁹

9.2.5. Identification of an Edition

Taboo characters can help us to distinguish and determine various editions of a work. For that, we need to check the age and authenticity of every edition. The verification of the authenticity of an edition is different from that of the authenticity of the work itself. We do not need to check the relation of a text to a certain author, but only to the copyist or engraver who made this edition.

Let us take a look at the case described by Fan Zhixin about an edition of the *Wudu wencui* 吳都文粹 compiled by Zheng Huchen 鄭虎臣 in the Song period.¹¹⁰ For a long time, the extant version was considered a copy from the time of Emperor Kangxi (r. 1661–1722). Only after discovering that all *li* 曆 characters were written without the lower part (as *li* 麻), could the edition be identified as the much later *Muhuozi* edition (*muhuozi ben* 木活字本), made in the period of the Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735–1796), whose given name Hongli 弘曆 was taboo.

If we analyze a text, it is also possible to identify on the basis of a firm knowledge of taboo customs, fragments from older and newer editions integrated into the same text. Furthermore, fragments of text which were added later and changes made in printing can be thus distinguished. There are, for example, two almost identical editions of the *Hengyun shanren mingshi liezhuangao* 橫雲山人明史列傳稿 of Wang Hongxu 王鴻緒 (1645–1723) from the beginning of the Qing dynasty, done in 1714 and 1723. The only difference between them is the character *shen* 慎 in the expression *jingshentang* 敬慎堂 written on the

¹⁰⁷ *Beishi*, j. 53, p. 7ab.

¹⁰⁸ *Bei Qishu*, j. 20, p. 1a.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 114.

¹¹⁰ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 223.

cover page. In the first edition, the character is unchanged and in the second the last stroke is omitted. It is an explicit case of tabooing the name of Emperor Yongzheng – Yinzhen 胤禛 (r. 1722–1735), which helps to place the second edition during the time of his reign.¹¹¹

However, the dating of an edition with the help of taboo studies needs special attention. We should avoid focusing on isolated evidence of taboo, and rather take all characteristics of the text and period into account. The original publication of a concrete edition should be distinguished from later additions. It means that we have to determine the original's authenticity first. We should also keep in mind that additions may, but do not necessarily have to observe the taboos of the original, e.g. additions to texts of Song from the Yuan times usually do not observe taboos of Song, but those from the Ming period often preserved old Song taboo.¹¹²

Furthermore, taboo characters can be very inconsistently tabooed or untabooed in privately published books (while official books were subject to a higher degree of state control).¹¹³ In such cases, we cannot rely on taboo custom only. The span of the real taboo period for concrete characters (ruling periods of specific emperors) should be determined. Therefore, the presence of taboo characters of the preceding and following emperors should be checked. Especially in texts of the Tang and Song periods, an analysis of taboos of distant ancestors can help, because the end of tabooing a distant ancestor marked the starting point of the taboo period for a new emperor.¹¹⁴

9.2.6. Analysis of Old Meanings and Pronunciations

Name tabooing is intricately connected with the form, sound and meaning of characters. Therefore, the analysis of works from this perspective can reveal new material for explaining old pronunciations, which is important for philological studies.¹¹⁵

If we read, for example, the biography of Wei Gao 韋皋 in the *New Book of Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*), we hear about his brother Yu 聿, who was appointed to the office of Assistant in the Palace Library (*bishulang* 秘書郎).¹¹⁶ As the title contained a homonym of the taboo name of his father, he could not accept it and later his appointment was

¹¹¹ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 226.

¹¹² Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 234.

¹¹³ About literary censorship in China see Guy 1987; Chan Hok-Lam 1995, pp. 1-60. Cf. also 7.3.

¹¹⁴ Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 235.

