

THE WIVES OF THE HAN RECLUSES

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ABSTRACT

Records of Chinese Recluses appeared as early as the pre-Han period. However, it was Fan Ye (398-445) who first gave them a collective identity in the 'Yimin liezhuan' of his work, the Hou Hanshu. It was Fan Ye, too, who drew attention to the wives themselves, - as neither the Shiji nor the Hanshu, before him, had done - by including them in the biographies of their reclusive husbands. Scholars have usually focused on the Recluses themselves such as the nature of their lives, their beliefs and writings. This paper, however, proposes to examine the Han Recluses from a different angle, from that of their wives and the important role they played in shaping what came to be known as a reclusive life.

Keywords: Han Recluses, Fan Ye, Chinese family dynasties, Chinese literature, Chinese civilization

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INTRODUCTION

This article focuses on the family life of a group of Later Han individuals (25-220), and makes specific reference to their wives. The group, twenty-six men in all, came to be known as the ‘*Yimin*’ 逸民 (Disengaged Persons)¹ when Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445) first paid special attention to them, in his *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han), in the chapter of ‘*Yimin liezhuan*’ 逸民列傳 (Biographies of Disengaged Persons). Their seemingly resemblance to Westerners’ notion of Recluses has stimulated much scholarly interest in Chinese Reclusion. Besides delving into the works of the Recluse poet Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427),² Albert Richard Davis comments on the tendency of later Recluses not to hide in the mountains and forests, but to reside near market places.³ Frederick W. Mote discusses varieties of eremitism in terms of philosophical thoughts and investigates the Yuan period.⁴

While Aat Vervoorn examines Recluses of the Han period and explains their emergence,⁵ Alan Berkowitz scrutinises Recluses of the six dynasties and discusses the portrayal of Recluses in Chinese Literature, at the same time, analyses the ‘Beckoning the Recluse’ Poems of the Western Jin.⁶ Li Chi traces the long history of preoccupation with Recluses in Chinese Literature; Margaret Pearson probes into the writings of the Han Recluse Wang Fu 王符;⁷ Wendy Swartz questions the portrayal of Tao Qian by early Biographers and argues that the perceptions of Tao Qian were influenced by purposeful construction.⁸ Talking about Han

mourning practices and funerary inscriptions, Miranda Brown touches briefly the existence of Recluses.⁹ As to the Chinese discussions, interest has never waned,¹⁰ since Lu Xun 魯迅 and Wang Yao 王瑤 first started the ball rolling.¹¹ Not only quantity is larger, the scope is also broader. Topics range from analysis of recluses’ thoughts and works, to observation of traits, evaluation of influence, and explanation to their emergence.¹² On Tao Qian alone, the amount of literature is especially huge, cited here are most notable but not exhaustive: Wang Shu-min 王叔珉,¹³ Qi Yi-shou 齊益壽,¹⁴ Lin Wen-yue 林文月¹⁵ and Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔.¹⁶ Approaching Reclusion from the philosophical perspective, in the context of Confucianism, Taoism and Mysticism are Gao Jiyi 高積意,¹⁷ Wang Xiaoyi 王曉毅,¹⁸ and Luo Zongqiang 羅宗強.¹⁹

Literature Essays Articles Reviews, 26 (2004), 77-97 and *Reading Tao Yuanming: Shifting Paradigms of Historical Reception (427-1900)* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, c2008).

9 Miranda Brown. *The Politics of Mourning in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

10 One example of recent works is: Huo Jianbo 霍建波, *Song qian yinyi shi yanjiu* 宋前隱逸詩研究 (A study of Reclusive Poems of the Pre-Song period) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006).

11 Lu Xun 魯迅, ‘Yinshi’ 隱士 (Recluses) and ‘Wei-Jin fengdu ji wenzhang yu yao jiu zhi guanxi’ 魏晉風度及文章與藥酒之關係 (Interplays of Belles-lettres, Wine drinking and Drug indulgence of the Wei-Jin Epoch) in Lu Xun Quanzhi 魯迅全集 (Complete Works of the Lu Xun) (Shanghai: Renmin chubanshe, 1973), pp. 227-229, 487-507, and Wang Yao 王瑤, *Zhonggu Wenxue Sixiang* 中古文學思想 (Thoughts in Medieval Literature) (Shanghai: Tangdi chubanshe, 1951).

12 The full list is not possible to be given here. For the complete list of Chinese bibliography, see the thesis of Tan Soon Cheng, “To Serve or Not to Serve: Recluses of the Han, Wei and Jin Periods”, National University of Singapore, Department of Chinese Studies, 2006-.

13 Wang Shumin 王叔珉, *Tao Yuanming shijian zhenggao* 陶淵明詩箋證稿 (The Commentaries on the Poems of Tao Yuanming) (Taipei: Yiwenyinhuguan, 1975).

14 Qi Yishou 齊益壽, *Tao Yuanming de zhengzhi lichang yu zhengzhi lixiang* 陶淵明的政治立場與政治理想 (The Political Stand and Ideal of Tao Yuanming) (Taipei: National Taiwan University, 1968).

