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**The soldier as a sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-confucianization of the military in sixteenth-century China**  
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## Chapter 1 – The Making of *Wen* and *Wu*

### Earliest Beginnings

The Chinese twin concepts of *wen* (usually associated with the civil and culture) and *wu* (usually associated with the military and the martial) and their changing significance and meanings across Chinese history constituted the main discourse of Chinese civil-military relations for millennia. The semantics associated with them reveal much about Chinese thinking about war, the place of the military within successive Chinese polities and the cultural constructs – ideal types – against which the representatives of *wen* and *wu* were measured. The Chinese had by Ming times a long literary tradition reaching back for two millennia, and the oldest texts often had the greatest authority. In practice this meant that thought pertaining to civil and military relations ascribed to, for example, Confucius (551-479 BCE) continued to frame discussions up until the end of the imperial age in 1912. The meanings of *wen* and *wu* that will be applied throughout this dissertation are, first of all, in an *institutional* sense their designations of two different branches of government and their accompanying spheres of action and hierarchically structured institutions with associated personnel. By extension, it could thus probably also refer to “methods, institutions and policy choices” that were used to enact either *wen* or *wu*. Peter Bol ascertained at least the usage of the term *wen* in this way by the time of the Jürchen Jin (1115-1234) empire.<sup>27</sup> Second, they will also be used in a *socio-cultural* sense as identity markers, as people could be characterized by “having *wen*” or “possessing *wu*”.<sup>28</sup> These two sets of meanings, institutional and socio-cultural, are the ways Chinese themselves have used *wen* and *wu* throughout history, as I will demonstrate below in more detail. So, in order to understand the variety of meanings, interpretations and normative assessments of both terms better, it is instructive to explore the still little-researched history of the emergence and evolutions of both. There is, I argue, also a third *de-facto* layer to *wen* and *wu*, namely their associated *activities* outside of the sphere of state activity. These could be, for example, the writing of *belles-lettres* and calligraphy in the case of *wen*, and the practice of martial

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<sup>27</sup> Peter K. Bol, “Seeking Common Ground: Han Literati under Jurchen Rule,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47.2 (1987): 488-489.

<sup>28</sup> Kam Louie and Louise Edwards., “Chinese Masculinity: Theorizing *Wen* and *Wu*,” *East Asian History* 8 (1994): 139-140.

arts in the case of *wu*. Both could sometimes come into conflict with the state. In the case of *wen*, certain writings could be labelled as heterodox and persecuted by the state.<sup>29</sup> Chinese states were also at times understandably wary of the undue militarization of society outside of the state's jurisdiction. This could take the shape of the performance of martial arts in the context of illicit armed groups engaging in banditry or as part of heterodox religious movements. Proceeding from these three layers, I will weigh the importance of Confucianism in shaping this variety of meanings, interpretations and normative assessments of *wen* and *wu*, and weigh its contribution to the divergence of *wen* and *wu* during the Song. Extending the analysis of this divergence to the Ming dynasty, I will elucidate the historical context of Qi Jiguang's engagement with Neo-Confucianism in terms of institutional and socio-cultural history.

### **The Genesis of *Wen* and *Wu* as Spheres of State Activity**

Strangely, considering the importance of both concepts in Chinese thinking and discourse, research about the genesis and historical evolution of both is rare. This applies even more to *wu*, which is no doubt owing to the overwhelming interest of scholars in favour of Chinese civil culture and accomplishments as opposed to its military and martial counterpart. The most systematic treatment of both is by the Polish scholar Krzysztof Gawlikowski.<sup>30</sup> In addition to him, scholars such as John Fairbank and Peter Bol have tried to address the changing significances of *wen* and *wu* in Chinese history.<sup>31</sup>

To understand *wen* and *wu* as concepts we have to consider the context of their origin during the long Zhou (c. 1046-256 BCE) dynasty. Most of the earliest thought dates from the Zhou dynasty and is contained within literary works. Originally the Zhou was organized along feudal

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<sup>29</sup> This happened, for example, to the sixteenth-century thinker and writer Li Zhi 李贽 (1527-1602) who criticized the state ideology of the Ming empire. See Li Zhi, *A Book to Burn & a Book to Keep (Hidden). Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Rivi Handler-Spitz, Pauline C. Lee, and Haun Saussy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), xv-xx.

<sup>30</sup> Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: Wen 文 and Wu 武 in Chinese Classical Thought (Part One)," *Annali* 47.4 (1987): 397-433; Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: Wen 文 and Wu 武 in Chinese Classical Thought (Part Two)," *Annali* 48.1 (1988): 35-62; Krzysztof Gawlikowski, "The Origins of the Martial Principle (*Wu*) Concept," *Cina* 21 (1988): 105-122.

<sup>31</sup> Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992); John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: Varieties of Chinese Military Experience," in *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, edited by Frank Kiernan Jr., John K. Fairbank, and Edward L. Dreyer. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 2-9.

lines. By the Spring- and Autumn Period (771-476 BCE) and, especially, the succeeding Warring States Period (476-221 BCE) the passing of time had diluted the significance of the ties of kinship between the suzerain and his high nobility, and the former had become a largely powerless figurehead presiding over a number of polities increasingly at-odds with each other. It is exactly in these circumstances of military and social upheaval that the first inklings of what would later be known as Chinese philosophy, appeared. The distinctive character of this philosophy is that it was almost exclusively concerned with solving the problems of political and social chaos that the Warring States had unleashed. Chinese philosophy was therefore less concerned with metaphysical and epistemological concerns, but more so with the way society and state should be organized and the role the individual should play within it. In this period that we find the genesis of such “schools” of thought as Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, Legalism and the Strategists. According to Mark Edward Lewis, only Confucianism and Mohism constituted traditions transmitted through sustained interaction between masters and their disciples, the others were created *post-facto* by grouping transmitted textual traditions together.<sup>32</sup> These philosophical traditions would play an important role in defining, interpreting and assessing *wen* and *wu*, a topic to which I will turn shortly.

Mostly predating these philosophical writings, however, was a corpus of texts collectively referred to as the “classics” (*jing* 經), which were valued by large parts of the (intellectual) elite because they purportedly recorded different aspects of the “golden age” of early Zhou (and the preceding Xia and Shang dynasties’) politics, society, and culture. In addition, Confucius himself was said to have edited the transmitted versions. They perhaps contain some of the oldest transmitted written materials in Chinese literary history. However, they are only mentioned by name in the late third century BCE and are associated with Confucius as editor only in the second century BCE during the Han dynasty. Because Confucius wanted to restore the moral order of this golden age, these classics came to hold a special significance in his tradition, and the history of their transmission and editing is likely to have coloured the contents.<sup>33</sup> The five most important classics were known as the *Wujing* 五經 or *Five Classics*, which contained bits and pieces of

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, “Warring States: Political History,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 591.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001), 16-19.

information relating to the earlier period of Zhou history, especially relevant concerning the dynasty's social and political organization. These were the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), the *Classic of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經) and the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書 or *Shujing* 書經). However, as we shall see later, this canon was mutable and at times more texts were considered classics and added to these five. These classics were important especially for the Confucian-inclined scholars, as they purported to depict the early Zhou society and mode of governance, which for Confucius was an ideal state present-day China should aspire to return to. A Confucian had to safeguard the values observed within the classics and implement them in society. The early Zhou state was characterised by a strict social hierarchy between the ruler and subject, man and woman, senior and junior friends, and so on. Rites and rituals were important prescribing the performative aspect of this social reality, and were intended to shape and govern behaviour. These documents also probably took their first coherent shape during the mid-Han dynasty, and as such it is hard to tell how accurately they depict conditions existing a full millennium earlier in Chinese history. Important is that the Confucian-inclined scholars themselves believed they did and the texts became a co-opted depository of ideas and ideals pertaining to state, society and the individual.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, despite the appropriation of the classics by the later Confucians of the Han by positing Confucius as their editor, they probably contain ideas predating the Confucian philosophical tradition. What light do they shed on *wen* and *wu*?

