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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages and Literature

From *Sanguo zhi* to *Sanguo zhi yanyi*: The Role of Sun Quan and the

Development of the Three Kingdoms Historiography

by

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Introduction

Romance of the Three Kingdoms or *Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi yanyi* 三國之演義) is a Chinese historical novel that is attributed to Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 who lived in the 14th century. The novel is based on events that took place between the Eastern Han Dynasty (*Dong Han* 東漢, 25-220 C.E.) to the end of Three Kingdoms era in 280, which also happens to be the year of the Jin 晉 reunification of the three kingdoms. The story consists of historical events, legends, and myth. In the beginning of the novel, the author chronicles the tale of feudal lords who tried to replace the Eastern Han. After describing the fall of Yellow Turbans (*Huangjin zhi luan* 黃巾之亂, 184-205 C.E.) and the fall of most of the warlords, the novel eventually narrows the story down to accounts of three warlords, Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220 C.E.), Liu Bei 劉備 (161-223 C.E.), and Sun Quan 孫權 (182-252 C.E.) - who would eventually establish the three states, Wei 魏, Shu 蜀, and Wu 吳. *Sanguo zhi yanyi* is one of the “Four Great Masterworks” (*sida qishu* 四大奇書) of the Ming period, and it is unquestionably the most widely recognized and read historical novel in pre-modern and modern China, Japan, and Korea.

There are two especially interesting aspect of *Sanguo zhi yanyi*. One is the novel’s origin and the other is its character development. Many readers might think that *Sanguo zhi yanyi* was directly based on Chen Shou’s *Records of Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志). However, this speculation is not entirely true. Fundamentally, *Sanguo zhi yanyi* has its source in two different types of literature. The first is historical records such as *Sanguo zhi* – including Pei Songzhi’s commentaries on *Sanguo zhi* –and Sima Guang’s

Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) along with Zhu Xi's revised and condensed version of *Zizhi tongjian*, which is also known as (*Zizhi tongjian gangmu* (資治)通鑑綱目). The second type is a collection of tales (*shuohua* 說話) such as *A New Account of the Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語). One of the most interesting aspects of these two roots of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* is the authorship and readership. While the historical records were read and studied by scholars and members of the imperial elite, the *Sanguo* tales were often written, read, and performed by jesters, playwrights, and storytellers etc. This is the reason why many of *Sanguo* tales were used to entertain general audiences, and the popularity of a collection of tales, Dao Sijiu's 禱四究 *Shuo sanfen* 说三分 (Renzong 仁宗, 1010-1063) - which later became the basis for *Sanguo* plays in the Song dynasty. However, most of these *Sanguo* plays have disappeared, and there are only the *Sanguo zhi pinghua* 三國志平話 and a few Yuan drama plays (*yuanqu* 元曲) that can tell us something about these Song dynasty *Sanguo* plays. The overall story plot and character development in *Sanguo zhi pinghua* are not well constructed and developed, and the main characters, Liu Bei, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, are portrayed as being somewhat more violent than they are in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*. Nevertheless, it is hard to ignore the influence of *Sanguo zhi* and *Shishuo xinyu* because many episodes in *Sanguo zhi pinghua* were adapted from *Shishuo xinyu* to *Sanguo zhi yanyi*.

As for the character development, the protagonists of Shu and Wei are more or less the same in *Sanguo zhi* and *Sanguo zhi yanyi*. However, there is one unique and yet perplexing character in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, Sun Quan, the first emperor of Wu. In *Sanguo*

zhi and *Zizhi tongjian*, the role played by Sun Quan is very minimal, and the records of Wu (*Wu Shu* 吳書) in the *Sanguo zhi* are more focused on Sun Quan's ministers and generals than on Sun Quan himself. On the other hand, his role in the novel is vital because his presence creates a balance between the forces of Cao Cao and Liu Bei. However, there is a big discrepancy between Sun Quan's historical persona and his fictional persona. In the historical records, Sun Quan is mainly portrayed as a tyrant. On the other hand, the author of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* portrays him as a hero, as we can see in the following poetic description:

“The purple beard, the gem green eyes, hailed a hero true;
And Sun Quan's vassal-officers freely gave their love.”¹

Then a question arises: Why did the author changed the role of Sun Quan from a tyrant to a hero? It is possible that the answer to the question may lie within the texts from historical records and the novel. The main objective of this thesis is to take a closer look at Sun Quan's character development from history to fiction. Furthermore, this thesis will be exploring two specific questions: Did the transformation occur in the novel? Or can it already be found in the historical records? It appears that Sun Quan's change in persona from the historical records to the novel may have been occurred progressively. Moreover, Sun Quan's image as a hero in the novel may have been influenced by and derived from the compilers of the historical records. I also suggest that the author of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* might have exaggerated Sun Quan's role as a hero in order to represent political and moral views of his own.

¹ See Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 838.

In the first section of this thesis, I will discuss Sun Quan as a historical figure. I will begin with a brief review of the history of the Three Kingdoms era, and then introduce *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian*. Then I will focus on Sun Quan's negative historical image in order to contrast it with his image in the novel. In the second section, I will discuss Chen Shou and Sima Guang's possible reasoning behind Sun Quan's character portrayal via connecting their political philosophies and moral principles. Finally, in the last section of the thesis, I will discuss Sun Quan's heroic qualities in the novel, which will help the reader to see the vivid transition of a tyrant in historical records to a hero in the novel. For this particular thesis, I decided to exclude *Sanguo zhi pinghua* and *Shishuo xinyu* because Sun Quan's name and his tales are hardly mentioned much in both collections. In order to narrow down the research, my main primary source will be two historical records and the earliest printed version of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* (*Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi* 三國志通俗演義).

Part 1: Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi's criticisms on Sun Quan

Chen Shou wrote *Sanguo zhi*, also known as *the Records of the Three Kingdoms*. Although the exact date of completion is unknown, Chen Shou started to gather the documents after the fall of the Wei kingdom. After the Wu kingdom surrendered in 280, Chen Shou finally collected all the documents of Wei, Shu, and Wu. When Chen Shou finished compiling *Sanguo zhi*, his work was not widely recognized due to his disgraced political career. While he was holding some minor posts in Jin dynasty, he was admired –

especially by a minister, Zhang Hua (张华) - for his work as a historian. However, he later was disgraced and was out of office up until his death in 297.²

Approximately 150 years after Chen Shou wrote *Sanguo zhi*, Pei Songzhi was commissioned to compile a commentary to *Sanguo zhi*, which he finally completed in 429. In *The Biography of Sun Chien*, Rafe De Crespigny states, “it was at this time [when the commentary was presented in 429] that imperial recognition set the San-Kuo Chih and its commentary among the ‘standard histories’, to rank with the Shih-Chi and the Han Shu.” (De Crespigny, pp.1-2) However two questions arise: Is Pei’s commentary credible? And is it biased?

De Crespigny suggests that not all Pei Songzhi’s commentaries are reliable due to sources that he used that were somewhat personal, and there is a gap of almost two hundred years between *Sanguo zhi* and Pei’s commentary.³ Nevertheless, De Crespigny also suggests that Pei used nearly two hundred works of biography, history or commentary that had been written or published since the publication of Chen Shou’s *Sanguo zhi*, and these sources helped Pei to preserve the contents of *Sanguo zhi*. Most importantly, when Pei Songzhi commented on the state of Wu, he used the official history written by the court historians of Wu (also known as the *Wu shu* like the one from *Sanguo zhi*), and Pei still harshly criticized Sun Quan even when Pei’s primary sources

² See Cutter and Crowell, *Empresses and Consorts: Selections from Chen Shou’s Records of the Three States with Pei Songzhi’s Commentary*, pp. 62-63 for more of Chen Shou’s biography.

³ De Crespigny, p.3.

was Wu historians' documents.⁴ Thus, Pei Songzhi's commentary on Wu state is not only relatively unbiased, but can also be considered as a supplement to *Sanguo zhi*.

Sanguo zhi contains 65 *pian* 篇, which is equivalent to *juan* 卷 or chapters at the time. In 65 chapters, the book of Wei (the *Wei shu*) has 30 chapters; the book of Shu (the *Shu shu*) has 15 chapters, and the book of Wu (the *Wu shu*) has 20 chapters. The style of writing in *Sanguo zhi* only consists in a biographical style (*liezhuan* 列傳), and unlike *Shiji*, it has no distinct section of annals (*benji* 本紀). The biographies of the founding fathers of each state are located in the early chapters of each book. For instance, the second and third chapters of the *Wu shu* contain the biography of Sun Quan – and De Crespigny finds this interesting because the very first chapter deals with Sun Quan's father (Sun Jian) and his older brother (Sun Ce) – and they were not the emperors of Wu.