15 Lin Wenyue 林文月, ‘The Wine Drinking Style of Ruan Ji’ 阮籍的酒量與酒品, in Lin Wenyue 林文月, *Zhonggu wenxue luncong* 中古文學論叢 (Collected Works of Medieval Literature) (Taipei: Da’an chubanshe, 1989), pp. 55-85.

16 Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔, *Gujin yinyi shiren zhi zong: Tao Yuanming* 古今隱逸詩人之宗: 陶淵明論析 (A Study of the Recluse Poet Tao Yuanming) (Taipei: Yunchenwenhua, 1999); Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔, ‘Tao shi zhong de huanyou zhi tan’ 陶詩中的宦遊之歎 (Tao Yuan-Ming’s Laments of Drifting about in Officialdom), *Wenxue Yichan* 文學遺產 (Heritage of Literature), 6 (1995), 5-14; Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔, ‘Tao shi zhong de yinju zhi le’ 陶詩中的隱居之樂 (The Joy of Reclusion in the Poems of Tao Yuanming), *Taida zhongwen xuebao* 臺大中文學報 (Bulletin of the Department of Chinese Literature), 7 (1995), 1-27; Wang Kuo-ying 王國瓔, ‘Shizhuan zhong de Tao Yuanming’ 史傳中的陶淵明 (Biographical Accounts of Tao Yuanming), *Taida zhongwen xuebao* 臺大中文學報 (Bulletin of the Department of Chinese Literature), 12 (2000), 5-36.

17 Gao Jiyi 高積意, ‘Handai yinyi yu jingxue’ 漢代隱逸與經學 (Han Reclusion and Studies of Classics), *Hanxue Yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese Studies), 20,1 (2002), 27-53.

18 Wang Xiaoyi 王曉毅, ‘Han-Wei zhi ji Ru-Dao guanxi yu shiren xintai’ 漢魏之際儒道關係與士人心態 (Attitudes of Scholars, Confucianism and Taoism in the Han-Wei Periods), *Hanxue Yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese Studies), 5: 1 (1997), 45-71.

19 Luo Zongqiang 羅宗強, *Xuanxue yu Wei-Jin shiren xin tai* 玄學與魏晉士人心態 (Mysticism and Attitudes of

1 The term is first seen in the Analects, referring to seven men named Bo Yi 伯夷, Shu Qi 叔齊, Yu Zhong 虞仲, Yi Yi 夷逸, Zhu Zhang 朱張, Liuxia Hui 柳下惠 and Shao Lian 少連. Liuxia Hui was demoted to humble position; the remaining (excluding the unknown Zhu Zhang and Shao Lian) refused to serve at Court.

2 Also Tao Yuanming or T’ao Yüan-ming.

3 A. R. Davis. ‘The Narrow Lane: Some Observations on the Recluse in Traditional Chinese Society’, *East Asian History*, No.11 (June 1994), p.44; and *T’ao Yüan-ming (AD 365-427) His Works and Their Meaning* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

4 Frederick W. Mote. ‘Confucian Eremitism in the Yuan Period’, in Arthur Wright (ed.), *Confucian Persuasion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 203-240.

5 Aat Vervoorn. ‘The Origins of Chinese Eremitism’, *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies*, XV (1984), 249-295; and Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990).

6 Alan J. Berkowitz. “The Moral Hero: A Pattern of Reclusion in Traditional China”, *Monumenta Serica: Journal of Oriental Studies*, XL (1992), 1-32; “Topos and Entelechy in the Ethos of Reclusion in China”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 114; 4 (1994), 632-638; *Patterns of Disengagement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); and “Courting Disengagement: ‘Beckoning the Recluse’, Poems of the Western Jin” in Paul W. Kroll & David R. Knechtges (eds.), *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature and Cultural History: in Honor of Richard B. Mather & Donald Holzman* (Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003).

7 Li Chi. “The changing concept of the recluse in Chinese literature”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 24 (1962-1963), 234-247.

8 Wendy Swartz. “Rewriting a Recluse: The Early Biographers’ Construction of Tao Yuan Ming”, *Chinese*

A glance in the English works tells us that the Jin period (265-420) (Davis, A.R, Alan. J. Berkowitz, Wendy Swartz) is just as attractive as the Han period (Aat Vervoorn, Miranda Brown). Similarly, attention is paid to all periods in the Chinese Literature. From the Pre-Qin to the Ming, hardly any era is less investigated. However, we will begin our quest with Han period, for good reasons. First, pre-Han Recluses could be legendary figures,²⁰ before concrete evidence of their existence materializes, examination of them poses some problem. Second, pre-Han Recluses are fewer. It was during the Han period that the number of Recluses started to increase, growing to a considerably large size by the time of the Later Han period.²¹

As subjects of study, many find that there is none better than the *Yimin* in Fan Ye's chapter. Both Aat Vervoorn and Alan J. Berkowitz, the former working on the Han period, the later not, have referred to Fan Ye's *Yimin* in their discussions about Chinese Reclusion, the same is found in the Chinese Literature.²² Moreover, before Fan Ye, the zhengshi 正史 (Standard Histories) of China had made only scant reference to individuals showing similar traits, and even then only in passing.²³ Fan Ye's chapter is thus regarded as an essential source of reference for scholars studying