It was in the classics that the first conceptualizations of *wen* and *wu* as two distinct spheres of state appeared. The characters for *wen* (文) and *wu* (武) already appeared on oracle bones belonging to the Shang dynasty (c. 1600 – 1046 BCE), which preceded the Zhou. There they appeared to carry the meanings of “favouring peace” and “brave in waging war” respectively, amongst others. In the literary tradition of the classics, the concepts came to life with the stories of King Wen 文王 (r. 1099-1050 BCE) and his son King Wu 武王 (r. 1046-1043 BCE), the two founding monarchs of the Zhou dynasty. King Wen was said to have ruled his domain by *wen* (the way of culture), whilst his son succeeded in conquering the Shang dynasty and founding the Zhou

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Nylan, “A Problematic Model: The Han “Orthodox Synthesis,” Then and Now,” in *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, edited by Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 33.

by *wu* (the way of coercion).<sup>35</sup> This description, which appears in the classic *Record of Rites* seems to indicate a dichotomy - a contrasting - of *wen* and *wu* as two different principles according to which a ruler could act, establishing them as each other's antithesis. However, analysing a different classic, the *Book of Documents*, Christopher Reed concludes that the examples of King Wen and King Wu also indicate a complementarity of the concepts they embodied. *Wu* was meant to be a punishment for those who resisted the virtuous ruler, and his virtue rested in the enactment of benevolent social policies, or *wen*.<sup>36</sup> If good governance was thus endangered, it was legitimate to employ military means. It also provided a pretext for regime change, because the Zhou legitimated its termination of the rule of its suzerain the Shang on the basis of the latter's tyrannical governance of the population.<sup>37</sup>

The *Record of Rites* and the *Book of Documents* were not the only classics that could be consulted on the interpretation of *wen* and *wu*. In the *Zuo zhuan* 左傳, or *Zuo's Tradition*, a work of history dealing with the Spring- and Autumn Period and purportedly composed before 389 BCE, we get probably the oldest clear definition of the scope of the sphere of *wu* as enumerated as the seven virtues of King Wu. Furthermore, the *Zuo zhuan* was another source that would at one time or another be considered a classic.<sup>38</sup> Paraphrasing Gawlikowski's translation, these were the repression of cruelty, the removal of all weapons, the preservation of the greatness (of the ruling house), the consolidating of (the ruler's) merit, the ensuring of peace to the people, the harmonizing of the multitude (of states) and the ensuring of abundance. With repression of cruelty was meant the ending of killing and the practice of leaving bodies unburied. This amounted to cruelty because it destined the souls of the deceased to become wandering spirits. The second value, the removal of all weapons, is more straightforward and refers to ending military actions. The third, the preservation of greatness, tied the *wu* sphere to the legitimacy and fortunes of the dynasty, upholding the greatness of the ruler and his dynasty. The fourth, consolidating merit, means to bring into effect the ruler's merit through the liquidation of all opposing forces. Gawlikowski further explained the differences between the third and the fourth value: "Whereas the element number 3 referred to prestige and influence obtained by ensuring peace and justice, by proper

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<sup>35</sup> Gawlikowski, "The Origins of the Martial Principle," 105; Louie and Edwards, "Chinese Masculinity," 140.

<sup>36</sup> Christopher Clark Rand, "The Role of Military Thought in Early Chinese Intellectual History" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1977), 23.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Levi, "Morale de la stratégie, stratégie de la morale: le débat chinois sur la guerre juste," *Extrême-Orient Extrême-Occident* 38 (2015): 114; Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 138.

<sup>38</sup> Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 477.

administration of the state, of the people and spirits as well, the element number 4 refers rather to elimination of an opposition and to increasing practical political influence.”<sup>39</sup> The fifth, the ensuring of peace to the people, and the sixth, the harmonizing of the multitude (of states) refers to creating a tranquil and secure domestic and international environment by the use of military force. In the context of the Spring- and Autumn Period the latter probably referred to the peaceful coexistence of the numerous regional power centres under the hegemony of the ruling house, but in the later imperial age this shifted to maintaining the position of the succeeding empires as the world’s hegemon by preventing outside aggression against China, but also aggression between foreign states themselves. The seventh, ensuring abundance, seems strange to modern western eyes as a task belonging to the military realm. Gawlikowsky interprets it as follows: “On the one hand it seems to refer to the old concept which emphasized the necessity of performance of work on the land at the proper time. Such an adjustment to seasons and natural time-changes was considered a substantial element of << martiality >> [sic].”<sup>40</sup> This early elaborate definition of *wu* is a state-centred one, demonstrating that this institutional layer of its meaning was already present from an early period in Chinese history. This early definition of *wu* manifests it as a series of tasks meant to ensure social and political stability and does not include any overly aggressive expansionistic leanings.

Like the concept of *wu*, *wen* was mentioned as a concept in opposition to *wu* for the first time in *Zuo’s Tradition*, but the word had a pedigree that went back in the past much further. One of the original meanings of *wen* was probably “pattern” or “form” and referred to the design of, for example, pottery and textiles. Gawlikowsky further speculates that from these meanings a link could be made with “peace” or “favouring peace”. A design, in order to work, or to be experienced as beautiful, had to possess a harmonious coming together of colours and forms. Peace is intimately linked with the notion of harmony. Furthermore, *wen* was seen in opposition to naturally endowed characteristics, hence it is similar to “culture”, the form or pattern of human existence. From here the link with writings and literacy can proceed from both angles: written characters themselves constitute a design in themselves, and written sources (especially the ones later recognized as classics) were a repository of the proper human cultural forms and thus civility. This aspect of *wen* is connected by Gawlikowski to the Confucians, as well as to their program of bringing peace to

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<sup>39</sup> Gawlikowski, “The Origins of the Martial Principle,” 110.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, 109-111.



the realm through the teaching of these cultural forms.<sup>41</sup> According to Bol, the meaning of *wen* in relation to writings came to refer to at least two phenomena by the time of the Jürchen Jin. First of these was *wen* as meant in the sense mentioned above, that group of writings and their study which contributed to the understanding of proper civil governance. Second, it came to refer to the practice of literary prose and poetry, calligraphy, and painting. Bol, however, does not make clear when this divergence in the meaning took place, or whether contemporaries themselves were conscious of these layers in the meaning of *wen*. Even so, while Confucianism usually stressed ruling through *wen* in the first sense, not all *wen* was necessarily Confucian in content.<sup>42</sup> How important were these Confucians, however, in shaping the discourse surrounding *wen* and *wu*? I will now turn to the contribution of the philosophical traditions to the evolution of Chinese thought pertaining to these two concepts, and gauge the influence of Confucianism within this group of philosophical traditions.