Another very interesting aspect of *Sanguo zhi* is its primary sources. De Crespigny states, “Ch'en Shou's biographies say that he compiled his San-Kuo Chih with the help of the court records of Wei and Shu and Wu. As well as the works of the historical offices, it seems that he also had access to the archives of the states and so great parts of his history came directly from the records of the three imperial courts.” (De Crespigny, p.6) Thus when *Sanguo zhi* was completed, other historians and scholars including Pei Songzhi regarded these biographies as historical records that provided accurate descriptions of the emperors and the warlords in the Three Kingdom era. If these biographies are accurate and reliable, what exactly did Chen Shou – and Pei Songzhi in

⁴ Ibid., pp. 3-4.

his commentaries – record about Sun Quan? The answer will undoubtedly surprise many readers of the *Sanguo yanyi*.

To reiterate, Sun Quan's biography starts in the second chapter of the *Wu shu* titled *Wuzhu zhuan* 吳主傳 (also known as Biography of the Lord(s) of Wu). *Wuzhu zhuan* is a very interesting chapter in *Wu shu* because the chapter not only deals with Sun Quan, but also mentions the two emperors of Wei, Cao Cao and Cao Pi. In fact, unlike the biographies of Wei and Shu emperors, most of the *Wuzhu zhuan* concerns Sun Quan's diplomatic skills and military tactics. In the beginning part of *Wuzhu zhuan*, Chen Shou mostly focuses on Sun Quan's physique and potential as a long-lasting leader.⁵ However, the rest of Chen's account of Sun Quan deals with Sun Quan's direct order to attack territories or his appointment of generals and ministers. Furthermore, only rarely are the records associated with Sun Quan as an individual:

建安四年，從策徵廬江太守劉勛。勳破，進討黃祖於沙羨。建安七年，權母吳氏薨。建安八年，權西伐黃祖，破其舟軍，惟城未克，而山寇復動。還過豫章，使呂範平鄱陽，（會稽）程普討樂安。太史慈領海昏，韓當、周泰、呂蒙等為劇縣令長。建安九年，權弟丹楊太守翊為左右所害，以從兄瑜代翊。⁶

In Jian'an 建安 4 (199 CE), Sun Quan followed Sun Ce in order to invade the Lujiang Prefect 廬江太守, Liu Xun. [After Ce] defeated Xun, [Ce] moved forward to subjugate Huang Zu 黃祖 at Shaxian 沙羨. In Jianan 7 (202 CE), [Sun] Quan's mother, Lady Wu 吳氏 has passed away. In Jianan 8 (203 CE), [Sun] Quan traveled west in order to attack Huang Zu. Although [Sun Quan] was able to destroy his navy, he was not able to capture the castle, and Shanyue tribe 山越族 once again rebelled against [Sun Quan]. Thus, [Sun Quan] decided to turn [his soldiers] around and

⁵ 琬语人曰：“吾观孙氏兄弟虽各才秀明达，然皆禄祚不终。惟中弟孝廉，形貌奇伟，骨体不恒，有大贵之表，年又最寿。尔试识之。”(Chen, *Wu Shu*, *Wuzhu zhuan* 2, p. 1115)

⁶ Chen, *Wu Shu*, *Wuzhu zhuan* 2, pp.1115-1116.

pass by Yuzhang 豫章. He made Lü Fan 吕范 to put down Poyang 鄱阳, made Cheng Pu 普讨 to subjugate Le'an 樂安, and made Taishi Ci 太史慈 to govern Haihun 海昏. Han Dang 韓當, Zhou Tai 周泰, and Lü Meng 吕蒙 and so on became county magistrates 县令 or chief magistrates 县长. In Jian'an 9 (204 CE), [Sun] Quan's younger brother, Danyang Prefect 丹楊太守 [Sun] Yi 孫臏 was killed by [his] ministers, and thus his cousin, [Sun] Yu 孫瑜 replaced Yi.

Towards the end of the biography, the focus shifts from Sun Quan to his generals and ministers - or to the state of Wei's affairs - as Sun Quan is no longer the subject of the account.⁷ It is very surprising to see how Chen Shou does not necessarily focus on Sun Quan's various types of achievements as a leader of the Wu state. Although Chen Shou's views on Wu are unknown, his various comments throughout *Wu shu* suggest Sun Quan's tyrannical acts as a leader. Moreover, the fact that Chen records very few of Sun Quan's achievements – compared to *Shu shu* and *Wei shu* – would seem to indicate his implicit criticisms of Sun Quan. At the end of *Wuzhu zhuan*, Chen Shou states:

評曰：孫權屈身忍辱，任才尚計，有勾踐之奇，英人之傑矣。故能自擅江表，成鼎峙之業。然性多嫌忌，果於殺戮，暨臻末年，彌以滋甚。至於讒說殄行，胤嗣廢斃，豈所謂賜厥孫謀以燕冀於者哉？其後葉陵遲，遂致覆國，未必不由此也。⁸

My comments⁹: Sun Quan bent down to endure humiliation, appointed and accepted talented ministers, has Gou Jian's 勾踐 rare talent, and he is an outstanding person amongst heroes. Therefore, he was able to control Jiangbiao 江表 himself, and he was able to stand in a tripartite power relationship. However, his dubious and envious characteristics caused massacres, and this got worse in his later life. He listened to false words as

⁷四年春正月，大雪平地深三尺，鳥獸死者大半。夏四月，遣衛將軍全琮略淮南。決芍陂，燒安城邸閣，收其人民。威北將軍諸葛恪攻六安。

⁸ Chen, *Wu Shu*, *Wuzhu zhuan* 2, p.1249.

⁹ This is Chen Shou's commentary in *Sanguo zhi*.

advices, and he executed his descendants (Sun Quan's sons and grandchildren). How can you say he is the one who planned the safety of his descendants and gave them hopes? His future generations fell into decadence, which consequently overturned the kingdom, and this must be the reason.

While Chen Shou credits Sun Quan's accomplishment of establishing the state of Wu, he also criticizes his tendency to "doubt and envy" (性多嫌疑).¹⁰ Chen's criticism of Sun Quan continues by suggesting that Sun Quan's poor decisions of appointing his crown prince and killing his son – and even his grandson – was the main reason for the state of Wu's destruction. One interpretation of *Wu shu* in *Sanguo zhi* is that the book primarily deals with Sun Quan's negative portrayal, which could explain Chen Shou's deliberate recording only a few of his achievements in Sun Quan's biography. For instance, in the first biography of *Wu shu* titled "Biographies of Sun Who Defeats Barbarians, and Sun Who Attacks Rebels" (孫破虜討逆傳 *Sun po lu tao ni zhuan*), Chen Shou's suggests that he and the Wu state historians questioned Sun Quan's moral character:

評曰：孫堅勇摯剛毅，孤微發跡，導溫戮卓，山陵杜塞，有忠壯之烈。策英氣傑濟，猛銳冠世，覽奇取異，志陵中夏。然皆輕佻果躁，隕身致敗。且割據江東，策之基兆也，而權尊崇未至，子止侯爵，於義儉矣。¹¹

My comments: Sun Jian 孫堅 is brave and sincerely resolute. He was a man of low status and poor, and he rose to power and position. He led [Zhang] Wen 張溫 to kill [Dong] Zhuo 董卓, he organized the imperial tomb, and he is loyal and magnificently upright. [Sun] Ce had a heroic spirit and liked to help others. Ce's bravery and sharpness covered the world, he liked to observe talented people and obtained ministers, and he wished to conquer the middle kingdom. However, all of their frivolousness and rash decisions led to their deaths and failure. Furthermore, Ce set up the foundation of Jiangdong 江東, but Quan was

¹⁰ According to *Far East Chinese-English dictionary* 遠東漢英大辭典, 嫌 can be translated as 疑心.

¹¹ Chen, *Wu Shu, Sun po lu tao ni zhuan* 1, p.1149.

not venerable, and [Ce's] son only receiving an official title was miserable indeed.

According to Chen's commentary, Sun Quan did not properly respect his older brother (策之基兆也，而權尊崇未至), Sun Ce, and his son did not receive any royal title after Sun Quan established himself as an emperor (子止侯爵，於義儉矣). Although Chen Shou does not blatantly attack Sun Quan's lack of moral qualities, he suggests his moral deficiency by recording Sun Quan's decision to bestow a noble title on Sun Ce's son instead of making him a minister. Nonetheless, Chen's commentary regarding Sun Quan becomes more evident throughout the later chapters because most of *Wu shu*'s chapters deal with tragic events that directly involve Sun Quan.