Chinese Recluses, in particular, those in the Han period. In addition to the merits of '*Yimin liezhuan*' already pointed out, the author has another reason to base this study on the '*Yimin liezhuan*': That Fan Ye's treatment of Recluses is unconventional. Fan Ye differs from previous historians in that he regarded the wives as unique, relevant and important in his accounts. The wives, only six in all,²⁴ this number is nevertheless highly significant when compared to the records of earlier historians. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca.145-86BC), the author of *Shiji*, for instance, made no reference at all to the Recluses' wives, while Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), the author of *Hanshu*, acknowledged the existence of two, but provided no other information.²⁵ In his view of the family orientated lifestyle of Chinese Recluses, as observed by Aat Vervoorn,²⁶ family life of Recluses is indeed worth investigating. Although a wide range of political, philosophical, literary, cultural, religious and aesthetic topics about Chinese Reclusion had already been explored, the bulk of the research works mentioned above rested on Recluses themselves, seldom touching on their family or relationships with family members.²⁷ This article therefore seeks to fill the gap in the literature by looking at the lives of the Recluses through the perspectives of their wives. In doing so, the author hopes to highlight the significant part played by these women in the reclusive lives of their husbands and the meaning of reclusive life for both the wives and the Recluses themselves.

For these reasons, our investigation begins with the Recluses and their wives in the '*Yimin liezhuan*'.

Wei-Jin Scholars) (Shanghai: Zhejiang Renmin chunbanshe, 1991).

20 Xu You 許由, Chao Fu 巢父, Bian Sui 卞隨 and Wu Guang 務光 are some examples of legendary pre-Han Recluses.

21 For details about the growth in number of Recluses from the Former Han to the Later Han periods, see Tan Soon Cheng, "To Serve or Not to Serve: A Study of Han Recluses", a paper presented at the Fifth International Conference of Asian Studies (ICAS 5), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 3 August 2007. As for those of the Wei and Jin periods, see the thesis of Tan Soon Cheng, "To Serve or Not to Serve: Recluses of the Han, Wei and Jin Periods".

22 See Gao Jiyi 郜積意, 'Handai yinyi yu jingxue' 漢代隱逸與經學 (Han Reclusion and Studies of Classics), *Hanxue Yanjiu* 漢學研究 (Chinese Studies), 20: 1 (2002), 27-53, and Wang Renxiang 王仁祥, Xian Qin Liang Han de yinyi 先秦兩漢的隱逸 (Reclusion of the Pre-Qin and Han Periods) (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban weiyuanhui, 1995). Xu Youna 許尤娜 also acknowledged the 'charismatic authority' of the '*Yimin liezhuan*' in the studies of Chinese Reclusion, see Xu Youna 許尤娜, Wei-Jin yinyi sixiang ji qi meixue hanyi 魏晉隱逸思想及其美學涵義 (Reclusive Thoughts of the Wei-Jin Periods and their Aesthetic Meaning) (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 2001), 37.

23 Standard Histories (referring to Dynastic Histories compiled by Court appointed historians or officials at the commands of reigning Emperors) of earlier time, such as the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Historian) and *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han), do not have a special chapter recording singularly the recluses; however, the two Standard Histories do keep some records of such people. In particular, the chapter of 'Boyi liezhuan' 伯夷列傳 (The Biography of Boyi) in the *Shiji*, and the chapter of 'Wang Gong Liang Gong Bao zhuan' 王貢兩龔鮑傳 (The Biographies of the Wang, Gong, Liang and Bao) in the *Hanshu* contain more recluses than the other chapters, but the description of these recluses tends to be fleeting, besides, the recluses mentioned often are not the central characters of the biographies. For example, In the *Shiji*, to unfold the life story of the aristocrat Wei Wuji 魏公子無忌, four talented Recluses (Hou Ying 侯嬴, Zhu Hai 朱亥, Mao Gong 毛公 and Xue Gong 薛公) awaiting for a serving opportunity made their appearance. In the *Hanshu*, the semi-Recluse Zhang Zhi 張摯 was mentioned simply because he was the son of Zhang Shizhi 張釋之, one of the main characters of that chapter.

24 They are the wives of Liang Hong 梁鴻, Gao Feng 高鳳, Pang Gong 龐公, Zhou Dang 周黨 and Dai Liang 戴良. The sixth, the wife of Wang Ba, although not mentioned in the chapter, is recorded in the chapter of 'Lienü zhuan' 列女傳 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women). We should take note that the actual number of wives may be eight, because two of the Recluses (Feng Meng 逢萌 and Xiang Zhang 向長) had children so we may safely infer the existence of wives.

25 The *Hanshu* recorded two wives: that of Mei Fu 梅福 and that of Wang Jun 王駿. In the chapter of 'Yang Hu Zhu Mei Yun zhuan' 楊胡朱梅雲傳 (The Biographies of the Yang, Hu, Zhu, Mei and Yun), Ban Gu stated that Mei Fu 'Yizhao qiqi qu Qiujiang' 一朝棄妻子去九江 (left his wife to go to Jiujiang eventually). In the chapter of 'Wang Gong Liang Gong Bao zhuan', it is mentioned that Wang Jun did not wish to re-marry when wife died. Wang Jun quoted the example of Zeng Shen 曾參 not remarrying for the sake of his son(s) to explain that he did the same for the consideration of his son(s), see Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) (comp.), Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581-645) (comm.), *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 958, 1006.