What were these philosophical traditions? Gawlikowski defines *wen* and *wu* against a backdrop of relatively rigidly drawn boundaries between the different “schools”, or traditions mentioned above. However, the recognition of distinct schools of thought seems to have been a product of the Han dynasty, when the multifaceted philosophical production of the Warring States was parcelled up in different schools of thought. This was pioneered by historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145 or 135 – 86 BCE) who endeavoured to depict the Chinese past into a comprehensive and coherent history, the *Shiji* 史記 or *Historical Records*. In fact, recent research has posited the notion that many literary works predating the Han dynasty only gained separate cohesive forms during the middle years of the Han (possibly during the reign of usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE – 23 CE) and his short-lived intervening Xin dynasty, 9 – 23 CE), and prior to that they probably existed as oral traditions or snippets within larger literary depositories. They were up until that time not self-contained arguments in a book-like format, but formed part of a continuum of texts that interrelated with each other in complex ways and it would therefore be anachronistic to parcel them out in clearly defined schools of thought, as is often still assumed by modern scholars.<sup>43</sup> Instead, I would more cautiously regard the schools of thought as theoretical tendencies,

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<sup>41</sup> Gawlikowski, “The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: Wen 文 and Wu 武 in Chinese Classical Thought (Part One),” 398-403.

<sup>42</sup> Bol, “Seeking Common Ground,” 490-491.

<sup>43</sup> See for examples of this new view Michael Hunter, “Kongzi Sayings, Deselected” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2012); Esther Klein, “Were There ‘Inner Chapters’ during the Warring States? A New Examination of Evidence about

which were grouped together much later on the basis of perceived ideological consistency. Presumably later during imperial times, the Chinese themselves did start to conceive of Chinese thought as belonging to these constructed schools. I follow Yuri Pines in this regard, who states regarding two of the philosophical traditions: “Both terms “Legalism” and “Confucianism,” even if inaccurate (especially the former), may be heuristically useful insofar as we employ them in the same way that they were used by the Han and later archivists: as a classification label for certain texts that share a common perspective on some of [sic] major political and social questions.”<sup>44</sup> Before I turn to the contribution of these philosophical traditions to the *wen* and *wu* discursive field, it is thus important to keep in mind that these traditions to a large extent were not reflected in the social reality in which their texts originated, and that rather than a lack of interaction between closed monolithic systems, we should assume intellectual cross-fertilization.

The fluidity of the boundaries between philosophical traditions notwithstanding, is it possible to discern broad trends in thought pertaining to *wen* and *wu* as spheres of state activity? Christopher Rand analysed this thought and concluded that there were three main tendencies considering the proper balance of importance between *wen* and *wu*: syncretism, militarism and compartmentalism. The oldest one was the syncretic view, which he chronologically places during the early Zhou dynasty and the Spring and Autumn Period, and could be found in the classics. The above-cited *Zuo zhuan* is considered by Rand to reflect this viewpoint, which entailed *wen* and *wu* to exist as a continuum of possible state policies to ensure its continuing ability to function.<sup>45</sup> The syncretic view was a-moral and assigned no ethical judgments to solving problems of state by either military or non-military options. The newer philosophical traditions abandoned this syncretic balance, however, and tended towards the marginalization of either *wen* or *wu*. A distinctively militarist viewpoint came into being during the Warring States period, and it is associated with two thinkers conventionally assigned to the Legalist tradition, Hanfeizi 韓非子

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the *Zhuangzi*,” *T’oung Pao* 96 (2011): 299-369; John Makeham, “The Formation of Lunyu as a Book,” *Monumenta Serica* 44 (1996): 1-24; Matthias L. Richter, *The Embodied Text: Establishing Textual Identity in Early Chinese Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> Yuri Pines, “Review of Zhao Dingxin. *The Confucian-Legalist State: A New Theory of Chinese History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, xx + 447 pp.” *Early China* 39 (2016): 316

<sup>45</sup> Mark Edward Lewis, in the context of martial ethics, also notes that the classics *Zuo zhuan* and *Shijing* often offer viewpoints contrary to later Confucianism. See Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 43.

(mid-3<sup>rd</sup> c.) and Shang Yang 商鞅 (390–338 BCE).<sup>46</sup> They tended to favour that states be governed through a strict system of laws, rewards and punishments. The first empire, Qin (221-206 BCE), was ruled according to its precepts and the dynasty was notorious for its draconian implementation of Legalist ideas. These two Legalists (but not all Legalists) not only held that *wu* should trump *wen*, they also had their own ideas about the proper contents of *wen* and *wu*, equating the former with rewards and the latter with punishments. In contrast to the Confucians, the Legalists favoured *wu* over *wen* and so warfare came to be seen as a form of punishment meted out to opponents of the established order. Hence, *wu* was associated with the law and its enforcement in general. This association was later broken, and the enforcement of the law, certainly during the Ming dynasty, became part of the domain of *wen* state activities. Yet the conceptualization of war as a form of punishment against enemies inside and outside the empire remained strong. The Han dynasty, for ideological reasons, had to move away from the Legalist ideology of its predecessor, but in practice Legalist ideas continued to inform methods of governance.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, these thinkers saw warfare as a means to end conflict by striving for the ultimate unification of all warring states and advocated organizing their polities for this purpose.<sup>48</sup>

Opposing this viewpoint was the compartmentalist way of viewing *wu* in relation to *wen*. To this group belonged those thinkers later considered to be the Confucians, but it also included thinkers categorized as Daoist and Mohist. What united this diverse group was the notion that *wu* should only be applied in extreme circumstances, for example self-defence or the removal of unethical rule. The latter focus on ethics would continue to play an important role within the Confucian-inclined thought on war. A further result of this focus was that war, or rather its prevention, was conceived of as a task not merely of the *wu* sphere within the state. The enemy's warlike intentions could also be undermined by *wen* activities, by convincing the opponent of the justness of your cause and the virtue of your rule through politics, diplomacy and sheer example.<sup>49</sup> In Mencius' (372 – 289 BCE) thought, for example, it was assumed that the display of *de* 德, or

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<sup>46</sup> Christopher C Rand, "Li Ch'üan and Chinese Military Thought," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 39.1 (1979): 108-109; Rand, "The Role of Military Thought," 26-27, 42-43.

<sup>47</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, "Continuity and Change," in *A Military History of China*, edited by David A. Graff and Robin Higham (Boulder: Westview Press, 2002), 23; Gawlikowski, "The Origins of the Martial Principle," 108, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Rand, "Li Ch'üan," 108-109.

<sup>49</sup> Gawlikowski, "The Origins of the Martial Principle," 111; Richard J. Smith, "The Employment of Foreign Military Talent: Chinese Tradition and Late Ch'ing Practice," *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 15 (1975): 113-138, 114-115.

virtue, by the ruler would entice enemies to submit to the Chinese world order. It would therefore be a mistake to assume that the *wu* sphere within the state was always conceived to be coterminous with all activities related to war in the broadest sense, because *wen* could also have its legitimate place within it. A second result of this focus is that it contributed to the notion that *wu* served *wen*, the military sphere served virtuous *wen* government and was thus in some way subordinate to it. Above all, war was a means to protect virtuous civil *wen* rule and punish those who threatened it.<sup>50</sup> Some Confucian-inclined thinkers would take this position even further to reduce the importance of *wu* and in theory even rejected it as a necessary sphere of state activities.<sup>51</sup> This was done for example by Mencius in whose text the following advice to a ruler of one of the Warring States was recorded:

“Now if you practice benevolence in your government, then all the officials in the world will want to find a place in your court, all tillers to plow in your fields, and all merchants to store their goods in your marketplaces, all travelers to journey on your roads, and all those who hate their rulers to lay their complaints before you. Such being the case, who can stop you from achieving the end?”<sup>52</sup>

One has to see this quote in the context of the frequent destructive conflicts of the Warring States Period, when no obvious winner was in sight yet. It can be surmised that it was Mencius’ hope a permanent peace could be attained when all states relinquished their *wu* activities and competed with each other in benevolent governance instead. In later imperial times, however, writings such as these were used to admonish bellicose rulers and expansionist policies, as well as providing arguments for a restriction on the size of the military and its related spending. In reality, many Confucian-inclined thinkers recognized the need for a *wu* sphere of state activity to complement the *wen* sphere,<sup>53</sup> presumably because subduing enemy aggression through virtuous and exemplary government was not a very practical ideal. Yet the anti-militarist strain of thought remained influential throughout imperial history and it was often used as a rhetorical tool to plead for marginalization of the army and its activities.<sup>54</sup> Thought concerning the proper place of *wen* and

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<sup>50</sup> Rand, “The Role of Military Thought,” 148-179.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 127-130.

