

## 2. Reading Ancient Texts

Ancient texts were public, not private. They were part of a dialogue about values, sacred or secular. A typical ancient text *grew over time*, to record changes in its own view, or to adjust to changes in the world around it. A text represents a school of thought. It does not have an author; that is a modern idea. It has successive *proprietors*, to guide it in addressing its public over the years.

Where does a text add new material? Here are the commonest places.

### A / AFTER

The most natural place to add something to a text is **at the end**.

1. The **Gortyn Law Code** was engraved on the walls of the city hearing chamber; we possess the original stones.<sup>1</sup> The laws are in three groups. The first has a logical sequence, the second supplements them, the third adds further refinements. The content of the second and third groups suggests updating. That can be proved for the third group, which are *in a different handwriting*.

2. The **Analects** (Lún Yǔ, LY) began as fourteen *remembered* sayings of Confucius, LY 4, and was later expanded by adding chapters of *invented* sayings of Confucius, the earliest being LY 5 and LY 6, and the latest LY 20, as the school's ideas, and its image of its founder, evolved.<sup>2</sup>

3. **Mwòdź 17-19** give the sub-elite Micians' view of war, from opposition (MZ 17, 0390), to an argument from cost (MZ 18, 0362), to acceptance of "righteous war" (MZ 19, 0326), as the Mician school gradually assimilated to Confucian and other elite values.<sup>3</sup>

4. To the **Isaiah** core (Isa 1-39, pre-Exilic) were added Deutero (Isa 40-55, Exilic) and Trito (Isa 56-66, post-Exilic), each adjusting previous doctrine to the changing times.<sup>4</sup>

5. "**Second Zechariah**" (Zech 9-14) is distinguished from what precedes by its later theology and "Oracle" labels. Other evidence distinguishes Zech 12-14 as a Third Zechariah.<sup>5</sup> These three would then be a parallel to, and perhaps a precursor of, the three divisions of the much larger threefold Isaiah.

<sup>1</sup>Some damaged (they were repurposed in antiquity); photos in Willetts **Gortyn**.

<sup>2</sup>See Brooks **Original**. The basic accretional text was further complicated by the proprietors' own addition of harmonizing and other interpolations; see #17 below.

<sup>3</sup>See Brooks **MZ 17-19**, and for the larger situation, Brooks **Ethical**. Each group of three texts in the Mwòdź records stages in doctrinal development; thus MZ 20-22 for changing ideas on frugality, and MZ 23-25 on simplicity in burials.

<sup>4</sup>Duhm **Jesaja** (1892); for later contributions, see Williamson **Book** (1994).

<sup>5</sup>Smith **Twelve** (2ed 1928) 2/437-479; Petersen **Zechariah** (1995).

## B / BEFORE

New material can be placed **at the head**, not the tail, of a text. That first contact will powerfully affect future readers' perception of all that follows.<sup>6</sup> To do so was precisely the intent of whoever preposed that material.

6. When Horace arranged his first collection of Carmina ( Books I-III) for publication, he placed first a poem to his patron Maecenas, acknowledging his gratitude for Maecenas' support. The poem begins:

Maecenas, atavis edite regibus  
Maecenas, risen from kings as your ancestors . . .

It offers the entire work of the poet as a tribute to the patron.

7. At the head of the Analects stands **Analects 1**, written when the school of Confucius had rejected war as state policy, and had lost influence at court. It does what it can to make private collegiality as good as public importance: "To have friends coming from far places, is this not also delightful?"

8. **Jwāngdž 8**, the first of three Primitivist chapters, argues that webbed toes or an extra finger are natural, and should be accepted. A preposed paragraph *urges the opposite*: such irregularities should be removed. This was inspired by Mencius 6A12, which notes that someone with a crooked finger would go any distance to find a doctor to straighten it, so he can be like other people.<sup>7</sup>

9. The seven-day creation story in **Genesis 1** precedes and contrasts with the older Eden story, Genesis 2-3; it gives cosmic sanction to the seven-day Sabbath custom; to make that point was probably the motive for its addition, and its prominent placement.<sup>8</sup>

10. The Gospel of Luke had originally begun, in proper historical fashion, by defining the political context: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [2] in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas . . ." <sup>9</sup> There was later preposed **Lk 1-2**, a miraculous Birth Story, to catch up with the one in Matthew, and to keep current with the latest thinking on the theology of Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>It may seem that preposed material cannot outweigh, in the reader's mind, all that follows. But a new reader has *not yet seen* what follows, and the first thing encountered will set the tone for the rest; see Brooks **Original** Appendix 5.