26 In his definition of Chinese Reclusion/eremitism, Aat Vervoorn remarked that 'In China the idea of physical isolation was not fundamental to eremitism...Even when Chinese hermits did retreat into the mountain forests to live in self-sufficient isolation, they usually took their families with them', See Aat Vervoorn, *Men of the Cliffs and Caves*, 8-9.

27 The author is currently working on a literary review of these works, and finds hardly any studying the wives, with the exception of one article studying legendary wives of pre-Qin Recluses. See Cheng Yongzhen 程勇真, 'Xian Qin shiqi nǚxing yinyi sixiang de cunzai ji wenhua chengyin' 先秦時期女性隱逸思想的存在及文化成因 (The Existence and Formation of Female Reclusive thoughts in the Pre-Qin period), *Zhengzhou Daxue Xuebao* 鄭州大學學報 (Journal of Zhengzhou University), 40, 1 (2007), 25-27.

I. THE SIX WIVES OF THE 'YIMIN' IN FAN YE'S WRITINGS

What defines the twenty-six Recluses or 'Yimin' as a group is that they all refused to serve the Imperial court of the Eastern Han dynasty, some protested against the new rule of Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC-23 AD),²⁸ many simply preferred to lead a less public life at the periphery of the Han bureaucratic world.²⁹ Out of a total of twenty-six recluses,³⁰ fifteen of them were reported to be offered official appointments but declined. The remaining eleven held no official posts either. All of them opted to live from the land (farming, selling cows and herbs, hunting wild birds or rabbits) or lead a scholarly existence (teaching, studying and writing); in short, they declined an official career, preferring instead a simple life.

Quiet their lives may have been but this did not automatically mean living in physical isolation. Only eleven, (less than a half) lived in the mountains,³¹ and even here, they were accompanied by their family. Some were within reach of a city or marketplace.³² Nor did a Recluse cut off human intercourse and live in total isolation. Instead they had an active social life. Fan Ye records the presence of friends, neighbours and disciples, along with parents, siblings, children and wives. For example, Gao Feng mediated disputes between quarreling neighbours. Liang Hong and Feng Meng interacted with friends.³³ Xu Fang, Li Ziyun, Gao Feng and Fa Zhen had hundreds and thousands of disciples who followed and lived near them. Dai Liang was said to be a filial and attentive son, at the same time, a responsible father who educated well his five daughters and married them off. Similarly, although Xiang Zhang

wanted to roam mountains with his best friend, he postponed the long for activity until all his children were grown up and well settled down. Out of a total of twenty-six, there were only two celibates, Tai Tong and Jiao Shen who also chose to live in a cave, however, they were visited by officials who came to persuade them to accept posts, or they received letters inviting them to serve.

Fan Ye specifically refers to six wives (five in the 'Yimin liezhuan', and one in the 'Lienü zhuan' 列女傳 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women). The amount of information available about the six wives varies: from a passing reference (in the case of the wife of Zhou Dang and that of Dai Liang) to considerably more for others.

The wife of Pang Gong is referred to more than once, but no clear picture of her as a person emerges. We do know that she and her husband farmed, respected one another and gathered herbs on Mount Lu Men 鹿門 and then eventually simply disappeared. Yet in spite of the meager information available about her, one can still conclude that she shared her husband's life to a significant degree. She had other merits, too. If her husband's friends appeared unannounced, and if Pang Gong was not at home, she accepted their commands as if from her own husband.³⁴

In the case of the wife of the Recluse Gao Feng, we learn nothing about her physical appearance, character or background; yet from the few lines that Fan Ye devotes to her, we get as distinctive an impression of her as we have of her husband. He records one occasion when she admonished her husband for being so preoccupied with his studies that he forgot to take care of some wheat laid out to dry. The fact that Gao Feng agreed to help his wife and accepted her rebuke shows that there existed a real partnership between them inside the domestic household.

Fan Ye's account of the wife of Liang Hong, by comparison, is a lot more detailed. Not only are we told her name Meng Gang 孟光 (light or brightness) or De Yao 德曜 (dazzling virtue) but we know her age (thirty), her physical appearance (plump, ugly, tanned, strong), her family background, her character and her ambition. She also emerges as someone with a mind of her own. She was determined to marry Liang Hong, she made known her wish to

28 Wang Mang (45 BC-23 AD) was the nephew of the Empress Yuan Hou 元后. He dismissed the imperial heir, declared himself as Emperor, and founded the Xin 新 dynasty (9-23).

29 For more information about the reasons of these Recluses for their refusal to serve, see Tan Soon Cheng, 'To Serve or Not to Serve: A Study of Han Recluses', and also the thesis of Tan Soon Cheng, 'To Serve or Not to Serve: Recluses of the Han, Wei and Jin Periods'.