Another relevant aspect of *Wu shu* is Chen Shou's blatant attempt to praise everyone except Sun Quan and his heirs within the record. It appears that in most of the biographies, generals and ministers who directly served under the Sun family were praised. Although some of them had tragic endings, both Chen and Pei praise their heroic deeds and merits while serving under the Sun family. The "Biographies of Zhou Yu, Lu Su, and Lü Meng" (周瑜魯肅呂蒙傳 *Zhou yu lu su lü meng zhuan*) are the perfect examples of such appraisal from Chen and Pei. However, among Wu's great generals and ministers, the biographies and that is the biography of Zhang Zhao 張昭 stands out from the rest.

Zhang Zhao (156–236) was one of main advisers of Sun Ce and Sun Quan. According to *Sanguo zhi*, he was initially recruited by the governor of Xu province Tao Qian 陶謙 during the Eastern Han period. However, Zhang refused to serve Tao, and

became one of the Sun Ce's main advisers along with Zhou Yu 周瑜.¹² Before Sun Ce died, he asked Zhang to take care of Sun Quan and his family affairs. Zhang lived until Sun Quan declared himself as an emperor and founded the state of Wu, at which time Zhang was 77 years old. In "Biography of Zhang Zhao" (*Zhang Zhao zhuan* 張昭傳), Zhang was described as a patriot of Wu because he was known for his devotion to the state of Wu, which means he often placed the state's interests above those of his lord's, and whenever Sun Quan implemented a policy that did not benefit Eastern Wu, Zhang would criticize him.¹³ However, Zhang's straightforward attitude toward Sun Quan often created tensions between Zhang and Sun Quan. For instance, when nearly all of Wu's ministers recommended Zhang as the prime minister of Wu, Sun Quan denied the request, and hired someone else:

初，權當置丞相，眾議歸昭。權曰：“方今多事，職統者責重，非所以優之也。”后孫邵卒，百寮復舉昭，權曰：“孤豈為子佈有愛乎？領丞相事煩，而此公性剛，所言不從，怨咎將興，非所以益之也。”乃用顧雍。(Chen, *Wushu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p. 1219)

At first, when [Sun] Quan decided to set up the prime minister position, everyone recommended [Zhang] Zhao 張昭. Quan said: "Now, there are many events that are need to be taken care of, I am not giving him any preferential treatment." After Sun Shao 孫邵 was deceased, every ministers once again recommended Zhao, and Quan said: "Why would I cherish Zi Bu 子佈 (Zhang Zhao's character)? The work of prime minister is vexed, but this person's character is indomitable. If I do not follow his advice, he shall resent and blame me, and this will not benefit him." Thus, he appoints Gu Yong 顧雍.

¹² Chen, *Wu Shu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p. 1219

¹³ In *Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, Zhang Zhao harshly criticized Sun Quan for drinking and partying, and then Sun Quan was embarrassed and quickly stopped the party. The dialogue between Sun Quan and Zhang Zhao indicates that Zhang never hesitated to criticize Sun Quan if his actions for the sake of the state: 昭正色不言，出外車中坐。权遣人呼昭还，谓曰：“为共作乐耳，公何为怒乎？”昭对曰：“昔纣为糟丘酒池长夜之饮，当时亦以为乐，不以为恶也。”权默然，有惭色，遂罢酒。(Chen, *Wu Shu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p. 1219)

While Sun Quan's decision to appoint Sun Shao 孙邵 and Gu Yong 顧雍 show Sun Quan's possible hatred of Zhang's upright character, it also shows Sun Quan's "dubious and envious" characteristics as mentioned by Chen Shou in *Wuzhu zhuan*. Thus, at the end of "Biographies of Zhang, Gu, Zhuge, and Bu" (*Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 張顧諸葛步傳), Chen Shou also comments that Sun Quan's attitude toward Zhang Zhao show his inferiority compared to Sun Ce:

評曰：張昭受遺輔佐，功勳克舉，忠謇方直，動不為己；而以嚴見憚，以高見外，既不處宰相，又不登師保，從容閭巷，養老而已，以此明權之不及策也。(Chen, *Wushu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p. 1242)

My comments: Zhang Zhao received [Sun Ce's] last wish, and assisted ruler in governing. While he was performing meritorious deeds and being loyal [to his lord], he spoke out directly, and he did not act for personal interest. However, his harsh actions regard him as an outsider, and his lofty behavior estranged him, which is the reason why he was not able to become prime minister 宰相. Additionally, he did not ascend to Shibao 師保, and quietly lived his life in retirement at home. Hence it is clear that [Sun] Quan is inferior to [Sun] Ce.

Another interesting feature of this particular chapter is Pei Songzhi's commentary.¹⁴ In *Zhang Zhao zhuan*, Pei comment suggests that when Sun Ce asked Zhang Zhao to take control of power, this may mean that he did not trust Sun Quan's ability as a leader – perhaps at the time at least. This speculation is plausible because Sun Ce's last words to Zhang Zhao in Pei's commentary is parallel to Liu Bei's last dying wish to Zhuge Liang. Pei's commentary regarding Sun Quan in Zhang Zhao's biography shows that Pei is also adamant about Sun Quan's lack of leadership. Unlike Pei Songzhi, Chen Shou explicitly provides Sun Quan a negative image as a leader.

¹⁴ 策谓昭曰：“若仲谋不任事者，君便自取之。正复不克捷，缓步西归，亦无所虑。”(Chen, *Wu Shu, Sun po lu tao ni zhuan*, p.1149)

Nevertheless, the various biographies in *Wu shu* show that Pei Songzhi also criticizes Sun Quan's lack of leadership and morality, if somewhat more indirectly than does Chen Shou. In *Sanguo zhi*, there are three sets of biographies in which Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi both address Sun Quan's "suspicious and envious" nature: "Biographies of Concubines and Ladies" (*Feipin zhuan* 妃嬪傳), "Biography of Lu Xun" (*Lu Xun zhuan* 陸遜傳), and "Biographies of Yu, Lu, Zhang, Luo, Lu, Wu, and Zhu" (*Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Zu Zhu zhuan* 虞陸張駱陸吾朱傳).

Feipin zhuan is a very interesting set of biographies because not only do the biographies deal with the empress and concubines, they also describe Sun Quan and his grandson, Sun Hao's tyrannical actions toward them. The incidents recorded in *Feipin zhuan* are pivotal to the self-destruction of Wu. They point to the family feuds and corruption within the household, which is what Chen Shou suggested was the case in his *Wuzhu zhuan* commentary.¹⁵ Although *Feipin zhuan* show Sun Quan's inability to stabilize his household, the biographies themselves only focus on the empress and concubines, and they do not discuss Sun Quan's lack of moral quality in detail. On the other hand, in "Biography of Lu Xun," Chen Shou refers to Pei Songzhi's criticism of Sun Quan, and both Chen and Pei explicitly note Sun's "dubious and envious" character traits.

Chapter 58 is titled "Biography of Lu Xun" (*Lu Xun zhuan* 陸遜傳). Lu Xun is considered one of Wu's greatest prime ministers and generals, and is best known for defeating Shu at the Battle of Yi Ling (*Yi Ling zhi zhan* 夷陵之戰) in 222 AD. After Lu

¹⁵ 其后叶陵迟，遂致覆国，未必不由此也。（Chen, *Wu Shu*, *Wuzhu zhuan* 2, p.1149）

Xun defeated Shu – and Wei at the Battle of Shi Ting (*Shi Ting zhi zhan* 石亭之戰) in 228 AD – he was favored by Sun Quan. Then, after Sun Quan declared himself emperor, he appointed Lu as the new prime minister of Wu. In the novel, the reader is only told about the events leading up to the time Lu Xun becomes prime minister, since Lu Xun’s name does not reappear until Sun Quan’s death in chapter 108.¹⁶ However, Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi both state that his later life as prime minister was somewhat tragic.

