

Inheritance, Swerving, Tuning and Complementing: The Flux of Qu Yuan's Cultural Image in the Han Dynasty

Yihang Xu^{1,a,*}

¹Shandong University, Faculty of Art, Jinan, 250100, China

a. 1298274307qq@sina.com

*corresponding author

Abstract: The study of Qu Yuan has always been a key topic in Chuci, and since Wang Guowei's study in 1906, Qu Yuan's image and works has been continuously excavated in different periods. Being widely eulogized at that time, the discussion and compilation of Qu Yuan's cultural image by the rulers and scholars of the two Han Dynasty gave Qu Yuan a unique cultural connotation, and they jointly compiled a unique "Qu Yuan" belonging to the Han Dynasty. Against the background of the emergence of a new era of cultural study, the reinterpretation of the cultural image of historical figures in ancient China can contribute to the restoration of a more authentic history and culture. Hence, analyzing the flux of the cultural image of "Qu Yuan" in the two Han dynasty can clarify the cultural concepts promoted in different eras of the Han Dynasty and the overall historical tendency of its development.

Keywords: Qu Yuan, Han Dynasty, cultural image.

1. Introduction

The academic discourse on the historical image of Qu Yuan has always been an important topic in the study of Qu Yuan and *Chuci*. Early twentieth-century studies mainly inherited predecessor's achievements, concentrating on poetic and purely literary exegesis, and the studies from 1949 to 1978 primly concentrated on Qu Yuan's patriotism, popularity, and proletarian, and to a certain extent were bound by class study methodology. Since the Reform and Opening-up, the rise of cultural study models has made Qu Yuan's cultural image in contemporary times given more connotations that can be mined. Moreover, the Marxist class analysis also affords a new perspective to unearth the cultural image of historical figures, and the combination of different groups of people in the Han Dynasty - the rulers and the scholar-official (士大夫) - can present a clearer picture of the variations in Qu Yuan's image during this period. This paper mainly adopts the mode of cultural study, focusing on the flux of Qu Yuan's cultural image, exploring the connection between the change of cultural image and the historical and cultural trend of the Han Dynasty, and adding to the research study of clarifying Qu Yuan's cultural image. Meanwhile, a holistic dissection of Qu Yuan's cultural image is more helpful to fathom out the source of Chinese cultural self-confidence.

2. Into the Rulers' Eyes

When elucidating the cultural images of historical figures, ancient China scholars mainly relied on the hermeneutic conception, Yi-yi-ni-zhi (以意逆志). This means using individualised ideology to surmise the cultural connotations of the original figure. In order to shape the sacred Han cultural system, the rulers of the Han Dynasty raised this awareness to the national level, and systematically inherited, absorbed and integrated the culture of the previous generation, thus shaping a "'faith space' to which all the people belonged" (万民归命的“信仰空间”)[1]. In order to realise the historical task of "Han unification", the far-reaching Jing-Chu Culture of the Warring States period entered into the vision of the rulers and scholar-officials, who were the main writers of Han culture. Many Han Dynasty rulers showed their affinity and yearning for Chu Culture: Emperor Gaozu of Han was born in Pei (which was then under the jurisdiction of Chu), and was deeply influenced by the Jing-Chu Culture: *Shih chi-the Biographies of Liu Ching and Shu-sun T'ung* (史记-刘敬叔孙通列传) recorded that: "Shu-sun T'ung customarily wore the robes of a Confucian scholar but, because the king of Han had such a great dislike for this costume, he changed to a short robe cut-in the fashion of Chu, which pleased the king." (叔孙通儒服,汉王憎之;乃变其服,服短衣,楚制,汉王喜。)[2]; *Shih chi - the Basic Annals of Emperor Kao-tsu* (史记-高祖本纪) recorded: "A great wind came forth; the clouds rose on high. Now that my might rules all within the seas, I have returned to my old village. Where shall I find brave men to guard the four corners of my land!" (大风起兮云飞扬,威加海内兮归故乡,安得猛士兮守四方!)[2], these all can be seen in his admiration of Chu culture; additionally, other Han Dynasty rulers also have shown a strong admiration for Chu culture, such as Liu An, the Prince of Huainan: *the Biographies of Huainan, Hengshan, and Jibei Vassal King recorded* (淮南衡山济北王传) stated: "Be ordered to write *Li Sao Zhuan* (离骚传), in the morning to accept the imperial decree, and at noon when it was submitted up.....talk about the gains and losses and the literary techniques of Fu until dusk" (使为《离骚传》,旦受诏,日食时上.....谈说得失及方技赋颂,昏莫然后罢)[3], which can showed he not only exhibited his ardour for Chu culture, but also great admiration for Qu Yuan's personality. Emperor Wu and Xuan of Han exhibited their acceptance and recognition of the "Chu culture": *Tai Ping Yu Lan-Zhidao Bu* (太平御览-治道部) recorded: "The Emperor was very delighted by the words of the Chuci (言楚辞,帝甚悦之)[4], indicating that Emperor Wu appreciated the scholar-officials who excelled at making Chuci. Besides, the fact that Emperor Wu copied Song Yu's *Jiu bian* (九辩) and took the sadness of autumn to make the *Qiufeng Ci* (秋风辞). The Biography of *Wang Bao* (王褒传), which stated that "the Emperor Xuan summoned people from Jiujiang County who were proficient in Chuci" (征能为九江《离骚》被公)[3] can prove his good grace of Qu Yuan. Against this background, Qu Yuan, a prominent image in Chu culture, became an essential medium for shaping Han Dynasty's culture. The official ideology promoted by the rulers began to "compile" the unique image of Qu Yuan in this period.