30 The twenty-six persons are the Two Old Men 野王二老, Xiang Zhang 向長, Qin Qing 禽慶, Feng Meng 逢, Xu Fang 徐房, Li Ziyun 李子雲, Wang Jungong 王君公, Zhou Dang 周黨, Tan Xian 譚賢, Yin Mo 殷謨, Wang Ba 王霸, Yan Guang/ Yan Zun 嚴光/嚴遵, Jing Dan 井丹, Liang Hong 梁鴻, Gao Hui 高恢, Gao Feng 高鳳, Tai Tong 臺佟, Han Kang 韓康, Jiao Shen 矯慎, Ma Yao 馬瑤, Dai Liang 戴良, Fa Zhen 法真, The Old Man from Hanyin 漢陰老父, The Old Man from Chenliu 陳留老父, and Pang Gong 龐公.

31 Han Kang and Liang Hong lived at Mount Baling 霸陵山, Yan Guang at Mount Fuchun 富春山, Gao Hui at Mount Huayin 華陰山, Gao Feng at Mount Xitang 西唐山, Tai Tong at Mount Wuan 武安山, Ma Yao at Mount Qian 汧山, Dai Liang at Mount Jiangxia 江夏山中, Pang Gong at Mount Xian and at Mount Lumen 峴山·鹿門山, Feng Meng at Mount Lao 勞山, Jiao Shen lived in a cave.

32 Wang Jungong, Jing Dan, Xu Fang, Li Ziyun, Fa Zhen lived in the market or in the city.

33 Liang Hong corresponded with his good friend Gao Hui, although both lived in the mountains. Feng Meng kept friendship with Xu Fang, Li Ziyun and Wang Jungong.

34 Sima Decao 司馬德操 and Xu Yuanzhi 徐元直 walked into the house and hurried her to prepare a meal for them. The incidents are recorded in the account of Pang Gong and his wife, in the 'Xiangyang ji' 襄陽記, in commentaries compiled by Pei Songzhi 裴松之 (372-451), in Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) (comp.), Sanguozhi 三國志 (Record of the Three Kingdoms) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 954. The account goes on to specify that from the way the wife served the visitors, one could not tell who the master of the house was and who the guests were.

her parents, Liang Hong was agreeable, and duly she was married to Liang Hong. Seven days after the marriage, when she realized that her husband refused to talk to her, she insisted on finding out the reason for his displeasure. On learning that the way she dressed was too ostentatious for his liking, she immediately adopted more modest attire. In her support for her husband, she did not waver, from the time when he first decided to live on Mount Ba Ling 霸陵山, through the later years when he moved to the land of Wu 吳, until his death. Like the other wives of Recluses, Liang Hong's wife farmed and wove to support the family. However, her participation in her husband's Reclusive way of life involved more: he included her in his literary or aesthetic activities, such as reciting poems, reading classics, or playing musical instruments. Fan Ye drew particular attention to her extremely respectful manner towards Liang Hong at meal times.³⁵ Although Liang Hong's wife complied with the wishes of her husband, she cannot be viewed as a submissive wife: she initiated the marriage, she spoke out about her "cold" treatment and she took matters into her own hands to remedy the situation.

Lastly, the wife of the Recluse Wang Ba is particularly noteworthy. The treatment of her differs significantly from that of the other wives since Fan Ye records her in a separate chapter entitled '*Lienü zhuan*' 列女傳 (The Biographies of Exemplary Women).³⁶ Amongst the women recorded, Wang Ba's wife appears second on the list.³⁷

Leaving aside the questions of whether the women were ranked according to their merits, and what criteria the women were ranked, the fact that Fan accorded her – and uniquely her amongst the wives of Recluses – a place in the '*Lienü zhuan*', independent of her husband, whereas the rest of the wives only made their debut conveniently at the time when the husbands were mentioned, signifies her special standing. The way Fan Ye presents her is also distinctively unlike the rest. Although her background remains obscure (her parentage was unknown), her thoughts and character are nevertheless clearly depicted. Besides managing the household, in common with the rest of the recluses' wives, she was wise, had her own opinion and moral courage and offered sound advice to her husband. When a friend of high social status visited them with his equally prosperous son, Wang Ba felt a sense of inferiority both for himself and his own son. After the visit, discouraged and confused, Wang Ba took to his bed but his wife

35 "Wei jushi, bugan yu Hong qian yangshi, ju'an qimei" 為具食，不敢於鴻前仰視，舉案齊眉 (she raise whatever she was supposed to serve up to eyebrow level, and she dared not lift up her head to look straight into her husband's eye).

36 This chapter is, in fact, a new category of biographies, which is nowhere to be found in the *Shiji* or *Hanshu*, a creation uniquely Fan Ye's.

37 The first on the list is the wife of Bao Xuan 鮑宣.

reminded him of his contempt for fame and riches, whereupon he recovered his spirits, and both he and his wife resumed their reclusive way of life.

All twenty-six Recluses led very frugal lives; they had to labour to earn their living.³⁸ Yet, none of their wives objected to the life their husbands had chosen. Indeed, not only did they remain with their husbands in spite of the hardship, they gave their husbands strong practical support and in the case of Wang Ba's wife, significant moral support, too. She, in fact, adhered more firmly to her husband's choice of life, while her husband, momentarily lost courage. Although the existence of the other two wives, the wife of Feng Meng and Xiang Zhang is assumed, what we could gather from the records is that, they, too, did not leave their husbands to their hiding in the mountains, or at a remote corner. In this sense they could be considered equally supportive.