<sup>52</sup> *Mengzi* 孟子 – *Mencius*, translated by Zhao Zhentao 趙甄陶, Zhang Wenting 張文庭 and Zhou Dingzhi 周定之 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1999), 20-23.

<sup>53</sup> Gawlikowski, “The Origins of the Martial Principle,” 113.

<sup>54</sup> Dreyer, “Continuity and Change,” 23; D.L. McMullen, “The Cult of Ch’i T’ai-kung and T’ang Attitudes to the Military,” *T’ang Studies* 7 (1989): 65-66.

*wu* in what we now regard as the Confucian school of thought was thus not unanimous in its verdict. However, for the most part it tended to assign to *wu* a subordinate or non-existent legitimate role as a sphere of state activity.

There is one group of thinkers that has not been addressed yet in this survey, the tradition of thought that would become associated with the label of “Strategists”. Unlike the Confucians, Mohists, Daoists, and Legalists, they were not concerned with the totality of social-political organization and man’s place within it, but focused on the specifics of warfare itself. Hence, their thought tended to be more specialist in lieu of the more generalist tendencies of the abovementioned four traditions. Both Gawlikowski and Johnston detect the influences of these four traditions in the principal surviving writings of the Strategists, which include *Sunzi’s Art of War* (*Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法), *Wuzi* 吳子, *The Methods of the Sima* (*Sima fa* 司馬法), *Weiliaozi* 尉繚子, and the *Six Secret Strategies* (*Liu tao* 六韜).<sup>55</sup> It is Rand’s hypothesis that many of these works display a conciliatory stance towards the ethical objections of the compartmentalists, which would explain the influences of their thought detected within the articulated ideas of the Strategists. The Strategists can therefore not be considered as an extension of the militarist leanings of Hanfeizi and Shang Yang.<sup>56</sup> Probably as a reaction to the destructive Warring States Period, an ideological tendency developed that warfare by the military should be avoided when possible. This ideology can most famously be seen in the *Sunzi Bingfa*, *Master Sun’s Art of War*, purportedly written by general Sun Wu 孫武 (544 – 496 BCE), and categorized as being part of the Strategists school of thought. In this text, it is stated that the best way to wage war is to disrupt the war plans of the enemy, resorting only in case of failure to the implementation of military force.<sup>57</sup> These statements by Sunzi, and similar ones by other Strategists, have contributed to a picture of Chinese military thought as preferring evasive and non-military solutions to conflicts. Johnston, however, argues that, whilst war was indeed seen as inauspicious, it was also deemed unwise not to prepare for it. Human conflict was seen by many of the Strategists as essentially inevitable. Lip service was paid to Rand’s compartmentalists<sup>58</sup> by assuming that war would be initiated by the other side first,

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<sup>55</sup> Krzysztof Gawlikowski, “The School of Strategy (*bing jia*) in the Context of Chinese Civilization,” *East and West* 35.1-3 (1995): 176-181; Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 40-45.

<sup>56</sup> Rand, “The Role of Military Thought,” 179-180.

<sup>57</sup> See for example Ralph D. Sawyer and Mei-chün Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 160-161.

<sup>58</sup> Rand seems to imply the Strategists included ethical concerns in response to the compartmentalists, however Lewis seems to posit the military considerations of Confucians, Daoists, Legalists, and Mohists were a response to

making it legitimate for a ruler to defend his state against aggression. Non-military means of disrupting the enemy plans were seen as a necessary step, but not *a priori* as a sufficient one. In fact, according to Johnston, most Strategists advised the eventual deployment of superior military force in order to defeat the opponent. Furthermore, once the enemy has constituted itself as a security threat, any moral restraints do not apply anymore and the ethical leeway for the response is quite wide.<sup>59</sup> In conclusion, the military texts of the Strategists do not seem to favour *wu* over *wen*, but regard war as an inevitable fact of life and on that basis argue the best way to proceed with it.

The Confucians, or *Ru* 儒, were by many modern scholars assumed to have won this discursive battle on the proper place of *wen* and *wu*, based on the fact that Confucianism would become the state orthodoxy during the Han dynasty after the tumultuous Warring States and the short-lived unification under the draconian Legalist Qin empire (221-206 BCE). However, the extent of its hegemonic status has been the subject of doubt by recent scholarship. The standard narrative is that Emperor Wu 武 (r. 141-87 BCE) of the Han dynasty exalted Confucianism as the state ideology by appointing scholars selected according to Confucian criteria to enforce an imperial monopoly over classical learning, organized in an academy, which allowed the state to control content and dissemination of learning from 135 BCE onwards. However, the uniformity of Confucian learning, the consistency of state support for it during the Han, and its efficacy has been called into question by Michael Nylan.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, in practice Legalism provided many of the principles of rule, anti-Qin rhetoric and the moral vilification of Shang Yang and Hanfeizi notwithstanding. In 81 BCE it was still possible to defend Legalism in court debates, for example. However, later it became necessary to keep one's Legalist leanings under wraps, even if the state in practice followed its precepts. This situation would continue to hold until the end of imperial China.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, in terms of identity, at the start of the Han the *Ru* did not invariably see themselves as belonging to one particular school, but perhaps more as classicists and scholars who

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the ideas of the Strategists. However, later on he suggests that the ideas of Sunzi were a result of a dynamic interaction with Daoist concepts. See Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 11, 124.

<sup>59</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 106-107

<sup>60</sup> Nylan, "A Problematic Model," 17-56.

<sup>61</sup> Yuri Pines, "Legalism in Chinese Philosophy," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed December 27, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/chinese-legalism/>.

were the heirs of all Chinese thought.<sup>62</sup> Some texts within this transmitted tradition of thought carried more prestige, especially the classics reflecting the values of the old Zhou nobility as it had existed at the beginning of the dynasty. Because of the position of these classicist scholars as caretakers of the entirety of classical thought, including the other “schools”, Confucian orthodoxy as it developed over the centuries could interact relatively freely with other ideas and philosophical tendencies and often did.<sup>63</sup> Therefore many “Confucians” displayed syncretic tendencies and freely used ideas properly categorized as being part of other schools.<sup>64</sup> The umbrella-like quality of *Ru* as a category in ancient Chinese texts themselves has contributed to the idea of a hegemonic and monolithic Confucianism. In fact, as Nylan argues: “In China, the term “Ru” 儒 was used to describe the classicist who made the study of antiquity his chief pursuit. But the same term, quite confusingly, was also used in ancient texts more narrowly to describe committed followers of Confucius, who adhere in their conduct to the specific ethical Way of antiquity supposedly prescribed by the Master.”<sup>65</sup> Only in Warring States and Han texts was there a clear distinction made between these committed followers of Confucius and the more career-oriented and general classicist “vulgar” *Ru*. In texts composed after the Han this distinction disappears and *Ru* could refer to a wide variety of learned people with diverging aspirations.<sup>66</sup> As Confucianism was thus far from a monolithic movement and its canon was mutable. It would therefore follow that a specific “Confucian” attitude to war and the military was also subject to flux. We have also seen that a specific Confucian identity is also hard to postulate, let alone assigned a hegemonic presence, at the start of the Han dynasty.