3. Binding "Qu Yuan" and Chu Culture - Jia Yi and Liu Xiang's Inheritance

Han Dynasty rulers' promotion of Chu culture affected many celebrities of the scholar-official class during the Western Han period, who became the spokesmen for the central government's task of passing on and transforming Chu culture in a dichotomy of conscious and unconscious roles. It should be emphasised here that the so-called "conscious", that is, the literati chose to take the initiative to select the cultural image in accordance with their own spiritual concepts, while the "unconscious" refers to the official ideology promoted by the Han rulers, which influenced the choice of the scholar-official class at the subconscious level. The interaction of these two factors contributed to the unearthing and compilation of the cultural image of Qu Yuan. The first to systematise this mission

was the early Han poet Jia Yi (贾谊), whose discovery of Qu Yuan and Chuci began after he was deposed in Changsha. During the period of deposition, Jia Yi's creative Fu and excursions were a powerful manifestation of the schola-official class "creating the image of Qu Yuan as a spiritual forerunner for their own purposes" [5], thus highlighting the core purpose of grafting "Qu Yuan" into Han culture. According to Jia Yi's records in the *Shih chi*, he showed a strong sense of overthrowing the old system and seeking new changes in his early years, which was not completely extinguished after he was deposed. Against the backdrop of the Western Han rulers' close respect for Chu culture, Jia Yi, who was disillusioned with his political career, aspired to realize his political ideals at the cultural level - shaping a cultural system that belonged to the Han Dynasty; in addition, his relegation to Chu made him partly influenced by the Jing-Chu culture. Driven by these factors, Jia Yi unearthed Qu Yuan. In his eyes, Qu Yuan was not only a representative "cultural image" of the Jing and Chu cultures, but also a flawless case to reflect his personal perishing life experience. The task of the Han rulers in compiling the Chu culture was deconstructed by Jia Yi to have a more explicit and concrete meaning - to shape "Qu Yuan" as a great historical figure to represent the official ideology of the Han dynasty. Driven by this idea, Jia Yi made a number of endeavors: first of all, he strongly canonised and disseminated Qu Yuan and Chuci, and by imitating the compositional patterns of *Li Sao* and *Jiu Zhang*, he intended to create a creative culture of respecting and learning Qu Yuan among the circle of scholar-officials in the early Han Dynasty. Furthermore, in the early Han Dynasty, the clan state's style of supporting the scholar-officials (养士之风) was very prevalent [6], and the severance between the central government and the localities made the localities' sense of developing their unique cultures grow. The first literary groups of scholar-officials who inherited the mission of spreading Chu culture from Jia Yi, represented by the literary groups of Zou Yang (邹阳) and Mei Sheng (枚乘) during the period of the Prince of Liang Xiao, began to coalesce in the vassal states. Although there were many differences between the central government and the localities during the Wenjing period, the central government's admiration for Chu culture made them acquiesce to the growth of this cultural phenomenon at the local level. As a result, "Qu Yuan" was formally given the first concrete "cultural image" by the Han rulers- the Jing-Chu culture accepted by the Han dynasty. During the reign of Emperor Xuan of Han, with the deepening of conscious and unconscious awareness, the rulers and scholar-officials further enhanced the cultural status of the image of Qu Yuan, while highly recognising his historical role, the reasonableness of the Han Dynasty's acceptance of and promotion of the Jing-Chu culture. Liu Xiang's (刘向) collation and compilation of Chuci at the behest of the government is a strong proof of this. All in all, after the six generations of the Gaozu, Han culture basically broke away from the fence of the Warring States and formed a unique cultural system. The image of "Qu Yuan" continued to be inherited and superimposed, and eventually became an important cultural tool for the rulers to fulfil their historical mission under this historical tendency. This idea can be demonstrated by the generally positive assessment of Qu Yuan by rulers and scholars before the Xuan and Cheng periods of the Western Han Dynasty.