II. THE CHANGING REPRESENTATIONS OF RECLUSES' WIVES

A century before Fan Ye, Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215-282) and Ji Kang 嵇康 (223-262?) also had their collections of recluses. In *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳 (The Biographies of Noble Scholars),³⁹ Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 referred to ninety-nine recluses, the wives of ten of whom were mentioned. Of the ten wives, five (the wife of Laolaizi 老萊子, Lieyukou 列禦寇, Chenzhongzi 陳仲子, Liang Hong 梁鴻, Pang Gong 龐公) were described in some details. All except one (the wife of Lieyukou) supported their husbands' decision not to serve,⁴⁰ or persuaded the husbands to resist the temptation to serve. Let's look at the four of them:

The wife of Laolaizi, in particular, was a lady of strong character. Not only she did not

38 Only Zhou Dang was wealthy, but he gave away all his property and money, to be distributed among his clans; Dai Liang's great grandfather was rich, but there was no description of riches in his account. Wang Ba stayed in a shabby hut; the poverty of Xiang Zhang and Feng Meng were stated plainly by Fan Ye.

39 The text that this article studies is: Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (AD 215-282), '*Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳' (The Biographies of Noble Scholars), in Yong Rong, Ji Yun 永瑤、紀昀 (1724-1805) (comp.), *Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Photofacsimile reprint of the Wenyuan Pavilion copy of the Siku Imperial Library) Vol. 448 (Taiwan: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1986), 87-113.

40 The wife of Lieyukou 列禦寇 was unhappy when her husband refused to accept the gifts from the Prime Minister Zi Yang 子陽 who was at that time in power in the state of Zheng 鄭. Lieyukou had to explain to her why he rejected the gift. He told his wife that he did not want to be involved in or associated with Zi Yang. Zi Yang was eventually killed by the people of Zheng, together with all his supporters and subordinates. Lieyukou was proven to be wise in his decision.

complain about the hard life that the pair of them led, she labored hard to support both of them. Laolaizi farmed while she went out to gather wood. When she discovered that the King of Chu 楚王 had persuaded her husband to serve at Court, she told him that by serving he would be putting himself under someone's control, something that she would never allow to happen to herself. She immediately made preparations to leave, whereupon her husband decided to join her. They went into hiding in the South, thereby successfully escaping the attention of the Court. The account ends with her merit being praised by Confucius.

The wife of Chenzhongzi was another lady who deserves our attention. The King of Chu came to invite her husband to serve as a prime minister, whereupon her husband sought her opinion. She replied that in his present situation, surrounded by music and books, he was happy. To accept an official appointment in exchange for material comfort, would result in his being burdened with the problems of the state, and leaving him vulnerable to danger, which was not at all worthwhile. Her husband took her advice and they contrived to simply vanish.

Huangfu Mi's accounts of the wives of Liang Hong and Pang Gong are similar to those of Fan Ye. However, Huangfu Mi made no mention of Wang Ba's wife, to whom special tribute had been paid by Fan Ye. In addition to these four samples, Shihu zhi nong 石戶之農 and Lu Tong 陸通⁴¹ were also accompanied by their wives when they went into Reclusion.⁴² With the one exception of Lieyukou's wife, all six wives fully supported their husbands' decision, and all played a significant role in their husbands' Reclusive lives.

It should be pointed out that out of these six reclusive couples, at least four couples (Laolaizi, Chenzhongzi, Shihu zhi nong and Lu Tong) were semi-legendary figures from pre-Han period, whose actual existence has not been conclusively proven and they may, in fact, be idealised Recluses on the part of Huangfu Mi rather than real persons. The opposite seems true for the remaining two, the wives of Liang Hong and Pang Gong, whose life stories reappeared, similar in many ways, in Fan Ye's accounts. If we exclude those semi-legendary figures, it seems that Fan Ye's portrayal of Recluses' wives coincides pretty much with that of Huangfu Mi. No matter which category that they belong to, whether idealised figures like Laolaizi, or real persons, such as Liang Hong and Pang Gong, their wives are mentioned and depicted. Some of the wives, notably the legendary ones, for example, the wife of Laolaizi and Chenzhongzi, even took leading role and exerted considerate influence.

41 Lu Tong 陸通 in Huangfu Mi's accounts and crazy Jie Yu 狂接輿 in Ji Kang's accounts are the same person.

42 The accounts of the wives of these two recluses are very brief. The wives were mentioned, but no description about them was given.

Ji Kang's 嵇康 collection of recluses is slimmer: his *Shengxian Gaoshi zhuan* 聖賢高士傳 (The Biographies of the Sages, the Goods and the Nobles) contains sixty-nine recluses.⁴³ Five wives (those of Shihu zhi nong 石戶之農, crazy Jie Yu 狂接輿, Sima Xiangru 司馬相如, Shang Zhang 尚長, and Gao Feng 高鳳) are described. All are described as sharing their husbands' reclusive life. The first two are semi-legendary; while the wife of the third, Sima Xiangru, is a familiar figure in historical and literary texts. Even though it is debatable whether Sima Xiangru can qualify as a Recluse, as he did not eschew an official career, his wife did leave her rich father, to elope with him, and went through a period of hardship with him, selling wine and waiting on customers to help support him. The accounts of the wives of Shang Zhang 尚長⁴⁴ and Gao Feng are similar to those of Fan Ye. The wife of Feng Meng though mentioned by Fan Ye, is absent from the accounts of both Huangfu Mi and Ji Kang.