What I will contribute below to the debate on the development of *wen-wu* relations, then, is to apply the sceptical position of Nylan (and others) concerning the nature and influence of the Confucian movement and ideology on the formation of imperial Chinese *wen* and *wu* institutional utilizations and socio-cultural identities. I will therefore weigh the influence of Confucianism and other philosophical traditions on this process. Before I consider the historical development of the divergence of the institutional and socio-cultural aspects of *wen* and *wu* in social reality during the Song dynasty, I will first turn to the normative socio-cultural models of identity and personal

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<sup>62</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 3-4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>64</sup> Nylan, “A Problematic Model,” 33.

<sup>65</sup> Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, 364.

<sup>66</sup> Idem, 365.

comportment straddling the line between *wen* and *wu* the Warring States' philosophers bequeathed on imperial China. This will in turn allow me to gauge the influence of these models, including the Confucian one, on social reality in the next chapter.

### ***Wen and Wu as Aspects of Socio-Cultural Archetypes***

What socio-cultural models did the important philosophical traditions of the Warring States period offer that could shape the identities of the officials populating the *wen* and *wu* spheres of state activity? Mohism, the chief competitor of the Confucian philosophical tradition, offered a template of a society organized for defensive warfare, which would provide universal benefits for its members defined in utilitarian economic terms. The movement disappeared abruptly after the Qin unification, perhaps because its mission to defend beleaguered states had become obsolete. Their writings would only be subject to renewed interest during the Qing dynasty (1636-1912).<sup>67</sup> Daoism did not offer suitable models, because the philosophical tradition emphasized a minimal state and a primitive society. In addition, Daoism stressed an individualistic ethic of spontaneous self-deployment counter to conformity to social convention.<sup>68</sup> Legalism, finally, took a dim view of human nature, which was especially characterized by Hanfeizi as fundamentally self-interested and conflicting with the needs of the state. To govern, therefore, everyone needed to be subjected without exception to a set of impersonal laws and their associated rewards and punishments.<sup>69</sup> Within this world view, the ideal official would probably have been a disciplined bureaucrat impartially meeting out rewards and punishments. Personal moral agency would have been irrelevant. The Legalists, especially Shang Yang and Hanfeizi strove for a state organized for war, and the civil side of government's main function was to facilitate the mobilization of the entire population for agricultural production in peacetime and military activities during war. In the Legalist thought of these two thinkers, the actual contents of *wen* as a sphere of state activity was therefore extremely limited. The cultural contents of the *wen* the Confucians stood for, like the emphasis on the written textual tradition and the esteem accorded to rites and rituals and their

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<sup>67</sup> Chris Fraser, "Mohism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, accessed December 27, 2017, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2015/entries/mohism/>.

<sup>68</sup> James T. Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 12-13; Rand, "The Role of Military Thought," 148-149.

<sup>69</sup> Paul R. Goldin, "Han Fei's Doctrine of Self-interest," *Asian Philosophy* 11.3 (2001): 151-154.



associated need for specialists, were seen as detracting the state from its proper purposes.<sup>70</sup> Despite wishing to compartmentalize and marginalize *wu* as a sphere of state activity, both Mohism and Daoism had their reservations about the useful contents of *wen* as well. According to Mohism, the proper function of *wen* government should be the utilitarian provision of economic well-being to the largest number of people. Cultural refinements, like music and other traditionally upper-class patterns of consumption were a waste of resources. Contrary to the Confucian philosophical tradition, which tried to promote the use of *wen* to make *wu* as superfluous as possible, Mohism advocated a society militarized for defensive warfare. In effect, *wu* would counteract the *wu* of others.<sup>71</sup> Daoism, as already noted, advocated a simple and spontaneous life in accordance with one's natural tendencies. At most, the philosophical tradition allowed for the existence of a minimal state ruling over small primitive communities, whose inhabitants in the best case were even ignorant of the few laws and regulations that were in place.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, for reasons of a philosophical nature, especially pertaining to the contents of *wen* and *wu* as spheres of state activity, these three traditions did not have a lot to offer concerning the identity formation and moral comportment of the personnel that would populate the worlds of *wen* and *wu* in service of the state (or even outside of it) post-imperial unification. There were three traditions that did, however, and to these I will now turn.

### *The Junzi*

The first of these is the Confucian tradition itself. The socio-cultural exemplar it bestowed on imperial China was the ideal of the *junzi* 君子, often translated as “gentleman”. Originally this term referred to well-bred aristocratic elites of the Zhou. With the rising influence of Confucius’ teachings and the destruction of the Zhou nobility after the interstate wars of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods,<sup>73</sup> however, it lost its implications of nobility by birth and came to refer to men of moral cultivation and upright character. Already in the *Lunyu* can be found the core elements which would define the Confucian *junzi* in later ages (although not always all to the same degree): a stress on humaneness, honesty, and uprightness; an ability to voluntarily serve

<sup>70</sup> Yuri Pines, “A “Total War”? Rethinking Military Ideology in the *Book of Lord Shang*,” *Journal of Chinese Military History* 5 (2016): 104-105; Rand, “The Role of Military Thought,” 32-33.

<sup>71</sup> Fraser, “Mohism”; Rand, “The Role of Military Thought,” 170.

<sup>72</sup> Steve Coutinho, *An Introduction to Daoist Philosophies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 71-74; 126-129.

<sup>73</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 94-95

the people and the state; possessing wisdom and courage; putting the common good above private interests; engaging in self-cultivation; being able to transform others.<sup>74</sup>

Peter Lorge speculates that since after the Spring and Autumn Period the old Zhou nobility lost the monopoly on martial exploits in favour of mass conscripted armies of commoners, Confucianism rose to the fore as an ideology emphasizing rule through moral superiority.<sup>75</sup> However, the Confucian social ideal type of the *junzi* as advocated by Confucius still included martial abilities like archery and charioteering.<sup>76</sup> Even Confucius, who saw the behavioral norms, rituals and codes of conduct of the early Zhou nobility as an ideal that should be universalized and emulated by everyone regardless of their social background, paid scant attention to the martial aspects of this early Zhou noble military culture. The only hints we get at their preservation is in the so-called *liuyi* 六艺 “six-arts” the true *junzi* was supposed to possess and which Confucius was said to have taught his disciples. These were rites, calculation, music, charioteering, archery and history. The inclusion of archery and charioteering in this list makes it clear that Confucius, who said of himself to be ignorant in matters pertaining to warfare, did wish to preserve these martial components of the Zhou nobility in the Confucian ideal of the gentleman. In the *Analects*, said to preserve discussions and conversations between Confucius and various disciples and rulers, the six arts are not mentioned as a coherent set yet, although they are discussed separately. They also make an appearance in the *Zhouli* 周禮, *Rites of Zhou*, a work which appeared during the Han, but which was long thought to be of a much earlier date and enjoyed the status of a classic.<sup>77</sup>

The legitimization of the rule through moral superiority against a backdrop of militarization and the right of the strongest was perhaps one of the attractions of the *junzi*-ideal. Another one, in the context of state-subject relations, was the exultation of the moral autonomy of the individual in relation to the power of the ruler. In the words of Pines:

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<sup>74</sup> Yao Xinzhong, *An Introduction to Confucianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 214-216.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Lorge, *Chinese Martial Arts: From Antiquity to the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 51.

<sup>76</sup> Xinzhong Yao sees these arts more as a reflection of the skills needed to perform the ritual practices of the *Ru* 儒, a group of ritual masters who later evolved into the Confucian scholars. See Yao, *An Introduction to Confucianism*, 20. I personally believe these six skills were really resulting from a later Chinese idealized perception of the early Zhou nobility way of life. As seen in the introduction, the sixteenth-century observer Qi Jiguang certainly did see archery as a necessary *wu*-component of the Confucian identity.