4. Swerving "Qu Yuan" - Yang Xiong and Ban Gu's "Derogation of Qu" Theory

As a result of the policy of "Dismiss the hundred schools, revere only the Confucian" (罢黜百家、独尊儒术) promoted by Emperor Wu of Han, a group of Confucian scholars, such as Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒), integrated the culture of the hundred schools into the old Confucianism system, forming "Han Confucianism". The Chu culture represented by the image of "Qu Yuan" was gradually transformed by the Han rulers and scholar-officials. "The historical mission of Qu Yuan and Chu culture in the Han Dynasty had been completed, and their own cultural image began to compromise with the Han Dynasty cultural system, and was more constrained by the "Han Confucian classics and

ethics"[7]. Therefore, in the eyes of the Western Han rulers after Emperor Yuan of Han, "Qu Yuan" was no longer a sublime "cultural symbol" representing the official ideology of the Han Dynasty, but in the eyes of the scholars, the image of Qu Yuan was continuously improved by the efforts of the literati through the generations. As a result, the connotation of the Qu Yuan's cultural image was separated between the ruler and the scholarly community, and the scholar-official community's evaluation of Qu Yuan's history had to conform to the official ideology promoted by the Han rulers, as well as to their own individualised interpretation of Qu Yuan. The compilation of Qu Yuan's historical image began to shift from the "inherited" to the "intertextual" in the first and middle periods of the Western Han Dynasty, and it was Yang Xiong (扬雄), a literary scholar in the late Western Han Dynasty, who was the first to realise and present this historical trend. In *Wu Zi Chapter* (吾子篇), it was written, "Like white jade or bright jewels, it is like Danqing. As his wise!" (如玉如茨, 爰变丹青如其智!) [8], on the elucidation of "as his wise" (如其智), Li Daming expounded it as "Yang Xiong believed that Qu Yuan was 'wise', but he did not agree with Qu Yuan's martyrdom for the sake of loyalty to the king"[9]; and *Taixuan Fu* (太玄赋) wrote: "Qu Yuan died in fish belly in his sincere pursuit of purity..... I'm different. That's why I write "*Taixuan Fu*" (屈子慕清, 葬鱼腹兮.....我异于此, 执《太玄》兮) [10]. According to this, Yang Xiong showed a very different attitude to life from Qu Yuan. Therefore, his compilation of "Qu Yuan" is also filled with conflicts and contradictions: Yang Xiong firstly affirmed Qu Yuan's talent and literary achievements from the point of view of the scholar-official class, as recorded in the Biography of *Yang Xiong* (扬雄传): "He made Li Sao, threw himself into the river and died, and I really grieved for Qu Yuan's writings, and read them without shedding tears." (作《离骚》, 投江而死, 悲其文, 读之未尝不流涕) and "Why throwing ourselves into the torrential river"何必湘渊与涛濞[3], all these prove that Yang Xiong did deeply comprehend the "Yuan" (怨) and "Loyalty" (忠) shown in Li Sao, and deeply sympathised with Qu Yuan's unfortunate life situation, affirming his role as a symbol of the spirit of Chu culture, which is basically the same as that of Jia Yi and Liu Xiang. However, Yang Xiong was perplexed by his life choices: he first criticised Qu Yuan's "showing off his talent" and "unruliness", and *Fan Li Sao* (反离骚) wrote: "Called the male hemlock to be a matchmaker, why did you leave so many times, thinking that none of them could be your mate?" (扈雄鸠以作媒兮, 何百离而曾不壹耦) [3], Yang Xiong opined that it is this arrogant attitude that led to its loss of help in the court, through the "The fragrance is so aromatic that no one would sniff it, so why not store it inside the house?" (芳酷烈而莫闻兮, 不如褻而幽之离房) [3] to illustrate the solution, temporarily let go of the inner unruly, compromise, looking for like-minded allies, and jointly assist the king to achieve their political ideals; Secondly, Yang Xiong criticised Qu Yuan's "maladroit martyrdom" and "lose sight of the situation", the *History of the Former Han - the Biography of Yang Xiong* recorded "Junzi can naturally make a big difference when the situation is right, while when the situation is not right, he hibernates like Loong or a snake; whether the current situation is good or bad all relies on the mandate of heaven, so why should we recklessly commit ourselves to the age?" (君子得时则大行, 不得时则龙蛇, 遇不遇命也, 何必湛身哉) [3]. "That is to say, the viewpoint of "the current situation" and "the Mandate of Heaven" is used by him to oppose Qu Yuan's life choices [11]. In other words, a gentleman should adopt a flexible way of life in this chaotic age, to preserve himself, endure for a while, and look for the right time, instead of using extreme means for self-destruction and blindly seeking the right time. Instead of resorting to extreme means of self-destruction, blind martyrdom could not save the country and the people. All in all, under the influence of Confucian moral consciousness in the Han Dynasty, Yang Xiong's evaluation of Qu Yuan is marked by the unique cultural atmosphere of the Western Han Dynasty's Cheng and Ai periods. Qu Yuan's image was not as positive as before, and the theory of "derogation of Qu" (贬屈论) was derived from this; therefore, under the contradiction between the