¹¹⁵ With the reconstruction of previous pronunciation in Chinese one has, of course, to be very cautious.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 377.

changed.¹¹⁷ Yet, we know from analysis of Chen Yuan that the name of his father was written as the character 賁,¹¹⁸ which is nowadays usually pronounced also as *ben* or *fen*. But in the period of Tang, the pronunciation of that character must have been in all likelihood similar to *bi*,¹¹⁹ and was in that way the homonym of *bi/mi* 秘. This old pronunciation can here be determined with the help of name tabooing.¹²⁰

Similarly, in the *Old Book of Tang (Jiu Tangshu)* we can read about a certain Xiao Fu 蕭復 who was nominated to the office of “General Administrator” (*tongjun zhangshi* 統軍長史).¹²¹ This new title of office was created by a special imperial decree in order to avoid the name Heng 衡 of his father.¹²² We do not know the former name of this office, but can presume that it was the Army Aide, usually pronounced as *hang/xingjun changshi* 行軍長史.¹²³ In the Tang period, the character 行 was apparently pronounced as *heng*, and was therefore the homophone of 衡 (cf. 8.1.3).¹²⁴

9.2.7. Textual Criticism and Exposure of Additions, Omissions, Changes and Errors

Knowledge about the tabooing of names and its principles is of invaluable help for the analysis of a text, if we want to identify changes made in a work. Practice of taboo observance caused many intentional and unconscious modifications in texts such as erroneous, superfluous, omitted and changed characters. They can be exposed if we compare the text with its original. Therefore, the discipline of name tabooing is an important ancillary science of Chinese textual criticism.

Practically, we can compare taboo observances on the level of singular characters, sentences or even chapters. If we analyze a text, then erroneous, omitted or added characters can be determined and corrected. Such is the case of the title *shu shiyushi* 書侍御史 used consistently in the *History of the Northern Dynasties (Beishi)*.¹²⁵ Only in one of the last chapters, the “Biography of Liu Fang 劉昉,” is the title written in its full form *zhishu*

¹¹⁷ *Xin Tangshu*, j. 158, p. 3a.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Tangwen cui*, j. 60, p. 2a.

¹¹⁹ Cf. also *Kangxi zidian*, p. 1135.

¹²⁰ Chen Yuan 1958, p. 128. For more examples of analysis of old meanings and pronunciations, see Chen Yuan 1958, p. 127-128.

¹²¹ Cf. Hucker 1985, pp. 112 and 554.

¹²² *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 125, p. 4b.

¹²³ Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 244.

¹²⁴ *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 37, p. 553.

¹²⁵ Cf., for example, *Beishi*, j. 70, p. 13b.

shiyushi 治書侍御史.¹²⁶ Originally, the author of the *History of the Northern Dynasties* observed the taboo of Emperor Gaozong's given name, Zhi 治. The additional character *zhi* in the case above seems to be an amendment by later compilers – a correction that was not made in the other occurrences of this title.

We can also compare fragments or chapters of a text in order to expose in this way deleted parts of an original text or passages inserted later, ascertain the sequence of fragments, and distinguish the original from the later version of a text. There are many cases in which a commentary was written by scholars of the past right into the main text. Later copyists did not differentiate between them and erroneously transcribed it as one text. It is often possible to reveal this type of mistake if we apply taboo principles.

For example, in a case from *Book of Later Han (Hou Hanshu)*, at the end of the biography of Guo Tai 郭太, we can find the following fragment:

When Tai had first come to Nanzhou 南州, he passed by the house of Yuan Fenggao 袁奉高, but went on without spending the night there. When he visited Shudu 叔度, however, he stayed for a number of days without leaving. Somebody asked Tai for the reason. Tai said: “The vessel of Yuan Fenggao is like an overflowing cup – though clear, it can easily be poured empty. The vessel of Shudu is wide like (water within) an embankment of a thousand *qing*.¹²⁷ Though it is clarified, it will not become clear. Though it is stirred, it will not become muddy, it is immeasurable. Soon, events confirmed his appraisal, and Tai's name became, therefore, famous in the whole empire.¹²⁸

When we compare this fragment with other parts of the biography, we discover that only here was the name Tai 太 of Guo Tai used openly – otherwise he is referred to by his courtesy name Linzong 林宗.¹²⁹ The name Linzong was used because the author of the *Book of Later Han (Hou Hanshu)* – Fan Ye – tabooed the name of his father (Tai 泰). Why not in this fragment? This case was explained by Qian Daxin in his *Nianershi kaoyi* 廿二史考異. He found out that this fragment is a quotation from the *Book of Later Han* which includes the commentary of Prince Zhanghuai (654–684). In all present editions, the passage has been interpolated into the main text, only in the Fujian edition its original form – without

¹²⁶ Cf. *Beishi*, j. 74, p. 1b. For the title *zhishu shiyushi* see Hucker 1985, p. 163.