<sup>77</sup> Karel van der Leeuw, *Het Chinese Denken* (Leiden: Shilin, 2012), 111-112.

In a nutshell, Confucians believed that only morally and intellectually cultivated “superior men” (junzi 君子) deserve elite status: in an orderly state, these men should become the core of the ruling bureaucracy. The status of junzi is entirely self-made: it is attainable only by those men who are able either to refine their innate moral goodness (Mengzi 孟子) or overcome their innate badness (Xunzi 荀子). Their debates aside, Confucian thinkers were unequivocal: neither the ruler nor the state can create a superior man or rob him of this status. Membership in the elite is determined by the superior men’s individual qualities alone. This perspective eventually allowed elites a considerable degree of autonomy from the state apparatus.<sup>78</sup>

Confucian conceptualization of society was hierarchical, with everyone assigned defined roles according to their positions in familial, state, and friendship hierarchies. However, these relations were supposed to be reciprocal as well. A subject, for example, owed loyalty to his ruler. On the other hand, the ruler had to reciprocate this with rule on the basis of propriety.<sup>79</sup> The possibility of moral autonomy within the Confucian philosophical tradition might, I argue, explain its attraction to the Chinese imperial elites serving in the bureaucracy, as well as those not serving in any official capacity. Within Legalism and Mohism the role of the individual was much more constrained, and Daoism was an unsuitable ideology to rule the Chinese empires as they took shape from the Qin onwards.

Confucianism overall was an ideology which stressed rule through *wen*. But, as we have seen, Confucians generally conceived as *wen* a very broad range of cultural activities. How were these connected to the civil sphere of governance? As Gawlikowsky posits it: “[...] *wen* was used for those elements of culture which are “decorations” or “patterns” of humans, and at the same time constitute their human, i.e. “cultural nature”, for the social obligations (*yi*), social norms and etiquette (*li*), for music (*le*), for virtues (*de*) [...]”.<sup>80</sup> Important here is the implied fusion of both outward appearance of human society, as expressed through rites and other performative acts, and its proper order. For Confucians, these two meanings of *wen*, or rather their inseparability within the conceptualization of *wen*, explains its central importance within the self-perception of the developing Confucian literati elites. The proper form and content of human society were in an inseparable and direct relationship with each other. The social hierarchies posited by the Confucians were reflected in the codes of conduct and norms of behaviour which were the most

<sup>78</sup> Pines, “Review of Zhao Dingxin,” 316-317.

<sup>79</sup> Zhao, *Introduction to Confucianism*, 34-35.

<sup>80</sup> Gawlikowski, “The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: *Wen* 文 and *wu* 武 in Chinese Classical Thought, Part One,” 401.

important constituent element of the Confucian rites. For a modern western audience, a close equivalent to the ancient Chinese concept of *wen* can be the thinking in terms of a dichotomy between man-made culture and nature. *Wen* here functions as the ancient Chinese idea of culture which is added to one's innate biological characteristics. According to Gawlikowski, this idea of culture was very restricted and for Confucian-inclined thinkers it only included the cultural phenomena found in the classics mentioned above, which purported to reflect early Zhou society as idealized by Confucius and his followers, and later writings by other Confucians. Only during the Han dynasty, when Confucianism became sole state orthodoxy in name, all other philosophical currents were appropriated by the Confucians and their literary heritage came under the rubric of *wen* as well. As a consequence of this focus on the scriptural aspects of culture, a link between *wen* and literary production and pursuits was thus established. In this context Gawlikowsky states that "Early Confucians did not separate clearly studies of books, i.e. literary knowledge, from culture and virtue."<sup>81</sup> But if we follow Nylan's objections to the interpretation of the Confucian-turn of the Han, perhaps the self-styled Confucians already belonged to a larger group of classicists who already considered a broad range of literary pursuits as *wen*. This contributed to the already unclear definition of *wen*, reflected by the existence of its myriad meanings and associations, which was caused by the paucity of contemporary Chinese discussions on the nature of the concept. Gawlikowski posits that the meaning of *wen* was considered "obvious" by the Chinese, and therefore elicited little scholarly discussion.<sup>82</sup>

Essential, however, for a classicist, a conscious follower of the Confucian ideal, or an official serving in the *wen*-sphere of state activity (and these categories probably overlapped in many cases), was the skill of literacy. Thus, if we assume, on the basis of Nylan's revisionism, a big amorphous group of classicists, many of whom were in service of the state from the Han onwards, then the ideal of the *junzi* committed to restoring the values of the golden age of the early Zhou and before on the basis of the study of the classics must have made a suitable fit. In addition, the ideal of the *junzi* contained an element of *wu* in socio-cultural terms as well, although this was a different kind of *wu* as that had come to characterize the military officer, a topic I will turn to now.

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<sup>81</sup> Gawlikowski, "The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: *Wen* 文 and *wu* 武 in Chinese Classical Thought, Part One," 408.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, 408-409.

### *The Sagely General*

Although the Strategists formed a very loose tradition, as we have seen above, a number of the associated texts would retain their influence to the point that they were canonized as a separate military canon during the early Song dynasty. This tradition of military thinking would also continue after the imperial unification.<sup>83</sup> Five of these canonized works, which were already mentioned above, can be dated to the Warring States period with some certainty and I refer to these works when discussing the Strategists in this section. Ultimately, these Strategists did not constitute a more unified tradition like that of the Confucians or the Mohists, because of the lack of an integrating author or authors, and also for reasons of the more specialized and limited nature of their field of knowledge.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the Strategists' military thought reflect the formation of the more centralized and bureaucratized Warring States with their disciplined predominantly-infantry armies. The mode of combat shifted from more individual displays of courage and honour by the earlier Zhou aristocracy to a battle of wits between two specialized military commanders, with their disciplined formations consisting of trained peasants stripped of any individual agency. Whereas the earlier Zhou chivalrous martial ethos emphasized an honest test of skills and bravery,<sup>85</sup> the newer Warring States ethos entailed deception and stratagem. In the words of Mark Edward Lewis:

The commander sought to present a picture to his adversary which was the exact inverse of the truth. At the same time he sought to know the truth of his opponent's situation, to take precautions against it, and to strike at his opponent's weaknesses or manipulate his strengths into their opposite weaknesses. Warfare became a match of fraud and deceit in which victory hinged on duping the opponent while penetrating his prevarications. The ultimate level of this duel in the manipulation of circumstances lay in the control of the foe's perceptions; this is what was meant by "victory through attacking an opponent's deliberations."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Sawyer and Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics*, 1-2.

<sup>84</sup> Rand, "The Role of Military Thought," 184-185.

<sup>85</sup> For example, one was not to take advantage of any of the opponent's difficulties in order to gain an easy victory. See Frank A. Kierman, Jr., "Phases and Modes of Combat in Early China," in *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, edited by Frank A. Kierman, Jr., John K. Fairbank, and Edward L. Dreyer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 42-45; Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 36-39.

<sup>86</sup> Idem, 98, 104-10, 124.