theory of "derogation of Qu" and "praise of Qu", Qu Yuan was constantly compiled by the "intertext" of the two, and gradually changed from the previous symbol of the spirit of the Chu culture to a poet of outstanding literary talent and rebellious character.

Yang Xiong's judgment and molding of Qu Yuan's historical image slightly shows the separation of the identification and judgement of his image by the "rulers" and the "scholar-officials", and this phenomenon is even more significantly extended in the case of Ban Gu. Ban Gu's characterisation of Qu Yuan's cultural image is mainly presented in two small preludes - *Li Sao Xu* (离骚序) and *Li Sao Zan Xu* (离骚赞序): *Li Sao Zan Xu* stated that Qu Yuan's "Loyalty can't be suppressed internally..... Can not bear the turbid world, throwing himself to the Miluo river" (忠诚之情,怀不能已.....不忍浊世,自投汨罗) [12], visibly he fully affirmed Qu Yuan's loyalty to the country and noble personality, and stated "being sorrowful, the King can't tell right from wrong, appointing a series of villains" (痛君不明,信用群小) revealed in the grief feelings of sympathy and regret, in addition, Ban Gu in the History of the Former Han - the Biography of Jia Yi commented: Qu Yuan, Chu's excellent courtier" (屈原,楚贤臣也) [3], and in the *Gu jin ren biao* (古今人表) Qu Yuan as the level of Zhongshang (中上), can be seen Ban Gu's admiration for Qu Yuan's personality and talent; however, in the *Li sao xu*, Ban Gu's evaluation of Qu Yuan's transformation is very thorough, *Li sao xu* stated, " Qu Yuan, displaying his talents and showing himself off, competing for favour with a group of villains in a country in distress, and being alienated by the king because of the villains' slanderous words, instead yuan King Huai of Chu and grumbling against the court.....also demeans those who have noble sentiments. " (今若屈原,露才扬己,竞乎危国群小之间,以离谗贼,然责数怀王,怨恶淑兰.....亦贬絮狂狷景行之士) [12] shows that Ban Gu criticized Qu Yuan's resentment of the King, exaltation of himself, the character of unruliness, accusing Qu Yuan's action of "throwing himself into the river because of his hatred and incompatibility with villains." (忿怼不容,沉江而死) did not perform the due responsibility of the courtiers, but also through the "It is the Mandate of Heaven that Junzi's talents cannot be utilized. Hence, the lurked Loong does not feel stifled even when not emerging into the world." (且君子道穷,命也,故潜龙不见,是而无闷) It is worth noting that Mao Qing, when analysing the contradictions in Ban Gu's evaluation regarded *Li Sao Xu* as an exhortation from Emperor Ming of Han to Ban Gu, or a manifesto showing Emperor Ming of Han's cultural intentions - regardless of the amount of his personal social contribution, anyone should defend the Monarch's standpoint at all times, and never show a trace of resentment and disgruntlement towards the Son of Heaven [13], and Ban Gu's retention of the "*Li Sao Zan Xu*", written in his early years, was an implicit survival of his own views. It is inferred that the different viewpoints of the "*Li Sao zan Xu*" and the "*Li Sao Xu*" represent the difference in the standard of judgement between the rulers and the scholar-officials on the cultural image of Qu Yuan. In short, in the Eastern Han Dynasty, when the study of Confucian classics (经学) and divination (谶纬) was developing at a high speed, Qu Yuan was given the cultural image of an "arrogant courtier" who "complained against the monarch". Since then, "Qu Yuan" officially stood on the opposite side of Confucianism in the Han Dynasty; while the "Derogation of Qu Yuan" has been continuously improved since the end of the Western Han Dynasty, and was officially recognized in the middle of the Eastern Han Dynasty, and the cultural image of Qu Yuan became critical and negative.