¹²⁷ *Qing* 頃 is a unit of area equal to 6,667 hectares.

¹²⁸ Cf. *Hou Hanshu*, j. 98, p. 2ab.

¹²⁹ For example, *Hou Hanshu*, j. 98, p. 1ab.

commentary – has been preserved.¹³⁰ In that way, textual criticism reveals an inconsistency in the observance of taboo and helps us to detect a small fragment of commentary inserted by mistake into the main text. The original text can thus be restored.¹³¹

There are a few principles that should be followed if the taboo practice is used in textual criticism. Stylistic rules and specific rules of taboo observance in a specific period and work should be checked. We know, for example, that there is no avoidance of taboo from the Jin dynasty in the *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguozhi*), or that taboos of the Tang dynasty were observed in the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*), but not in the *New Book of Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*). Similarly, the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*) avoided taboo characters of emperors of the Tang dynasty, but there is no taboo of characters of the name of the Emperor Taizong (Shimin 世民). It is because two-character names were not tabooed in that time.¹³²

The original text has to be distinct from later changes in order to avoid confusions such as that in the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*), which was compiled for the *Imperial Collection of Four* (*Siku quanshu*). The compilers saw the sentence: “Shi ... yi, courtesy name Jimei, from Daijun. His original name violated the temple taboo of (the Emperor) Taizu and was therefore changed” (*Shi ... yi, zi Jimei, Daijunren ye. Benming fan Taizu miaohui, gu gai yan* 史口懿，字繼美，代郡人也。本名犯太祖廟諱，故改焉)¹³³ and it was hastily decided that the name of the Emperor Taizu of Song – Kuang 匡 – was avoided, and that the original name of the person was Kuangyi 匡懿. In fact, this part of the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* was taken from the *Zhoushilu* 周實錄 without any change, and avoided the taboo of the Emperor Taizu of Later Zhou (r. 951-954) – Wei 威.¹³⁴

In textual criticism we should make certain to refer to the original text. Otherwise, mistakes are inevitable. We can take, for example, the above mentioned case of “Xiao hui” 蕭緯 of the *Book of the Southern Qi* (*Nan Qishu*)¹³⁵, explained as Xiao Luan 蕭鸞 of Southern Qi (r. 494–498) in the *Sibu beiyao* edition (see 9.1.2.1). Only after seeing the same fragment in the *Book of the Song* (*Songshu*),¹³⁶ which contains the original text

¹³⁰ *Nianer shi kaoyi*, j. 12, p. 258.

¹³¹ For other examples, where the analysis of a text is made with help of the knowledge about the tabooing of names see Chen Yuan 1958, pp. 107-111 and 115-126.

¹³² Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 219-220.

¹³³ *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 124, p. 4a.

¹³⁴ Chen Yuan 1937, p. 58ab; Fan Zhixin 2006, p. 219-220.

¹³⁵ *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 24, p. 6a.

¹³⁶ *Songshu*, j. 74, p. 16a.

adopted by the *Book of the Southern Qi*, can we determine that the person mentioned was Xiao Shunzhi, the father of Emperor Wu of Liang.

In conclusion, the historiographical consequences of taboo custom are many, and their impact on Chinese sources has been immense. Not only were there numerous changes according to complex principles, but also mistakes and confusions in copying and reediting texts. Luckily, on the other hand, the application of knowledge about name tabooing in texts can also help us. On the basis of our knowledge about name taboos, we can verify the authenticity of a text, determine its age, identify persons and facts more exactly and distinguish additions and omissions in a text. We can also identify different editions of a given text.