Disregarding these minor differences, the accounts of Ji Kang, Huangfu Mi and Fan Ye are alike: all three pay some attention to the wives. Whereas legendary Recluses are included by Huangfu Mi and Ji Kang, that was not the case for Fan Ye. As idealised figures give way to real-life persons, and fictionalised accounts are replaced by factual ones, we become more and more convinced that real wives existed who did help shape the reclusive life of their husbands.

Lastly, the *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping era) compiled by Li Fang 李昉 (925-996)⁴⁵ contains records of Recluses as well. The wives of three Han Recluses appear in the records: the wives of Yang Hou 楊后, Zhang Feng 張奉 and Hu Zhao 胡昭. Except for the wife of Hu Zhao 胡昭, who was abandoned, the other two wives are portrayed positively. In order to force Yang Hou to accept office, an official imprisoned Yang Hou's wife. To be used as a hostage implies that she must have been dear to her husband and we can assume that she shared her husband's reclusive life, at least before being seized as a hostage.

The representation of the wife of Zhang Feng is similar to that of Liang Hong's wife in Fan Ye's *Yimin liezhuan*. Equally well-endowed with material possession, the two wives

43 The text that this article studies is: Ji Kang 嵇康 (223-262?), 'Shengxian gaoshi zhuan' 聖賢高士傳 (The Biographies of the Sages, the Goods and the Nobles), in Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍 (1904-1998) (comp.), *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Photofacsimile reprint of the Siku Imperial Library Continued) Vol. 1204 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 38-49.

44 The name Shang Zhang 尚長 in Ji Kang's account differs from the name Xiang Zhang 向長 in Fan Ye's accounts.

45 It is a gigantic classified book or encyclopedia, known as 'leishu' 類書 by the Chinese system of classification of books. See Li Fang 李昉 (925-996) (comp.), *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping Era) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998).

willingly gave up luxurious life to fit in with the reclusive existence of their husbands. Their accounts are so similar that one wonders if they originated from a same source.

Therefore, there existed before Fan Ye's time some sketchy portrayals of the wives of Recluses. With one exception, the wives included in these earlier accounts firmly supported their husbands' belief and action. The portrayal is generally positive. However, the characters described are often Pre-Han semi-legendary figures, and they could be purely literary creation, in which the writers blended legends with imagination, and projected their ideal images of women.

Nevertheless, amongst these literary accounts we also find factual reports of a few real-life wives of Han Recluses, and all of them, as cited above, appeared to be positively supportive. If we compare the wives mentioned in these earlier accounts, with those found in the accounts of later periods, such as the 'Yimin liezhuan' of the *Hou Hanshu*, or the *Taiping Yulan*, as shown by the table in the appendix, we see that the role played by the wives of Recluses is rendered even more significant, as all of them (none of them legendary) in Fan Ye's account actively supported the decision of their husbands, whereas the majority in the other accounts (both legendary and non-legendary) did the same. It would seem that, at last, the ideal had somehow become reality.

III. CONCLUSION

Although some accounts of Recluses' wives tend to be sketchy or contain more legend than fact, the truth of the matter remains that historian or writers (Huangfu Mi, Ji Kang, and Fan Ye) began to pay attention to the wives of Recluses.

The degree of significance of the wives varies case by case. Gao Feng's spouse, for example, was in charge of the practical aspects of family life, whereas the wife of Liang Hong and that of Wang Ba featured more prominently in their husband's spiritual lives. In comparison, the wives of yet other Recluses such as those of Pang Gong, Dai Liang, and Zhou Dang; may have played a relatively more modest role, yet, they remained inseparable from their husbands' reclusive lives. In every instance, therefore, the presence of the wives is undeniable. Furthermore, the two wives found in the accounts of Ban Gu are nameless, not described, or even abandoned by her Recluse husband (the wife of Mei Fu); in contrast, the wives referred to by Fan Ye can never be dismissed as unimportant. They might still be nameless, and lack detailed description, but none of them suffered the same fate as Meifu's wife.

In short, Fan Ye's accounts demonstrate clearly how these wives lived with their Recluse husbands in their quiet, unostentatious havens, how they coped with their day-to-day problems, and how they supported their husbands' decision to refuse a Court post. Their values also come through when we see what they were - or were not - willing to give up. And in discovering these hidden lives, as recorded by Fan Ye, we have the added advantage of seeing their light illuminate further aspects of their husbands' lives, too: we catch a glimpse of wife and husband working hard and harmoniously together, enjoying the spiritual world of literature and music, discussing their worries or solving their problem, and raising and educating the children. Without these remarkable women, we wonder how much substance of the reclusive lives of their husbands would be lost, and how hollow and incomplete their lives would seem.