5. Integrate "Qu Yuan" and Confucian Classics: Wang Yi's Tuning by "Yi-jing-li-yi"

In the late Eastern Han Dynasty, Han Confucianism gradually tilted towards divination, and the defects of Confucian classics were increasingly magnified. In order to reshape the orthodoxy of Confucianism, Confucian scholars in the Eastern Han Dynasty began to reflect on the scriptural traditions of the previous generation, which also included the recasting of Qu Yuan's cultural image,

and they made profound reflections on the "Derogation of Qu", which had flourished since the last years of the Western Han Dynasty. The first to make a systematic refutation was Wang Yi. Compared to Ban Gu and Yang Xiong, who refuted Qu Yuan from the perspective of Confucianism, Wang Yi focused on Qu Yuan's inner spiritual world, analysing the "psychological motives of the poet's creation" [14], and putting forward unique insights into the connotations of Qu Yuan's cultural image: Firstly, Wang Yi affirms the reasonableness of Qu Yuan's creation of "Yuan and ci the Monarch" (怨刺君王), and *Dazhao Xu* (大招序) comments that Qu Yuan "shows Zhi by Feng and Jian" (因以讽刺,以达己志) [12], clarifying that the form of "Yuan and Ci the Monarch" is in conformity with the principle of "poetry expresses one's Zhi" (诗言志) in the traditional poetics. At the same time, Wang Yi also observed that "Li Sao" conformed to the aesthetic orientation of "Bi Xing" (比兴) in the *Book of Songs* (诗经), and emphasised in the *Li Sao Jing Xu* (离骚经序) that "Li Sao follows the pattern of Shih Ching's Xing" (《离骚》之文,依《诗》取兴) [12]. In the *Chuci Jing Xu* (楚辞经序), he said, "Having a similar pattern to *Shih Ching* and *Li Sao*" (《诗》《骚》同出) [12] and regarded *Chuci* as the Classic, which was equal to the *Book of Songs* and recognised the orthodox status of *Chuci*; and Wang Yi also defined Qu in terms of "the straightforward admonition to sustain a nation, and the courage to sacrifice oneself to preserve Ren" (危言以存国,杀身以成仁). In addition, Wang Yi defined Qu Yuan's behaviour of "Yuan and Ci the Monarch" as a manifestation of "loyalty to the King", which was in line with the Confucian "etiquette" during the Han Dynasty, "Wen rou dun hou" (温柔敦厚), and it refutes the principle of "showing submissive behaviour to flatter the King and avoiding troubles by being more considerate" (婉婉以顺上,逡巡以避患)[15], the principle of protecting oneself, which is advocated by Yang Xiong and Ban Gu, and opined that such values will be "shamed by the aspirants and despised by the fools" (志士之所耻,愚夫之所贱)[15]. It can be seen that "Yuan and Ci the Monarch" was regarded as a righteous act of loyalty in the cultural values of the late Eastern Han Dynasty; secondly, Wang Yi acclaimed that the phraseology of *Chuci* contains profound thought connotations. In fact, as early as in the Western Han Dynasty, Sima Qian in the *Biographies of Qu Yuan and Jia Sheng* used the phrase "Small in scale but profound in substance, and the examples are rather commonplace but far-reaching in metaphors" (其称文小而其旨极大,举类迥而见义远)[2] to illustrate this kind of assertion, and Wang Yi also inherited the aesthetics of Sima Qian's evaluation and used the phrase "Yin-lei-pi-yu" (引类譬喻) to describe "deep connotations". Wang Yi also followed Sima Qian's aesthetic assessment and summarized Qu Yuan's language with "Yin-lei-pi-yu", likewise, and also realized that "Yin-lei-pi-yu" is another manifestation of "poetry expresses Zhi", as followed he summarized the profound philosophy of Qu Yuan's character of "fidelity and purity", believing that it is the lofty ideology that creates his profound and condensed words, and affirming Qu Yuan's individualized thoughts. In short, Wang Yi, with the idea of "Yi-jing-li-yi" (依经立义)[16], defends Qu Yuan's "Yuan and Ci the Monarch" and "exhibiting his talents and self-exemplification" as being in line with Confucian ethics. Under Wang Yi's writing, Qu Yuan's personality and language were adapted to the Han Dynasty's respect for "moral codes" and "ethics", and his historical image was once again adapted to the Han culture. Compared to the Western Han period, when Qu Yuan was regarded as a representative of the spirit of Chu culture, the "Qu Yuan" of the late Eastern Han period was more often branded with Confucian etiquette, and became the ideal man of letters in the minds of Han scholar-officials.