After the death of the crown prince, Sun Deng, Sun Quan appointed Sun He as his heir to the throne in 242. When Sun He’s title was threatened by Sun Ba, who was favored by Sun Quan at the time, Lu decided to support Sun He, and he submitted petition letters to Sun Quan many times.¹⁷ However, Sun Quan eventually dismissed Lu from office, and Sun Quan sent officials to reprimand him. Grief-stricken, Lu fell ill and died at the age of 63.¹⁸ In *Sanguo zhi*, Chen Shou uses *Lu Xun zhuan* in order to portray Sun Quan’s tyrannical act towards to Lu Xun, who was praised by Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi for protecting Wu from Shu and Wei, and this also may imply that Sun Quan did not always treat his ministers and generals with respects. Moreover, in this particular biography, Pei Songzhi explicitly criticizes Sun Quan’s decisions to kill one thousand Wei prisoners:

臣松之以為遜慮孫權以退，魏得專力於己，既能張拓形勢，使敵不敢犯，方舟順流，無復怵惕矣，何為複潛遣諸將，奄襲小縣，致令市人

¹⁶ “By this time Lu Xun, Zhuge Jin, and other leading figures had passed away, and all matters great and small were left to Zhuge Ke.” (Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p.838)

¹⁷ 遜上疏陈：“太子正统，宜有盘石之固，鲁王藩臣，当使宠秩有差，彼此得所，上下获安。谨叩头流血以闻。”书三四上，及求诣都，欲口论适庶之分，以匡得失。既不听许，而逊外生顾谭、顾承、姚信，并以亲附太子，枉见流徙。太子太傅吾粲坐数与逊交书，下狱死。(Chen, *Wu Shu, Lu Xun zhuan* 13, p.1352)

¹⁸ 权累遣中使责让逊，逊愤恚致卒，时年六十三，家无余财。(Chen, *Wu Shu, Lu Xun zhuan* 13, p.1352)

駭奔，自相傷害？俘馘千人，未足損魏，徒使無辜之民橫罹荼酷，與諸葛渭濱之師，何其殊哉！用兵之道既違，失律之凶宜應，其祚無三世，及孫而滅，豈此之餘殃哉！¹⁹

While the minister [Lu Xun] was worried that Sun Quan might retreat his army, which would help Wei kingdom to concentrate [military] power for themselves, his broad power caused them (Wei) to dare not attack, and he believed that if the tandem ship followed the current, there is nothing to be worried. How could he send his generals to attack small counties, and surprised and caused townspeople to be afraid and fled, and caused injuries and deaths? Even if he captured and cut off the lives of one thousand enemies, it was not enough to damage Wei, and this only caused innocent people's to suffer from violence and cruelty. How is this different from Zhuge Liang's military action in the Wei river 渭? Violating the way of resort to arms would lose disciplines, and it was considered as inauspicious and cheap acts. His family lasted three generations, and this calamity was caused by Sun indeed!

The most interesting aspect of this commentary is Pei Songzhi's thoughts on Sun Quan and his household's destruction. In *Wuzhu zhuan*, Chen Shou suggests that Sun Quan's poor decision in choosing his heir was the main reason for the fall of Wu. On the other hand, Pei Songzhi suggests that Wu's destruction was retribution for Sun Quan's tyrannical act of killing one thousand Wei troops. Pei's commentary in *Lu Xun zhuan* alone does not provide enough evidence to prove that Sun Quan was a tyrant because Pei's commentary was more focused on expressing his sympathy for the murdered Wei soldiers than on criticizing Sun Quan as a tyrant – otherwise he would not have mentioned Zhuge Liang's military strategy (與諸葛渭濱之師，何其殊哉！). However, Chen Shou provides more evidence regarding Sun Quan's lack of leadership quality in “Biographies of Yu, Lu, Zhang, Luo, Lu, Wu, and Zhu” (*Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan*).

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 1351 – 1352.

Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan contains biographies of seven Wu ministers²⁰. An interesting feature of these biographies is why they were written in the first place. In *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, these characters' roles are very minimal. In fact, most of these ministers only appear in a chapter or two, and some only appear as names in the novel. Then a question arises: why did Chen Shou choose to record these seven ministers' biographies? It appears that these biographies prove Pei Songzhi's criticisms of Sun Quan. Another interesting aspect of *Wu shu* is chapter 57 – and chapter 57 is *Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan* - because this chapter has biographies of Wu ministers and generals, all of whom were either exiled or executed by Sun Quan. Moreover, the chapter shows that Sun Quan in *Sanguo zhi* is the exact opposite of the novel's portrayal of Sun Quan as a heroic figure.

Chen Shou's commentary in *Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan* is perhaps the most intriguing compared to other commentaries regarding Sun Quan's leadership in *Wu Shu* because Chen Shou mainly faults few of their tragedies to Sun Quan:

評曰：虞翻古之狂直，固難免乎末世，然權不能容，非曠宇也。陸績之於揚玄，是仲尼之左丘明，老聃之嚴週矣；以瑚璉之器，而作守南越，不亦賊夫人歟！張溫才藻俊茂，而智防未備，用致艱患。駱統抗明大義，辭切理至，值權方閉不開。陸瑁篤義規諫，君子有稱焉。吾粲、朱據遭罹屯蹇，以正喪身，悲夫！（*Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan*, p.1341）

My comments: Yu Fan 虞翻 was an harsh and upright person. Even though this certainly hard for him to avoid troubles, [Sun] Quan did not tolerate him because he (Sun Quan) was not a broad-minded person. Lu Ji's 陸績 contribution to Yang Xuan's 揚玄 [work, *Taixuan* 太玄] was equivalent to Zuo Qiuming's 左丘明 contribution [*Zuo zhuan* 左傳] to Confucius' 仲尼 [work, *Chunqiu* 春秋], or equivalent to Yan Zhou's 嚴

²⁰ *Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan* consists the biographies of Yu Fan 虞翻, Lu Ji 陸績, Zhang Wen 張溫, Luo Tong 駱統, Lu Mao 陸瑁, Wu Can 吾粲, Zhu Ju 朱據.

週 contribution to Laozi's 老聃 [work, *Dao De Jing* 道德經]. [Sun Quan] let this talented person to defend Nanyue 南越, and isn't this also harming this talented person! Zhang Wen 張溫 was a brilliantly talented person, but his intelligence was not able to protect him, and thus the disasters and worries reached him. Luo Tong 駱統 clearly upheld the cardinal principles of righteousness 大義. Although his words were absolute and his principles were at the utmost, [Sun] Quan did not listen to him and shut him down. Lu Mao 陸瑁 was an earnestly righteous, who remonstrated, and the gentleman 君子 praised him thereafter. When Wu Can 吾粲 and Zhu Ju 朱據 encountered hardship, their honesty cost their lives. What a pity!

Chen Shou's criticisms of Sun Quan in this particular set of biographies are excessive because Yu Fan and Zhang Wen were exiled by Sun Quan, Lu Ji was misused as a general when he was well known as a scholar, and Luo Tong's strategies were never taken seriously by Sun Quan. Chen Shou intends to exploit Yu Fan and Zhang Wen's harsh punishments the most because Chen believes that Sun Quan was unable to recognize good ministers' abilities, and he was not forbearing (然权不能容, 非旷宇也), which is completely different from how the novel portrays him, as we will see in the third part of this study. Most interesting of all is the fact that Chen Shou would compile a biography of Yu Fan, who was never recognized by Sun Quan throughout his career as a minister, and whose role in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, is extremely limited. In fact Yu Fan's name only appears three times in the entire novel.

Yu Fan's name first appears in an episode where he is arguing with Zhuge Liang during the latter's visit to Wu to offer an alliance between Liu Bei and Sun Quan. He appears again later when Zhou Tai is seriously wounded in battle – and Yu Fan recommends that Hua Tuo take care of his wound. The last appearance of Yu Fan is in Jingzhou 荊州, where he convinces one of Guan Yu's subordinates, Fu Shiren, to defect

to Wu. One interesting aspect of Yu Fan's biography is Yu Fan's behavior at the banquet held by Sun Quan to celebrate his enthronement.

At the banquet, Sun Quan offers Yu Fan a cup of wine, but Yu Fan lies on the ground pretending to be intoxicated. After Sun Quan moves on, Yu Fan gets up and takes his seat. Although Sun Quan wants to execute Yu for this insult, he is stopped by Liu Ji 劉基, who persuades Sun to forgive Yu Fan.²¹ Although this banquet episode is very short and is not considered as important as other episodes – which is the reason why Yu Fan's biography is one of the shortest biography in *Wu shu* - Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi both considered it to be an important indication of Sun Quan's character as an envious warlord who is not forbearing.

Sima Guang also appears to have agreed with Chen and Pei regarding Sun Quan's dubious and frivolous characteristics, which may be why he used *Sanguo zhi* as the main source for his “Chronicles of Wei” (*Weiji* 魏記).²² However, there are slight discrepancies between Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi* and Sima Guang's *Zizhi tongjian* when it comes to criticizing Sun Quan.

