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## The *Wen xuan* Tradition in China and Abroad\*

David R. KNECHTGES

Department of Asian Languages and Literature, University of Washington

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The *Wen xuan* 文選 is the earliest extant Chinese anthology arranged by genre. This article first discusses the history of the transmission and reception of the *Wen xuan* mainly in the Tang and Song, focusing on the emergence of *Wen xuan xue* 文選學 (*Wen xuan* scholarship) in the early Tang, the interest some Tang poets took in the *Wen xuan*, the early printing history of the *Wen xuan*, the origin of the phrase *Wen xuan lan, xiucai ban* 文選爛, 秀才半 (The *Wen xuan* thoroughly done, half a licentiate won), and the severe criticism made by Su Shi 蘇軾 of Xiao Tong. The second part of the article concerns the history of the reception of the *Wen xuan* outside of China. The *Wen xuan* became a widely read work in other East Asian countries, especially in Japan and Korea. The *Wen xuan* was transmitted to Japan as early as the eighth century. Many important manuscripts of the *Wen xuan* have been preserved in Japan, the most important of which is the *Monzen shūchū* 文選集注, which contains Tang period commentaries most of which were lost in China. The *Wen xuan* was also important in Korea. In the Choson dynasty (1392–1910) a Korean version of the *Wen xuan* was compiled, the *Tongmunsŏn* 東文選 compiled under royal command in 1478 by Sŏ Kŏjŏng 徐居正 (1420–1488). The final part of articles deals with *Wen xuan* studies in Europe and the United States with special mention of Arthur Waley 韋利 (1889–1966), Erwin von Zach 贊克 (1872–1942), and James Robert Hightower 海陶璋 (1915–2006).

**Keywords:** *Wen xuan*, *Wen xuan xue*, *Wen xuan lan*, *xiucai ban*, *Wen xuan jizhu*, *Tongmunsŏn*, Arthur Waley, Erwin von Zach, James Robert Hightower.

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The *Wen xuan* is the earliest extant Chinese anthology arranged by genre. It was compiled at the court of of Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531), Crown Prince Zhaoming 昭明 of the Liang 梁. It is one of the most important sources for the study of Chinese literature from the Warring States period to the Qi and Liang. Although there is no information about the transmission history of the *Wen xuan* after its compilation at the court of Xiao Tong in the 520s to the end of the Southern Dynasties, we do know that the *Wen xuan* survived the destruction of the imperial library that occurred during the fall of the Liang. Thus, it is listed in the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 (Monograph on bibliography) of the *Sui shu* 隋書.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest known commentary to the *Wen xuan* was actually done by a member of the Xiao family, Xiao Gai 蕭該 (2<sup>nd</sup> half, 6<sup>th</sup> century). Xiao Gai was the grandson of Xiao Hui 蕭恢 (476–526), who was a younger brother of Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464–549), Xiao Tong’s father.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Xiao Gai would have been a nephew or cousin of Xiao Tong. Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 suggests that Xiao Gai began studying the *Wen xuan* during his youth when he was living in Jiangling at the end of the Liang period.<sup>3</sup> Qu notes that Jiangling 江陵, which was in Jingzhou 荊州, was an area of literary culture. It is possible that after the *Wen xuan* was compiled, a copy of it was transmitted to the Jingzhou court.

Xiao Gai participated in the compilation of the famous dictionary *Qie yun* 切韻, and also wrote a commentary to the *Han shu* 漢書.<sup>4</sup> Xiao Gai wrote a commentary to the *Wen xuan* titled *Wen xuan yin yi* 文選音義 (Pronunciation and meaning of the *Wen xuan*). Although it is no longer extant, based on the title it must have been a philological commentary that explained the meaning and pronunciation of words in the text. Wang Zhongmin 王重民

1 *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 41.1082.

2 See *Sui shu*, 75.1715–16. On Xiao Gai see Wang Xibo 汪習波, *Sui Tang Wen xuan xue yanjiu* 隋唐文選學研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 43–50; Wang Shucai 王書才, “Xiao Gai shengping ji qi *Wen xuan* yanjiu kaoshu” 蕭該生平及其《文選》研究考述, *Ankang shizhuan xuebao* 2005.2: 66–68, 84.

3 See Qu Shouyuan, *Wen xuan daodu* 文選導讀 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1993), 46.

4 See *Sui shu*, 33.953. On Xiao Gai’s participation in compiling the *Qie yun* see Göran Malmqvist, “Chou Tsu-mo on the *Ch’ieh-yün*,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 40 (1968): 33–78.