Glossary

Baling 霸陵	Hou Ying 侯嬴
Ban Gu 班固	Hu Zhao 胡昭
Bao Xuan 鮑宣	Huayin 華陰
Boyi liezhuan 伯夷列傳	Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐
Chen Shou 陳壽	Ji Kang 嵇康
Chenzhongzi 陳仲子	Jiangxia 江夏
Cheng Yongzhen 程勇真	Jiao Shen 矯慎
Chu 楚	Jing Dan 井丹
Dai Liang 戴良	Jingyin wenyuange siku quanshu 景印文淵閣四庫全書
De Yao 德曜	Laolaizi 老萊子 Lao shan 勞山 leishu 類書 Li Fang 李昉 Taiping Yulan 太平御覽 Tai Tong 臺佟
Fa Zhen 法真	Tan Xian 譚賢
Fan Ye 范曄	Two Old Men 野王二老
Feng Meng 逢萌	Wang Ba 王霸
Fuchun 富春	Wang Fu 王符
Gao Feng 高鳳	Wang Gong Liang Gong Bao zhuan 王貢兩龔鮑傳
Gao Hui 高恢	Wang Jun 王駿
Gaoshi zhuan 高士傳	Wang Jungong 王君公
Gu Tinglong 顧廷龍	
Han Kang 韓康	
Hanshu 漢書	
Hou Hanshu 後漢書	

- Wang Mang 王莽
 Wei jushi, bugan yu Hong qian yangshi,
 ju'an qimei 為具食，不敢於鴻前仰視，舉
 案齊眉
 Wei Wuji 魏無忌
 Wu 吳
 Wuan 武安
 Xian Qin shiqi núxing yinyi sixiang de
 cunzai ji wenhua chengyin 先秦時期女性隱
 逸思想的存在及文化成因
 Xian shan 峴山
 Xiangyang ji 襄陽記
 Xiang Zhang 向長/ Shang Zhang 尚長
 Xitang 西唐
 Xu Fang 徐房
 Xuxiu siku quanshu 續修四庫全書
 Xu Yuanzhi 徐元直
 Xue Gong 薛公
 Yan Guang/ Yan Zun 嚴光/嚴遵
 Yan Shigu 顏師古
 Yang Hou 楊后 Yang Hu Zhu Mei Yun
 zhuan 楊胡朱梅雲傳
 Yi Yi 夷逸
 Yin Mo 殷謨
 Li Ziyun 李子雲
 Liang Hong 梁鴻
 Lienǚ zhuan 列女傳
 Lieyukou 列禦寇
 Liuxiahui 柳下惠
 Lumen 鹿門
 Lu Tong 陸通/crazy Jie Yu 狂接輿
 Ma Yao 馬瑤
 Mao Gong 毛公
 Mei Fu 梅福
 Meng Gang 孟光
 Old Man from Hanyin 漢陰老父
 Old Man from Chenliu 陳留老父
 Pang Gong 龐公
 Pei Songzhi 裴松之
 Qian shan 沂山
 Qin Qing 禽慶
 Sanguozhi 三國志
 Shihu zhi nong 石戶之農
 Shengxian gaoshi zhuan 聖賢高士傳 Yimin
 逸民
 Yizhao qiqi qu Qiujiang 一朝棄妻子去九江
 Yong Rong, Ji Yun 永瑤·紀昀
 Yu Zhong 虞仲
 Zeng Shen 曾參
 Zhang Feng 張奉
 Zhang Zhi 張摯
 Zhang Shizhi 張釋之 Zheng 鄭 zhengshi 正
 史 Zhengzhou Daxue Xuebao 鄭州大學
 學報
 Zhou Dang 周黨
 Zhu Hai 朱亥
 Zhu Zhang 朱張
 Zi Yang 子陽
 Shao Lian 少連
 Shu Qi 叔齊
 Sima Xiangru 司馬相如
 Shiji 史記
 Sima Decao 司馬德操
 Sima Qian 司馬遷

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Appendix

Table: Wives of Recluses Mentioned in the Four Accounts

Title of Account	Details	No	Supportive	Not Supportive	Others
'Yimin liezhuan' 逸民列傳 (The Biographies of the 'Yimin') in Fan Ye's <i>Hou hanshu</i> 後漢書 (History of the Later Han)	Wife mentioned (nonlegendary): Zhou Dang, Liang Hong, Gao Feng, Pang Gong, Dai Liang, Wang Ba	6	6	0	-
	Wife whose existence assumed (non-legendary): Feng Meng, Xiang Zhang	2	2	0	-
Huangfu Mi's <i>Gaoshi zhuan</i> 高士傳 (The Biographies of Noble Scholars)	Wife mentioned (nonlegendary): Liang Hong, Jiang Gong and his two brothers, Pang Gong	5	2	0	3 Details about the 3 wives of the Jiang brothers are not available
	Wife mentioned (legendary): Shihu zhi nong ' Lu Tong ' Laolaizi, Lieyukou, Chenzhongzi	5	4	1	-
Ji Kang's <i>Shengxian Gaoshi zhuan</i> 聖賢高士傳 (The Biographies of the Sages, the Goods and the Nobles)	Wife mentioned (nonlegendary): Sima Xiangru, Shang Zhang, Gao Feng	3	3	0	-
	Wife mentioned (legendary): Shihu zhi nong, The Madman Jie Yu	2	2	0	-
Li Fang's <i>Taiping Yulan</i> 太平御覽 (Imperially reviewed encyclopedia of the Taiping era)	Wife mentioned (nonlegendary): Yang Hou, Zhang Feng, Hu Zhao	3	2	0	1 The wife of Hu Zhao was abandoned