Part 2: Sima Guang's Criticism of Sun Quan

In the introduction to Moss Roberts' translation of *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, Roberts states that his footnotes regarding the historical information mainly came from Chen

²¹ See Chen, *Wu Shu*, *Yu Lu Zhang Luo Lu Wu Zhu zhuan* 12, p.1321 for the story in detail.

²² In *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang – like Chen Shou – also believes that the Wei is the legitimate to the Eastern Han. See Fang, *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, p. 44 – 48 for more details on Sima Guang's remarks regarding the legitimate succession of Eastern Han.

Shou's *Sanguo Zhi* and Sima Guang's *Zizhi tongjian*.²³ *Zizhi tongjian* was published in 1084, and is considered as one of the pioneering historical records of China. Although Sima Guang started working on *Zizhi tongjian* some years after he earned the *jinshi* 進士 degree in 1064, he spent nearly 20 years to complete the project, with the help mainly of three other historians, Liu Shu, Liu Ban, and Fan Zuyu.²⁴ Unlike Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi*, *Zizhi tongjian* is somewhat less informative about the Three Kingdoms period, since it covers such a larger sweep of Chinese history. When the 294-chapter *Zizhi tongjian* was presented to Emperor Shenzong 神宗, it included events dating from 403 B.C. to the end of the Five Dynasties in 960 A.D – a period that spanned 16 dynasties and 1363 years.²⁵ Thus, in *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang and Liu Shu²⁶ left many of the *Sanguo zhi* biographical records out when they were recording the Three Kingdoms period.

On the other hand, Sima Guang took an innovative approach by avoiding the usage of traditional Chinese historiography method, which divided chapters between annals of rulers (*benji* 本紀) and biographies of officials (*zhuan* 傳) like Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記. Instead, Sima Guang presented his records chronologically to make it easier for the reader to analyze events in a more historical manner – Sima Guang's presentation of Sun Quan and his ministers is in many ways the same as that of the biographies of *Sanguo zhi* – although he leaves out a few events such as the deaths of Sun Quan's

²³ Roberts (trans.), *The Three Kingdoms*, p. 940.

²⁴ In Rafe De Crespigny's translation, *The Last of the Han*, De Crespigny suggests that Sima Guang's works may have delayed due to a bitter political feud between Sima Guang and his political archrival, Wang Anshi 王安石. See De Crespigny (trans.), *The Last of the Han*, p. xii for more detail about the publication background of *Zizhi tongjian*.

²⁵ De Crespigny (trans.), *The Last of the Han*, p. xiv.

²⁶ De Crespigny states, "Liu Shu was in charge of the Three Kingdoms, the Chin dynasty, and the Period of Division." (De Crespigny, *The Last of the Han*, p.xiii)

relatives and wives. Sima Guang and Liu Shu also make use of stories from the *Zhang Zhao zhuan*, *Yu Fan zhuan*, and *Lu Xun zhuan* that are related to Sun Quan. However, they depict Sun Quan as being somewhat more forgiving and understanding than he appears in the *Sanguo zhi*.

For instance, when Zhang Zhao is remonstrating with Sun Quan for holding a banquet, Sun Quan listened to his remonstrations and ends the banquet out of shame.²⁷ As for the Yu Fan banquet incident, Sima Guang seems to indicate that Sun Quan learns from his ministers' remonstrations. The *Sanguo zhi* versions of these events are much more vividly described because Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi both imply that Sun Quan was extremely vexed by Zhang Zhao and Yu Fan's remonstrations, which is why he does not promote Zhang Zhao to be Wu's prime minister and in the end exiles Yu Fan. In comparison, Sima Guang takes a different approach by making Sun Quan as a good leader who listens to his ministers' advice and remonstrations.

Another good example is Sun Quan's intention of not promoting Zhang Zhao as Wu's prime minister. In *Sanguo zhi*, after Sun Quan appoints Gu Yong as the new prime minister, he ascends the throne as the first emperor of Wu. Following that event, Sun Quan returned Zhang Zhao's title and troops because he feels that Zhang Zhao was getting too old and sick (權既稱尊號，昭以老病，上還官位及所統領).²⁸ As for this particular event, Pei Songzhi comments that Sun Quan was mocking Zhang Zhao – but not in a serious manner because Sun Quan still respected Zhang Zhao – for suggesting

²⁷ See Chen, *Wu Shu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p.1219 for the original version or see Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, p.61 for the *Zizhi tongjian* version.

²⁸ See Chen, *Wu Shu, Zhang Gu Zhuge Bu zhuan* 7, p. 1221 for the entire story.

that Sun Quan surrender to Cao Cao when Zhuge Liang asked Sun Quan to form an alliance.²⁹ However, Chen Shou and Pei Songzhi are contextually suggesting that Sun Quan did not much like Zhang Zhao's uncompromising character, which is the reason why Chen Shou included in this account the incident about Sun Quan returning (上還) Zhang Zhao's title right before he denies the ministers' requests for Zhang Zhao's promotion.

As for Sima Guang, he also inserts this story of Zhang Zhao's failure to be promoted to be Wu's prime minister in *Zizhi tongjian*. However, unlike Chen Shou, Sima Guang then proceeds to discuss Gu Yong's success as the new prime minister, and to praise Gu's virtues.³⁰ The interesting element in Sima Guang's approach to the story of Zhang Zhao and Sun Quan is the way he seems to reverse the roles of Zhang Zhao and Sun Quan. In *Sanguo zhi*, Zhang Zhao is highly praised for his advising skills and upright character. However, in *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang, in fact, criticizes Zhao Zhao for being too "uncompromising by nature" to take a position of prime minister. Furthermore, Sima Guang even praises Sun Quan for hiring Gu Yong, and Gu's brief biography in *Zizhi tongjian* implies that Gu Yong was the right choice to be a prime minister:

[五] 吳丞相北海孫劭卒。初，吳當置丞相，眾議旭張昭，吳王曰：[方今多事，職大者責重，非所以優之也。] 及劭卒，百僚復舉昭，吳王曰：[孤豈為子佈有愛乎！領丞相事煩，而此公性剛，所言不從，怨咎將興，非所以益之也。] 六月，以太常顧雍為丞相、平尚書事。雍為人寡言，舉動時當，吳王嘗漢曰：[顧君不言，言必有中。]³¹

²⁹ Ibid. p.1222.

³⁰ See the quotes below; Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, p.184.

³¹ Sima, Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian jin zhu*, 70 juan, *Weiji* 2, pp. 15-16.

After the death of [Sun] Shao, the officials again recommended [Zhang] Zhao. The King of Wu said, ‘It is not that I begrudge it to Tzu-Pu! To be charged with the duty of a *ch’eng-hsiang* is an excessive task. And this gentleman is too uncompromising by nature. If his words are not followed, there will be complaints and reproaches from him.’ [And he gave the appointment to (Ku) Yung.] Sixth Month (July 23 – Aug. 21). The *t’ai-ch’ang* Ku Yung was appointed to be *ch’eng-hsiang* and to take charge of the business of *shang-shu*. As for his personality, [Ku] Yung [abstained from alcoholic beverages, and] was generally taciturn. His conduct was unexceptionable. The King of Wu once exclaimed, ‘Master Ku may not speak; but once he does, he speaks the right thing.’ (Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, pp. 183-184)

As for the Yu Fan banquet incident, Sima Guang criticizes Yu Fan for being intoxicated rather than blaming Sun Quan’s vexation for Yu Fan’s exile.

In *Zizhi tongjian*, Sun Quan is not really criticized for his lack of leadership. As a matter of fact, Sima Guang seems to praise Sun’s skill in hiring good ministers. Moreover, Sun Quan is not viewed as a frivolous character as he is in *Sanguo zhi*. Nevertheless, Sima Guang does criticize Sun Quan for naming his own successor, and both *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian* detail Sun Quan’s plan to eradicate family feuds in order to avoid the situation that Yuan Shao 袁紹 had to face before Yuan passed away.³² Sun Quan’s decision to appoint his own successors led him to execute and exile ministers and family members – and the first two victims were Sun He 孫和 and Sun Ba 孫霸.