6. Outside of Authority: The Poets and Sima Qian's Complement

The Han Dynasty rulers made constant revisions to the cultural image of Qu Yuan, which eventually became a symbol of the ideal personality of Confucian scholar-officials. Nevertheless, Hou Libing has suggested that the "Qu Yuan complex" (屈原情结), as a universal and profound mental

consciousness, has had a significant impact on the personality traits and creative mentality of the literati of the two Han dynasties" [17]. It can be seen that the literati group attempted to break away from the fence of Han Confucian classics that were revered by the rulers, and tried to encode another "Qu Yuan" that was different from the one constructed by the rulers under the drive of individualized consciousness.

The image of Qu Yuan constructed by the scholar-officials primarily came from two categories of poetry: one is a Saoti Fu (骚体赋) that imitates the structure of the Jiuzhang and Nine Songs, and the second is a poem in memory of Qu Yuan; the Saoti Fu created for the construction of Qu Yuan in the Han Dynasty include *Xi shi* (惜誓), *Diao Qu Yuan Fu* (吊屈原赋), *Qi jian* (七谏), *Ai shi ming* (哀時命), *Jiu huai* (九怀), *Liu Jiu tan* (九叹) and *Jiu Si* (九思). Throughout the two Han's Saoti Fu, they all inherited Qu Yuan's "Shenxian jia" (神仙家) thoughts, showing a strong ideology of the immortals: firstly, the "Shenxian jia" is reflected in the many mythological images of Saoti Fu, with the appearance of many fairylands, immortals and mythical creatures: the fairyland mainly covers the five sacred mountains of the Bei Hai in *Shanhai Jing* (山海经)- Daiyu (岱輿), Yuanqiao (员峤), Fanghu (方壺), Yingzhou (瀛洲), and Penglai and Mountain Kunlun, the central mountain of the gods, and other fairy realms, such as "Resting in the Mountain Kunlun" (休息崑崙之墟) [12] in the "Xi shi", "Tuomin rambling in Huachi" (鼯鼯游乎華池)[12] in the "Qi jian", and "following An Qixi who lives in Penglai" (从安期兮蓬萊) [12] in the "Jiu si", and immortals and mythical creatures also came principally from the mythological system of the Classic of Mountains and Rivers, such as "Chi song zi" (赤松子) in *Ai shi ming*, "Kong niao" (孔鳥), "Six Loong" (六龍) and "Xuan ming" (玄冥) in *Jiu tan* and in the *Jiu huai* there are "Teng she" (騰蛇), "Su nv" (素女) and "Chi Loong" (螭龍). Secondly, the "Shenxian jia's" thought is reflected in the inheritance of Qu Yuan's "Yuan you" (远遊) model by Han poets: Throughout Qu Yuan's *Chuci* works, "Yuan you" episodes appeared in *Li Sao* and *Jiu Zhang*, and the two distant travels in *Li Sao* respectively reveal Qu Yuan's two times of "Yuan you". The two times of "Yuan you" in *Li Sao* reveal Qu Yuan's different states of mind: The first "Yuan You" is mainly a search for the "Goddess", and there are many different opinions about the meaning and point of the "Goddess". In essence, the "Goddess" represents a sage ruler and an ideal personality, and Qu Yuan's "Yuan you" in order to put trust in political ideals that could not be realized in reality; the second "Yuan you" was in response to Ling Fen's divination, Qu Yuan chose an "auspicious day" to leave Chu to pursue his "ultimate ideal". Throughout the double of Yuan you, Qu Yuan regarded the journey as an inevitable part of realizing his life ideal, and