Already during the Warring States this new martial ethos came under attack of thinkers later associated with Confucianism. Xun Kuang 荀况 or Xunzi 荀子 (c. 313-c. 238 BCE), for example, contended that good governance by a virtuous ruler over a population of unified will would annul the efficacy of the stratagems of the Strategists. However, Legalist thinkers Hanfeizi and Shang Jun held a similar opinion, although their idea of virtuous rule obviously differed from the Confucian conceptualization of it.<sup>87</sup>

Further ethical elements in the Strategists that could indicate a sensitivity towards the compartmentalists' objections towards *wu* was a stress on the moral fibre of the military commanders, manifested for example in the Strategists' advocating of humane treatment of the soldiers. In addition, morally virtuous government would contribute to the security of the state, presumably by way of social stability, and also secure resources for the state.<sup>88</sup> In fact, the majority of the Strategists' views on the contents of the *wen*-sphere of government seem to have been an amalgam of the ideas developed within the Mohist, Legalist, and Confucian philosophical traditions. These include the provision of material welfare for the population, governance by a bureaucracy employing a clear system of rewards and punishments, and inculcation of the population with moral virtues sometimes buttressed by the rule of a monarch who set a personal example through morally virtuous conduct. The combination of two or three of these themes can be traced in the *Taigong's Six Secret Teachings*, *Methods of the Sima*, *Wuzi*, and the *Weiliaozi*.<sup>89</sup> The ideas about the content of *wen* that were developed within the Strategists' philosophical tradition, in so far as it commented on this, did not radically diverge from those conceptualized by other traditions. This inclusiveness of *wen*-notions of rule might have contributed to, or at least not hindered, the continued importance of these texts after the creation of the Han empire, an empire which did not rely on the dictates of a single philosophical tradition.

The Strategists, presumably for the lack of a unity in their tradition, did not develop a completely coherent military ethos for the military commander. Filipiak compared the ideal characteristics of a general in the Warring States-era Strategist treatises, but there were differences of moral categories and emphasis among all of them.<sup>90</sup> In contrast to the civil ethos and its

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<sup>87</sup> Idem, 66-67, 127.

<sup>88</sup> Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 107. Rand, "The Role of Military Thought," 180-184.

<sup>89</sup> Sawyer and Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics*, 33, 118-119, 203, 232-234

<sup>90</sup> Kai Filipiak, "Military Codes of Virtue: Aspects of *Wen* and *Wu* in China's Warring States Period," in *Civil-Military Relations in Chinese History: From Ancient China to the Communist Takeover*, edited by Kai Filipiak (London: Routledge, 2005), 36-39.

Confucian influences, the ethos of the military is under-researched and as a result largely unknown. Taking the *Seven Military Classics* as representative for the normative model of the military officer is problematic for several reasons already touched upon previously. Nevertheless, Kai Filippiak singles out four values that appear in many of the texts, and these include benevolence, wisdom, courage, and trustworthiness. These values differ from their civil ethic interpretations by emphasizing meanings more suitable to the military enterprise. Benevolence, for example, refers to the commander's ability to integrate his army by sharing in the hardships of his men and leading by example. It, moreover, pleads for a limit to the destruction visited upon the vanquished populations of the enemy. Wisdom stresses the strategic and tactical abilities of a commander.<sup>91</sup> In other ways, the contents of these military classics was in opposition with some of the more moralistic parts of the civil ethos. Especially the *Taigong's Six Secret Teachings*, *Sunzi's Art of War*, *Wuzi*, and *Weiliaozi* advocated deceit and stratagems with were in direct opposition with Confucian virtue, and Mencius disdained military specialists for this reason. In his view, a ruler's virtue would unite the people behind him and would make recourse to stratagems and deceit unnecessary. Furthermore, these military thinkers advocated a kind of mass-warfare of disciplined large formations combined with stratagems and deceptions, which dispensed with the chivalric and heroic aristocratic values of the old Zhou nobility with its emphasis on individual martial achievements and honour.<sup>92</sup> Since the Confucian philosophical tradition was wedded to the values of the Zhou nobility as transmitted through the classics, there was a potential conflict here concerning the proper moral values that should be the content of *wu*.

What could have attracted the Chinese imperial elites to strive to adopt this military ethos? First of all, some of the Strategists, like the *Methods of the Sima*, postulated a clear separation of civil and military realms with its own associated values out of sheer necessity. Within this realm, the military commander would have nearly limitless authority. The *Taigong's Six Secret Teachings* emphasized that the commander, once in the field, should be free from the authority of the ruler, so that valuable opportunities would not be lost and other officials would not be able to challenge his authority on the basis of personal relations with the ruler. Furthermore, in some of the texts associated with the Strategists the commander was considered to be a sage, *sheng* 聖.<sup>93</sup> In the

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<sup>91</sup> Filippiak, "Military Codes of Virtue," 39-43.

<sup>92</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 98, 103, 127-131.

<sup>93</sup> See for example *Sunzi's Art of War*: "Unless someone has the wisdom of a Sage, he cannot use spies; [...]." Quoted in Sawyer and Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics*, 185.

Confucian philosophical tradition, the sages were a category containing the mythical first rulers of China, like Yao 堯, Shun 舜, who had both set an example of virtuous conduct. Confucius himself would be eventually be regarded as a sage as well in this tradition. But the Confucians did not have the monopoly on the definition of the sage: The Legalists, for example, considered another set of mythical cultural heroes sages for their contribution to material advancement of culture. Julia Ching, on the basis of etymological research of the term concluded that the origin of the sage should be sought in the shamanistic component of the royal authority of the early Zhou kings. These alone were permitted to communicate with the highest deity, Heaven (*Tian* 天), and function as the relay between the natural and supernatural worlds. The character consists of the components denoting “mouth”, “ear”, and “king”, which could refer to a monarch who listens (or perceives in general) and talks (or transmits).<sup>94</sup> In its basic meaning a sage was someone could perceive the Way of Heaven and transmit it for the benefit of the world. How Heaven was perceived at the time of the writing of the Strategist’s texts is unclear. Originally Heaven was the supreme God of the Zhou pantheon, but by the time of Confucius and Mencius it had acquired a new layer of meaning denoting “fate” or “destiny” - the unfolding of existence beyond one’s control - and the source of a specific moral order.<sup>95</sup> According to Rand, who also based himself on other Warring States’ texts besides the Strategists, the ideal military commander was posited as a sage in the same Chinese tradition as a conduit between the natural and the supernatural:

We find that the premier military leader was not merely a physically strong and aggressive man; it was possible for him to have neither of these qualities. What he did possess was a supernatural capacity to fathom an enemy's circumstances and foresee the outcome of a confrontation. He had, in other words, a sagely wisdom which we would normally associate with Taoist or Confucian paragons of wen. Some figures secured their military prescience through the contemplation of esoteric texts.<sup>96</sup>

According to Rand, the equation of the military commander with a sage reflected a rough parity that existed between the travelling *wu*-specialists, of whom the Strategists are the surviving written

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<sup>94</sup> Julia Ching, “The Ancient Sages (sheng): their Identity and their Place in Chinese Intellectual History.” *Oriens Extremus* 30 (1983-1986): 2-6, 12, 14.

<sup>95</sup> Rodney L. Taylor and Howard Y.F. Choy, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Confucianism, Part II: N-Z* (New York: The Rose Publishing Group, Inc., 2005), 511-512, 603-605.

<sup>96</sup> Rand, “The Role of Military Thought,” 58-59.



remains, and their *wen*-specialist colleagues who were equally mobile. Both offered sagely advice on different spheres of governance travelling from court to court and giving advice to rulers whilst insisting on a freedom and autonomy to implement their ideas on the basis of the sagely credentials.<sup>97</sup> By the time of the Warring States the Strategists represent a kind of military specialization, but the common discourse and lifestyle they shared with other itinerant *wen*-specialists cast doubt on any socio-cultural rift that might have formed between them and the rest of the intellectual elite. In conclusion, then, we could say that the Strategists offered an attractive - if fragmented – model of a military specialist with a certain moral autonomy as well, similar to the Confucian *junzi*. A further consequence of the sagely model was that the ideal military commander had to possess literacy as well, in order to contemplate military writings. The ideal military commander also combined *wen* with *wu*, although the extant five Strategists' texts dating from the Warring States period give no evidence that they saw this necessity as a specific socio-cultural *wen* aspect of the sagely military commander.