³² Yuan Shao 袁紹 was a warlord during Eastern Han period. After he defeated one of his archrivals, Gongsun Zan 公孫瓚, he took control over the entire northern territories (hebei regions 河北), and he was considered as the most powerful warlord at the time of Gongsun’s defeat. However, he eventually was defeated by his colleague and another archrival, Cao Cao at the Battle of Guandu (*guandu zhi zhan* 官渡之戰), and he died in 202. Yuan Shao had three sons (Yuan Tan 袁譚, Yuan Xi 袁熙, Yuan Shang 袁尚), and he favored his third son, Yuan Shang, the most. The author of the novel indicates that Yuan Shao told Lady Liu and one of his advisers, Shen Pei to appoint Yuan Shang as his successor. (Roberts (trans.), p. 32) However, Chen Shou indicates in *Sanguo zhi* that Yuan was never able to finalize on his decision on his heir, which left his legacy to be contested by Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang. Ultimately, the family feud self-destructed the Yuan family.

While Chen Shou openly criticized Sun Quan's dubious actions of killing his ministers, sons, and grandsons, Sima Guang did not comment regarding this matter. However, it is obvious that Sima Guang, given his own political and moral values, also did not approve of Sun Quan's actions. As for Sima Guang's political and moral philosophies, I will discuss this matter later, but for now simply note that the texts in *Zizhi tongjian* show Sima Guang's implicit criticisms of Sun Quan. For instance, Sun Quan says to Sun Jun 孫峻:

子弟不睦，臣下分部，將有袁氏之敗，為天下笑。若使一人立者，安得不亂乎！³³

My sons are not friendly toward each other and my subjects are divided into two camps; there is going to be a bad end (like that) of the Yuan 袁, and we will become the laughing stock of the whole empire.” (Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 2, p. 70)

An interesting feature of this speech is that Sun Quan's decision to depose Sun He and make Sun Liang 孫亮 his new successor was exactly like the fateful decision of in Yuan Shao.³⁴ Another example of criticism would be one of Wei's generals (titled *zhengnan jiangjun* 征南将军), Wang Chang's 王昶 attack proposal to Wu, “Sun Ch'uan has banished his able ministers, and their heir and the bastard have been contending for the succession. We may well take advantage of this dissension to strike Wu.” (Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 2, p. 72)³⁵ Wang Chang's proposal is made right after Sun Quan has named Sun Liang his new crown prince, and exploits Wu's

³³ Sima, Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian jin zhu*, 75 juan, *Weiji* 7, p. 27.

³⁴ Sun Liang was the youngest son of Sun Quan, and he was favored by Sun Quan just the way Yuan Shao favored his youngest son, Yuan Shang.

³⁵ In *Zizhi tongjian jin zhu*, Sima Guang records, 征南將軍王昶上言：[孫權流放良臣，適庶分爭，可乘釁擊吳。] (Sima, 75 juan, *Weiji* 7, p.28)

weakness. Unlike *Sanguo zhi*, Sima Guang barely mentions Wu's problem throughout *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms* until Sun Quan's rapid change of his successor. Does this mean that Sima Guang actually disapproved of Sun Quan's decisions? It appears while Chen Shou and Sima Guang both had somewhat similar views on Sun Quan, they modified their presentation of Sun Quan's persona to fit their own moral and political views.

Part 3: Chen Shou's Moral Principles and Sima Guang's Political Philosophy

When Chen Shou was assigned to compile the histories of three kingdoms, the project was Chen Shou's last chance to revive his political career. In *The Biography of Sun Chien*, De Crespigny notes that Chen Shou's career was virtually over for the second time³⁶ after he finished compiling *Sanguo zhi*. Some scholars may argue that there were two reasons that Chen was dismissed by the Jin government: his mother's entombment at Luoyang 洛陽 and his disinterested moral views – which explains his detailed criticisms of nearly every single main characters. The primary difference between *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian* is their compilation methods. Although both *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian* are chronological, *Sanguo zhi* is only chronological within the biographies, which is why certain dates overlap in different biographies. De Crespigny even suggests that, “San-Kuo Chih is more a collection of biographies than a dynastic history.” (De Crespigny, p.11) As for *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang took a somewhat different approach. Instead of focusing on each kingdom's biographical information, Sima Guang focused on an overall history of *Sanguo* period, which means that *Zizhi tongjian* is what De Crespigny calls, “a

³⁶ Chen Shou once had the official title *guang lingshi* 觀閣令史 while he was in Shu. However, he was later dismissed by *houzhu* 後主 Liu Shan 劉禪 when he defied Liu Shan's favorite eunuch, Huang Hao 黃皓. The author of *Sanguo yanyi* also describes Huang Hao's role and his mischievous deeds from chapter 112 to 113 in the Mao edition (*maoben* 毛本). See De Crespigny, *The Records of the Three Kingdoms*, p.3.

dynastic history.” However, the accounts of the Wu in both the *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian* reflect their compilers’ different philosophies and moral principles.

De Crespigny states that *Sanguo zhi* is somewhat biased due to its excessive amount of criticisms of nearly all characters from each biography.³⁷ However, *Sanguo zhi* also shows Chen Shou’s desire to uphold his moral principles, which closely resembles the Confucian values of benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義). In *Analects*, Confucius generally raises his concerns regarding government affairs. He believes that when a gentleman (*junzi* 君子) leads by good moral example, people – or government in that matter – will follow:

Confucius said: “If a ruler himself is upright, all will go well without orders. But if he himself is not upright, even though he gives orders they will not be obeyed.”³⁸

Chen Shou does not exactly follow the way of Confucius in his *Sanguo zhi* commentaries since he expresses his admiration for Cao Cao as a statesman, although he does recognize Cao Cao’s “former mistakes”.³⁹ Still, Chen Shou integrates Confucian values into *Sanguo zhi* by harshly criticizing various warlords and the emperors such as Yuan Shao, Sun Quan, and Cao Pi 曹丕. In so doing Chen Shou shows that his criteria for determining

³⁷ De Crespigny, *The Biography of Sun Chien*, p.11.

³⁸ Wm. Theodore de Bary (ed.), *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, p.XIII: 6.

³⁹ In *Wei Shu*, *Wudi ji* 1, Chen Shou comments, “不念旧恶，终能总御皇机，克成洪业者，惟其明略最优也。” (Chen, *Wei Shu*, *Wudi ji* 1, p.55) This suggests that although Chen Shou recognizes Cao Cao’s past evil deeds, Chen still approves his great achievements as a leader of Wei.

statesmanship is based on degree of benevolence or cruelty shown by of each individual as an administrator.⁴⁰

The *Wuzhu zhuan* commentary displays Chen Shou's somewhat complimentary but also derogatory tones. To reiterate, Chen Shou – like Sima Guang – mainly criticizes Sun Quan for replacing the crown princes twice and killing his own son and grandson. What is most interesting here is the degree of criticism. It appears that Chen Shou mostly blames Wu's self-destruction on Sun Quan, which is very controversial because most historians generally conclude that the tyrannical reign of Sun Hao was the main cause of Wu's downfall.

Chen Shou's criticism of Sun Quan reflects his own moral principles as well as historical fact. Moreover, in his compilation of *Sanguo zhi*, Chen Shou changed the personas of Sun Quan and other warlords. It is possible say that Chen Shou prejudicially disparaged these warlords from the Three Kingdoms era in order to applaud the Wei as the “legitimate succession” (*zhengtong* 正統).⁴¹ But be that as it may, “legitimate succession” does not explain Chen Shou's criticism of Cao Pi's moral character. It appears Chen intended to incorporate his personal views in *Sanguo zhi* - including Confucian moral values – when he criticizes Sun Quan and others in order to show Chen's disapproval of Sun Quan's lack of moral values. As for *Zizhi tongjian*, while Sima Guang still agrees with Chen Shou's way of legitimizing the Wei as the rightful

⁴⁰ In “Comment on Chen Shou's Historiography,” Xia Zu-en states that Chen Shou's criterion for statesmanship is the degree of kindness or cruelty of the individual ruler.

⁴¹ In the first volume of *The Chronicles of Three Kingdoms*, Glen W. Baxter states it was logical for Sima Guang and Chen Shou to adopt the Wei as a chronological framework because the Jin dynasty was derived its power from Wei. (Fang (trans.), vol. 1, xiii)

successor, he incorporates his own personal views on moral values and politics, which changes Sun Quan's persona once more in a very interesting direction.⁴²

Sima Guang is recognized by modern scholars as having been not only one of the greatest Chinese historians, but also as an important “conservative” statesman. In his article “Government, Society, and State: On the Political Visions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih,” Peter Bol notes Sima Guang's conservative belief in government oriented politics.⁴³ Ji Xiao-bin explores Sima Guang's political philosophies in more detail in his book, in *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*. Ji states, “Sima thought that history had shown the necessary rules for maintaining any such structure. These rules were as follows: The ruler had to appoint appropriate persons to the various offices of government. He had to be benevolent, knowledgeable, and firm in supporting those he had appointed.” (Ji, p. 12)

Ji's statement regarding Sima Guang's beliefs on history may help explain why in *Zizhi tongjian* Sima Guang appears to use Sun Quan to symbolize the ideal ruler. Sima Guang's portrayal of Sun Quan contrasts with Chen Shou's in that the former highly regarded Sun Quan's hiring skills while the latter did not. Sima Guang's view of Sun Quan hiring Gu Yong instead of Zhang Zhao is the perfect example of this difference in opinion.⁴⁴ Moreover, Sima Guang essentially believed that a good –or loyal – relationship

⁴² See Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, pp. 45- 48 for Sima Guang's remarks on *zhengtong*.