the journey also became an effective way to relieve his melancholy and redemption. Han poets inherited this model, and all of them spoke on behalf of Qu Yuan in their compositions of *Saoti Fu*, so as to alleviate his sorrow and gloom, and to allude to his own disillusioned life, which had gone through wasted and changing times. However, they portrayed different aspects of Qu Yuan in their Fus, which Wang Yi attributes to the differences in the authors' deconstruction of Qu Yuan. Nowadays, these diverse modes of narration together form a unique "Qu Yuan" in the minds of the Han literati, an idealised poet. In a nutshell, Han Dynasty poets inherited Qu Yuan's aesthetics and incorporated the myths of fantasy and self-relieving "Yuan you" into the creation of the *Saoti Fu*, thus reintroducing Qu Yuan's image as a "Shenxian jia".

Another scholar-official who compiled Qu Yuan away from the official ideology was Sima Qian, whose *Shih Chi* was more in tune with Sima Qian's individualized spiritual concepts than the History of the Former Han, which was endorsed by the official rulers of the Han Dynasty. Combined with his own political encounters, he developed Qu Yuan's spirituality in *Chuci* and moulded it into the unique concept of "making a determined effort". Under the construction of this unique concept, Qu Yuan's image is evolved into three aspects: one is "Yuan and Ci the Monarch", and he wrote in *The Preface*

of *Shi Ji* (太史公自序) that "all of them are depressed and unable to get through to the right way, so recounting the past and pondering the future" (此人皆意有郁结,不得通其道,故述往事,思来者) [3], which affirms the rationality of "Yuan and Ci". He expected that future generations of scholar-officials would be able to dare to "Yuan and Ci the Monarch" like Qu Yuan, to be resilient in extreme hardship, and to seek for the realisation of life's ideals; secondly, Qu Yuan became an example of "the theme of the scholar-official's frustration" [18] in Sima Qian's writing. Qu Yuan's life was full of sufferings - the king's dissatisfaction, the grudge from his peers and his own Slough of Despond, which were constantly condensed in his heart and turned into extreme agony. Sima Qian accurately analysed that Qu Yuan's suffering came from the core reason- frustration, and accurately portrayed Qu Yuan's spirit in this aspect in his biography; thirdly, in "martyrdom", many chapters of *Shih Chi* used detailed content to portray the character's sacrifices and deaths, which is not common in the mode of Chinese traditional historical narrative. In essence, Sima Qian personally puts his own depression of not being able to commit suicide into the portrayal of these characters, and reveals his own inner noble sentiments with their consecrated martyrdom. In *Shih Chi*, Sima Qian recounts Qu Yuan's cry before he sank into the Miluo River - "Knowing that death is not to be allowed, the original should not be loved" (知死不可让兮,原勿爱兮) [2], shaping the atmosphere of despair and helplessness, and highlighting the nobility and grandeur of "martyrdom". In a word, Han Dynasty scholar-officials were driven by the psychology of "Qu Yuan complex" [17] independent of Han Dynasty ideology, shaping the cultural image of "Qu Yuan" which belonged to their own.