### *The Knight-Errant*

The third socio-cultural archetype and moral exemplar which survived into the imperial age and would have its influence on the identity formation of *wen* and *wu* officials and (non-state actors) diverges from the previous two, because it is not rooted in a philosophical tradition of the Warring States. This ethos was closely associated with martial activities and belonged to the so-called knight-errant, or *xia* 侠 (there are many compound variations on this term, the most frequently used being *youxia* 游侠 to stress their *you* 游 “itinerant” nature). With Confucianism thus emphasizing rule through moral suasion and emulation of a perceived golden age during the early Zhou dynasty and before, the knights-errant were men of action and left no philosophical canon. Instead, their legacy lived on in literary depictions and their ideals could be surmised from their acts. Knights-errant had a moral code quite close to the chivalry of the Confucians, yet different also in other ways. The most important one was the Confucian commitment to particularity in social obligation: one's family and one's ruler came first. In contrast, knights-errant regarded everyone as equally important and for this reason it has been speculated that they were in fact an outgrowth of Mohism, which advocated universal reciprocal social obligations. James Liu discards

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<sup>97</sup> Idem, 62-63.

this theory on the basis that the knights-errant fought for personal justice on a voluntary basis, whilst Mohists were embedded in a strict hierarchical structure and were dedicated to the avoidance of violence on principle. Another view holds that the *xia* originated from the socially and politically displaced Zhou nobility, which was destroyed in the course of the Warring States period. However, Liu discards this thesis as well, on the basis of a lack of references to *xia* in pre-Warring States sources and the reference to their low social status in the extant primary sources.<sup>98</sup>

Other smaller differences were the Confucian's preference for moderation in praxis in contrast to the knights-errant celebration of non-conformist behaviour. Knight-errant chivalry stressed the need to protect the weak against the strong and actively redress injustices, more often than not by the use of martial exploits.<sup>99</sup> Lien-sheng Yang describes their ethos and quotes the Han dynasty scholar Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145 – c. 86 BCE):

The knights-errant were distinguished by their absolute reliability, which was their professional virtue. As described by Ssu-ma Ch'ien in his *Historical Memoirs*: "Their words were always sincere and trustworthy, and their actions always quick and decisive. They were always true to what they promised, and without regard to their own persons, they would rush into dangers threatening others." This is the way they responded to friends who really appreciated their worth. Always seeking to right wrongs, the knights-errant proved most helpful to people who desired to secure revenge.<sup>100</sup>

As such the knight-errant was an ideal-type which actually stressed non-state "governance" through *wu* instead of the *junzi*'s pursuit of *wen*-governance.

Another big difference with the *junzi* was knight's lack of moderation in behaviour, which partly sprang from their universalizing instead of particularistic ethics. The *junzi* could not always be sincere in his words, because it could conflict with what was right according to his moral code. According to Yang, a son was allowed to lie in order to hide his father's acts out of filial piety. One was also not allowed to sacrifice one's life when the parents were still alive for the same reason. The knight-errant had to respond to every act of kindness or malice in kind, the *junzi* turned the other cheek to a morally inferior man.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant*, 2, 10-12.

<sup>99</sup> Idem, 1-12.

<sup>100</sup> Lien-sheng Yang, "The Concept of *Pao* as a Basis for Social Relations in China," in *Excursions in Sinology*, by Lien-sheng Yang (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 6.

<sup>101</sup> Yang, "The Concept of *Pao*," 306.

Knight-errantry with its almost anarchic tendencies was naturally not a very suitable ideology for a state official, although the knights did accept service in the private forces of powerful patrons during the Warring States period.<sup>102</sup> The Qin and Han empires attempted to suppress knight-errantry: it would not do for an empire to have Robin Hood-esque vagabonds roaming around dispensing justice in the name of an implied moral autonomy existing separately from that of the justice meted out by the empire. For the Legalist Qin empire, agriculture and war were the only two activities beneficial to a state, and Hanfeizi perhaps for this reason argued that Confucians and knights-errant contributed to disorder by not strengthening the state in these respects.<sup>103</sup> Legalism envisioned the universal military service of the entire agricultural population of a state in a combined civil-military existence, which left no place for the military as a specialized profession.<sup>104</sup> Yet, the ideology of knight-errantry and its adherents never completely disappeared and lived on in society and the arts. While Confucianism is often associated with elite literate culture, knight-errantry seems to have had a more diverse social base.<sup>105</sup> However, the celebration of knights-errant in poetry and other literary works meant that it certainly had its appeal to the literate elite as well and would continue to serve as a moral exemplar to follow in spirit, if not in practice.<sup>106</sup> The attractiveness of this socio-cultural identity might have lain in its combination of moral autonomy, an itinerant and free lifestyle, social inclusiveness, and an emphasis on martial activities.

### *The Rujiang*

Much later in Chinese history, against the backdrop of the mid-Tang dynasty, there developed a new model-exemplar. This was a type of military commander that shared civil elite values with the capacity to command troops into battle, the scholar-general, or *rujiang* 儒將. This new ideal of the general was thus already nascent in the late Tang empire, when some scholar-officials expressed their preference for military commanders who went out in the field as generals, and returned to the civil fold as a bureaucrat. These should be either loyal full-time military officials, or civil officials who had enough competence to function in both the *wen* and *wu* state spheres.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Rand, "The Role of Military Thought," 236-237.

<sup>103</sup> Han Feizi, *Basic Writings*, translated by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 106.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence*, 131.

<sup>105</sup> Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant*, 2-4.

<sup>106</sup> Idem, 71; Yang, "The Concept of *Pao*," 295.

<sup>107</sup> McMullen, "The Cult of Ch'i T'ai-kung," 76.

According to Liu, an important element of this model general was his ideological affinity: “[...] within the realm of learning, the “scholar-general” should, by definition, give priority to Confucian ethics and scholarship, rather than to statecraft, laws, Taoist teachings, Buddhist doctrines, or other kinds of learning.”<sup>108</sup> However, I argue that this connection with Confucianism was not prevalent yet. One important historical exemplar for the *rujiang* was Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234), a late Han military commander and statesman who was also known for his Daoist leanings.<sup>109</sup>

We have seen how *wen* and *wu* had both different meanings and differing importance in the various Chinese philosophic traditions. Furthermore, these traditions yielded a number of ideal archetypes one could model one’s identity on, which also included a mix *wen* and *wu* virtues. The knight-errant, together with the *junzi*, the sagely general, and the *rujiang* would retain their attraction on the social and political elites of imperial China - both in and out of state service - after the Warring States period, as we shall see in my consideration of the development of the institutional and social-cultural aspects of *wen* and *wu* in social reality from the Song to the Ming dynasties. These archetypes and their popularity among the civil elite are one way to gauge their oft-positing pacifist bias. Another is surveying what we can know about the ideological inculcation of this civil elite and the significance of a Confucian anti-war tendency as part of it. Both phenomena will be examined in the next chapter, however, I will first briefly look at the course of *wen* and *wu* relations during the Han and the Tang dynasties, before considering why the Song formed a discontinuity in this regard.

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<sup>108</sup> Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, “Ho Ch’ü-fei and Chu Hsi on Chu-ko Liang as a “Scholar-General”,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 25 (1995): 77-94, 78.

<sup>109</sup> Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 106.