⁴³ See Bol, “Government, Society, and State: On the Political Visions of Ssu-ma Kuang and Wang An-shih,” p.158.

⁴⁴ Chen Shou valued the ruler's benevolence more than any other moral values, and Chen Shou stated that Sun Quan was not benevolent due to his frivolous character traits and killing his sons and grandsons.

between the ruler and his subjects was the key to preserving the peace.⁴⁵ It is evident, then, that Sima Guang purposefully manipulated the stories of Zhang Zhao and Yu Fan in order to depict them as ideal leaders. However, Sima Guang still disapproved of Sun Quan's choice of his own successor because they led to enormous family disputes. According to Ji, Sima Guang's close relationship with Emperor Yingzong 英宗 and the royal family helped Sima Guang's political career.⁴⁶ Like Chen Shou, Sima Guang also had to criticize Sun Quan's behavior in this regard.

Part 4: Sun Quan's new persona in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*

In *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, Sun's character is modified yet again. In *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel: Ssu ta ch'i-shu*, Andrew H. Plaks mentions that *Sanguo zhi tongshu yanyi* considered the earliest version of *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, was first printed around 1522 – despite its first preface dated 1494.⁴⁷ Possibly one of the most interesting aspects of *tongshu yanyi* is the novel's adaptation from the historical records. Many historians and scholars would say that *tongshu yanyi* was mainly influenced by Zhu Xi's *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*.⁴⁸ Unlike other supplementary or abridged documents, *gangmu* was one of the most important bridges between the historical *Sanguo* story and the novel. Nearly a century after Sima Guang presented his *Zizhi tongjian* compilation to the throne,

⁴⁵ Ji states, "To Sima, the loyalty of the ministers to their ruler was essential for the stability of the government, and therefore for the preservation of the general peace." (Ji, p. 15)

⁴⁶ See chapter 5 of *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China* for more detailed story about his relationship with Emperor Yingzong.

⁴⁷ See Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, p. 362. The second preface is dated 1522.

⁴⁸ In *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, Anne E. McLaren states, "A seventeenth-century edition of the Narrative of the Three Kingdoms [*Sanguo zhi tongshu yanyi*] from Hangzhou contains the following declaration in its preface: 'Luo Guanzhong took historical material from the *Sanguo zhi* [i.e. official history] and from the [*Zizhi tongjian*] *gangmu* [Outline of the Comprehensive mirror of government, by Zhu Xi] and made it comprehensive so that ignorant men and commoners (*yufu shushi*) could read and recite it (*jiangdu*).'" (McLaren, p. 161) Although McLaren's statement regarding the readership is not convincing, McLaren's discovery of the preface can convince the reader that *gangmu* was the main source of *Sanguo zhi yanyi*.

Zhu Xi and his assistant presented their condensation and rearrangement of Sima Guang's work. Zhu Xi's compilation was the first to place Shu as the legitimate succession of the Eastern Han.⁴⁹ This idea of *zhengtong* becomes such a critical and controversial themes in the novel that Mao opens his *dufa* essay "How to Read *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* " with a defense of Zhu Xi's argument regarding the Shu Han's legitimacy.⁵⁰

Once the novel established the Shu as the legitimate successor to the Han dynasty, there was a drastic change in the roles of the *Sanguo* characters, especially Cao Cao and Sun Quan. Cao Cao is perhaps the most intriguing figure in the history of *Sanguo*. Although praised for his achievements by Chen Shou and Sima Guang, in the novel Cao Cao emerges as an unscrupulous hero (*jianxiong* 奸雄), more cunning villain than skillful warlord. On the other hand, Sun Quan seems to almost disappear from the story, and his role in the novel is minimal. In fact, the novel rarely mentions his name after the Battle of Red Cliff and the Battle of Yi Ting.⁵¹ The most interesting new item introduced in the novel concerns his death. In chapter 108, after Sun Quan passes away, a poet writes the following poem about Sun Quan, the first couplet of which I cited earlier:

The purple beard, the gem green eyes, hailed a hero true;
And Sun Quan's vassal-officers freely gave their love.
One score and four he reigned, the Southland king:

⁴⁹ Fang (trans.), *The Chronicles of the Three Kingdoms*, vol. 1, p. xiii.

⁵⁰ Rolston (ed.), *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, pp.152-153.

⁵¹ Sun Quan's name first appears in chapter 29 and dies in chapter 108 in 120-chapter version.

A dragon coiled, a tiger poised below the mighty Jiang.⁵²

An interesting notion of this poem is that this is one of only two poems that describe for Sun Quan in the novel. Furthermore, this poem is controversial because the poet refers to Sun as a king, not as the emperor of Wu. This could be interpreted as the author's and Mao Zonggang's way of commenting on Sun Quan as an illegitimate successor. Moreover, Mao Zonggang in fact edited this poem. In *Sanguo yanyi shici jianshang* 三國演義詩詞鑑賞, Zheng Tiesheng 鄭鐵生 states that when the Mao edition was printed, nearly 200 lines were either deleted or edited by Mao Zonggang, including a line in chapter 108.⁵³ In chapter 108, *tongsu yanyi* version had an additional line “積善之家慶有餘.” This line of poetry translates, “accumulation of goodness to the family will have enough to rejoice the happy outcome.” This line is somewhat ironic and yet controversial in *tongsu yanyi* because Sun Quan's family did not accumulate goodness but rather were engaged in many conflicts with one another.

We do not know why Mao Zonggang deleted this specific line. However, the way Mao selected each lines of poetry is very similar to the way Sima Guang selected his stories about Sun Quan. In *Zizhi tongjian*, Sima Guang never falsified the historical information, but he still carefully chose the stories and compiled them chronologically to create different perspectives on his characters. As for Mao, he seemed to have carefully chosen the lines of poems and put them together so as to produce a different characterization of Sun Quan. In *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*,

⁵² Roberts (trans.), *Three Kingdoms*, p. 838.

⁵³ See 鄭鐵生, 《三國演義詩詞鑑賞》 (Beijing Press, 1995) ; In *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, Rolston also mentions that Mao cut about two hundred lines of commentarial poems. (Rolston, p. 237)

Rolston suggests that the poems in *Sanguo zhi yanyi* are commentarial. Moreover, Sheldon Lu states that the reason Mao Zhonggang believed that *Sanguo zhi yanyi* was far superior to *Shuihu zhuan* was because of the former faithfulness to the historical source.⁵⁴

Thus Mao Zonggang's approach to the novel and his way of editing Sun Quan's character as a heroic figure from the *tongsu yanyi* edition via commentarial poetry is parallel to Sima Guang's approach to Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi* via Chen Shou and other various scholars' commentaries. Although Mao and Sima have different views on *zhengtong*, they both seem have a similar way of portraying Sun Quan's heroic qualities. On the other hand, it is very interesting to see how Mao and the author of *tongsu yanyi* both reduced the role of Sun Quan in the novel to camouflage his frivolous character traits as if they were following Sima Guang's method of hiding Sun Quan mischievous deeds by simply not displaying many of Sun Quan's mistakes and cutting his story short by focusing more on the Shu and Wei affairs.⁵⁵

It is hard to simply conclude that the character of Sun Quan in the novel was based entirely on the historical records because Sun Quan's persona as the warlord changes in different ways as different compilers and authors use him to embody different values. Nevertheless, the author of the novel and Mao Zhonggang may have used the same method as the compilers of the historical records to portray Sun Quan as a hero. Then the final question is: can *Sanguo zhi yanyi* be regarded as a work of history?

Part 5: Sanguo zhi yanyi: The new form of historiography

⁵⁴ See Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality*, p. 141; Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, pp. 193-195.

⁵⁵ In *Sanguo zhi*, *Wu Shu* (20 volumes) has more biographies and annals than *Shu Shu* (15 volumes), which shows there are more stories about Sun Quan and his ministers than the Shu ministers and generals.