7. Conclusion

Despite the divergent judgement made by rulers and scholar-officials in different periods of the Han dynasty, the core purpose of their efforts to compile a cultural image of Qu Yuan was identical - to integrate the quondam and representative cultural elements into the new grand unified cultural system, and to give the new dynasty a chance to establish its cultural legitimacy. Martin Kern once judged that the textual context of early China was full of "intertextuality" [19], however, it is not enough to regard "intertextuality" as an interaction within concrete texts - a purely linguistic and bibliographical perspective. Cultural study and class analysis methodology can unearth a more profound mode of cultural derivation - the cultural faith of each class within a community is somewhat discrete, and the plurality of Qu Yuan's cultural image is one of the main aspects of the outward expression of such discrepancy: the rulers focused on whether Qu Yuan's cultural image could speak for their cultural orthodoxy, while the scholar-officials created a Confucian saint-- Qu Yuan under the constraints of official ideology. Whether it is the "inheritance", "swerving" and "tuning" guided by the ideology of Han Dynasty scripture; or the individualized construction of literati independent of the official ideology, Qu Yuan has indeed been endowed with many different cultural connotations. To conclude, different cultural images of Qu Yuan have been inherited, absorbed and integrated with the development of the times, and eventually became a unique cultural image that presents the spiritual culture of the Han Dynasty.

References

- [1] Feng, Y. (2019) *Fate of Divine Artifacts-The Sacred Character and Collapse of the Han Empire*. [M] Social Sciences Academic Press, Beijing.
- [2] Sima, Q. (2016) *Records of the Grand Historian*. [M] Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.
- [3] Ban, G. (1962) *History of the Former Han Dynasty*. [M] Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.
- [4] Li, F. (1960) *Taiping Imperial Encyclopedia*. [M] Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.
- [5] Sun, S. (2024) *The Formation and Confirmation of Cultural Identity in the Western Han: Taking the Opportunity of the Discovery of Qu Yuan and Songs of Chu*. *Literature, History, and Philosophy*, 3:18-33.

- [6] Wei, C. (2020) *The Deep Reasons for the Formation of the Literary Groups of the Vassal States in the Early Han Dynasty*. [J] *Journal of South-Central University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 40(4):119-125.
- [7] Ran, W. (2015) *On the Transition of Academic Conception under the Argument upon Qu Yuan in the Han Dynasty*. [J] *Journal of Guangzhou University (Social Science Edition)*, 14(4):78-85.
- [8] Wang, R. (1987) *FaYan Yishu*. [M] Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.
- [9] Li, D. (2004) *History of Chuci study in Han Dynasty*. [M] Social Sciences Academic Press, Beijing.
- [10] Zhang, Q. (1986) *Gu Wen Yuan*. [M] Taiwan Commercial Press, Taipei.
- [11] Li, C., Liu, S. (2018) *Qu Yuan and Sao Criticism and the Spiritual Flux of the Two Han Scholars*. *Qinghai Social Sciences*, 05:163-168.
- [12] Hong, X. (1983) *Chuci Buzhu*. Zhonghua Book Company, Beijing.
- [13] Mao, Q. (2011) "Loyalty", or "Flaunting"?-A detailed analysis of Ban Gu's evaluation of Qu Yuan's contradictions. [J] *Journal of Chinese Studies*, 1:91-99.
- [14] Chen, L. (2007) *History of Chinese Poetic criticism*. Jiangxi people's publishing house, Nanchang.
- [15] Wang, Y. (2017) *Chuci Zhangju*. [M] Shanghai: Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House.
- [16] Zhang, J. (2014) *Studies on Wangyi's "Yi-jing-li-yi"*. [J] *Journal of Hubei Minzu University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 32(1):73-79.
- [17] Hou, L. (2003) *The construction of Qu Yuan Complex in the Literators of Han Dynasty*. *Research of Chinese Literature*, 3:27-30.
- [18] Durrant, S. (1995) *The Cloudy Mirror*. [M] State University of New York Press, New York.
- [19] Kern, M. Yao, Z. Gu, Y. Guo, X. (2022) *Cultural Memory and the Epic in Early Chinese Literature: The Case of Qu Yuan and the Lisao*. *Literature, History, and Philosophy*, 4:57-76.