In his article “Traditional Chinese Fiction – The State of the Field,” Robert E. Hegel proposes that *xiaoshuo* – as a term – did not fit into the major category of narrative such as history.⁵⁶ Although Hegel would debunk the idea of *zhanghui xiaoshuo* such as *Sanguo zhi yanyi* being a historiographical work, *Sanguo zhi yanyi* is somewhat distinct from other *zhanghui xiaoshuo*. Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 thinks *Sanguo zhi yanyi* is hard to categorize as historical narrative or “other” narrative as Hegel suggests because it is 70 percent historical and 30 percent fictional (*qishi sanxu* 七實三虛).⁵⁷ Sheldon Lu states that Mao Zonggang believed *Sanguo zhi yanyi* was more closer to a form of historiography (*shih* 史) rather than to fiction based on historical records.⁵⁸ In addition to Lu’s statement, Liangyan Ge also suggests how *Sanguo zhi yanyi* closely ties to historiography – even in the popular version (*yeshi*).⁵⁹

Sanguo zhi yanyi is indeed too complicated to pinpoint its category in the world of Chinese narrative. As Mao Zonggang mentioned, unlike other *zhanghui xiaoshuo* such as *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 or *Xiyou ji* 西遊記, *Sanguo zhi yanyi* is very faithful to its historical events. We can see this in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*’s fictional sections, most of which deal with the Shu and Wei. On the other hand, there are only three major episodes that are fictional in *Sanguo zhi yanyi*.⁶⁰ Moreover, Sun Quan’s tales are very similar to the

⁵⁶ Hegel states, “As a term for classifying writings in early China, *xiaoshuo* seemingly meant ‘other’ works that did not fit into the major category of narrative, i.e., history.” (Hegel, p. 394)

⁵⁷ See Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠, *Chang Hsueh-cheng i-shu* 章學誠遺書, pp. 396-97.

⁵⁸ See Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality*, pp. 141-142.

⁵⁹ See Ge, *Out of the Margins*, p. 37.

⁶⁰ The first episode is the death of Hua Xiong. According to *Sanguo zhi*, Hua Xiong was defeated by Sun Jian’s army. However, the author of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* and *Sanguo zhi pinghua* changed the story as one of many great tales of Guan Yu. The second episode is the death of Sun Ce. In *Sanguo zhi yanyi*, one of the main reasons of Ce’s death was killing Yu Ji 于吉. The last episode is Guan Yu’s death. After Guan Yu died, the author describes that Guan’s head was floating around the sky and he cursed at Sun Quan for his forwardness.

tales that were told in *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian* as if the author directly copied the stories from the two historical records. Andrew Hing-bun Lo's dissertation, "*San-Kuo-Chih Yen-I and Shui-Hu Chuan in the Context of Historiography*" shows much more detailed evidence – such as insertion of poems, commentaries (*ping* 評), and notes that mentioned historical records - of *Sanguo zhi yanyi*'s relationship to historiography.⁶¹

Sanguo zhi yanyi's writing style is not necessarily distinctive, since it can be traced back to Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記. According to Stephen W. Durant, *Shiji* consists of details that portray Sima Qian's self-representation.⁶² Moreover, Sima Qian not only relied heavily on earlier documentary sources and even integrated his own views on political and military affairs like *Sanguo Zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian*, he often made use of fictional materials in his biographies. For instance, in Burton Watson's translation, *Records of the Grand Historian in China*, Sima Qian depicts the supernatural side of Han Gaozu, Liu Bang's youth:

[Gaozu] was fond of wine and women and often used to go to Dame Wang's or old lady Wu's and drink on credit. When he got drunk and lay down to sleep, the old women, to their great wonder, would always see something like a dragon over the place where he was sleeping. Also, whenever he would drink and stay at their shops, they would sell several times as much as wine as usual. Because of these strange happenings, when the end of the year came around the old women would always destroy Kao-tsu's credit slips and clear his account.⁶³

According to Han Yu-shan's *Elements of Chinese Historiography*, one of the essential functions of the historian in ancient China was astronomy. Han suggests that astrology –

⁶¹ For more information, see Lo (dissert.), "*San-Kuo-Chih Yen-I and Shui-Hu Chuan in the Context of Historiography*," pp.18 – 23.

⁶² See Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror*, p. xix.

⁶³ See Watson (trans.), *Records of the Grand Historian in China: Han Dynasty vol.1*, p.78.

during the Zhou 周, Qin 秦, and Han 漢 period – was closely associated with a mythical or supernatural significance, which means the fictional aspects of the historical record *Shiji* can be considered as historiography because Dame Wang’s observation of “sleeping dragon” is part of historiography regardless of its credibility.⁶⁴ Therefore, it appears that the novel *Sanguo zhi yanyi* could be viewed as the writing of history as well. Although some of the novel’s episodes may not be fictional or even mythical – such as Guan Yu’s head floating around or Sun Ce’s death involving Yu Ji’s curse – the author’s intention of inserting mythical or supernatural elements are one of many features in historiography, and it is possible to assume that *yanyi* can be read as reading a historical record.

Conclusion

Sun Quan’s change of persona appears to be gradual. In fact, it starts from *Zizhi tongjian*. Unlike accounts of Liu Bei or Cao Cao, Sun Quan’s tales were fairly consistent, and the author of the novel was very faithful to its historical source. Although Sun Quan’s tales may have been consistent, there are a few changes that Sima Guang, Zhu Xi, Mao Zonggang, and the author of *Sanguo zhi yanyi* made in accordance with their own political philosophies and moral values.

It appears that each of them slightly shortened or re-arranged Sun Quan’s tales to create a distinctive persona of Sun Quan to portray their views – regarding politics or moral values etc. Yet none of them falsified nor changed Sun Quan’s character as a whole. For instance, most of his speeches and actions in *Sanguo zhi* – unless the event was not included in the story - were the same in the later tale of Sun Quan.

⁶⁴ See Han, *Elements of Chinese Historiography*, p. 3.

Another interesting discovery that has resulted from my research is the novel's usage of poetry to portray Sun Quan. In *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, Rolston argues that these poems can be function as commentary. In the entire novel, there are only two poems about Sun Quan. The first poem is in chapter 67 when he was riding his horse to save himself because he was being chased by the Wei troops at the time. The second poem is Sun Quan's eulogy in chapter 108. The most intriguing aspect of Sun Quan's two poems is his eulogy because it creates another persona of Sun Quan as one of the great three heroes in the novel.

However, it is ironic to see how the poet praises Sun Quan as a hero even though Sun Quan doesn't embody much of these heroic achievements or performances. It is very interesting to see how merely describing his physical appearance and the love – without any explanation bestowed on him by his ministers can earn him the title of hero in the novel. Although Mao Zonggang gives Sun Quan some credit for maintaining a long and good relationship with the Shu in his *dufa* essay, Sun Quan's presence in the novel is so minimal that the reader hardly recognizes it.⁶⁵

In *In the Shadow of the Han*, Holcombe argues that the compilers reconstructed the stories in *Shishuo xinyu* in order to reflect the traditional Confucian bias toward purely political history (Holcombe, pp. 112-113). It appears that the novels or collection of stories in late imperial China often integrated politics and moral – or Confucian – values to view the characters through the author's or compiler's perspectives. For instance, in his *The Novel in Seventeenth Century China*, Hegel states that in the late

⁶⁵ See Rolston (ed.), *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, p. 163 for Mao's statement regarding the Shu-Wu alliances.

Ming and early Qing periods, there were many tumultuous events, and some recorded these events as unofficial historical records or informal memoirs, which later became the sources for fiction.⁶⁶ It was fascinating to see how the histories *Sanguo zhi*, *Zizhi tongjian*, and the novel *Sanguo zhi yanyi* had similar elements and methods to approach Sun Quan's character and change his personas into three unique individuals. Sun Quan's character and his persona in *Sanguo zhi yanyi* were certainly derived directly from *Sanguo zhi* and *Zizhi tongjian*.

Thus, I would conclude that the novel itself can be viewed as another form of the Three Kingdoms era historiography because the author – based on Sun Quan's tales – and Sima Guang both take the same approach for Sun Quan's character representation. The various changes of Sun Quan's persona show that the novel took another step of becoming another type of historiography, and we can see *Sanguo Zhi*, *Zizhi tongjiang*, *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, and *Sanguo zhi tongsu yanyi* as the anthology of historical records regarding the Three Kingdoms stories with different perspectives.

⁶⁶ See Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth Century China*, p. 67.

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