<sup>7</sup>Giving the sequence JZ 8B primitive > MC 6A12 in opposition > JZ 8A accepting the Mencian criticism. The issue here is whether human nature is natural or imposed. That human nature is everywhere the same is the prevailing assumption of the time. That assumption MC 6A12 asserts, and JZ 8A (the preposed addition) finally accepts.

<sup>8</sup>For a plausible Mesopotamian source for Gen 1 story, see Speiser **Genesis** 9-10.

<sup>9</sup>See Fitzmyer **Luke** 1/304-312. The Lukan Birth Narrative is grander than, and for that reason alone probably secondary to, the one in Matthew.

## C / CONCENTRIC

New material may be added at **both the head and tail** of a text, either successively or as a one-time framing device. This keeps the ends of the work mutually compatible, and gives an overall impression of unity of thought.

11. **Rgveda** 2-8, the “family books,” plus Book 9, anthologizing some Soma Pavamāna hymns from various sages, were later bookended by books 1 and 10, the latter containing some of the latest material.<sup>10</sup>

12. **Dāu/Dv Jīng** 14, the core of that text, is a hymn to “The Lord,” Ishvara; in fact Ātman or breath, suitable to a breath-control meditation group. Further chapters on meditation-based government were added both after (DDJ 15-16) and before (DDJ 13) that core. The last chapters by the first master of that school were **DDJ 10 and 21**, where the term Dv 德 “power” first occurs.<sup>11</sup>

13. **Shāng-jywn Shū** (The Book of Lord Shāng) was built on a concentric plan, with a core at SJS 10-11 (on military matters. The framing **SJS 1** (adapting an earlier story)<sup>12</sup> and **26** first added Lord Shāng’s name to the text, which up to then had been only tacitly associated with him.

14. **The Torah Psalter**. At one point, the evolving Psalms collection was framed by the head-and-tail addition of Torah Psalms 1 and 119, making the whole Psalms collection proclaim that post-monarchic theme.<sup>13</sup>

15. **1 Peter**, at first a widely distributed but anonymous baptismal homily, responded to the expulsion of Jesus followers from synagogues (c85) by adding material at the head (**1:1-2**) and tail (**4:12-5:11**) of the text to address the new emergency (“the fiery trial among you”). This transformed the familiar homily into a message of encouragement and reaffirmation in a new emergency.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup>See the introduction to Jamison and Brereton **Rigveda**. The finalizing of the Vedic hymns at the total of 1000 (due to later additions, now 1028) is an example of arresting the growth of a text at a numerically satisfactory point; see further Section F, below.

<sup>11</sup>See Brooks **Formation** and Liebenthal **Lord**. His successor, Lăudž, continued to use head-and-tail alternation, but a military disaster in Yēn, reflected in DDJ 30-31, caused a shift to end-accretion, which continued until the end of the text, at DDJ 81. For the symmetrical sayings in DDJ 10 and 21, see further p19, below.

<sup>12</sup>For JGT 6, the source of SJS 1, see Duyvendak **Book** 167n. Three chapters, SJS 27-29, have been lost from the end of the SJS; they were probably later accretions, quite properly excised by some early critic.

<sup>13</sup>The shift from a previous Davidic focus to something post-monarchical parallels the end of the monarchy, recorded in the Books of Kings, which conclude with the death, without a successor, of Jehoiachin, the last King of Judah, in Babylonian captivity. There next followed the Psalms of Ascent (Psa 120-134), entertaining the possibility of a Davidic renewal, but chiefly shifting focus to the Temple.

<sup>14</sup>See Beare **First**. As another aspect of the revision, the formerly anonymous text was now explicitly attributed to Peter; see Brooks **Apostolic**.

## D / DISTINCTIVE MATERIAL: INTERPOLATIONS

A passage may stand out as different in tone or content from its neighbors, or as interrupting a narrative. If you tentatively remove some suspect passage, and the adjacent passages become consecutive, like your finger when you take a splinter out, *that* was probably an interpolation.<sup>15</sup>

16. Readers of Caesar's Gallic War may have noticed the part near the beginning; from "**Eorum illa pars**," which gives an outline of the geography of Gaul. Removing it leaves a straightforward account of the contemporary doings of Orgetorix and the Helvetii, which, and which alone, would have been of immediate practical interest to Caesar.<sup>16</sup>

17. Analects 3:4 and 3:6 (c0342) are paired sayings about Lín Fàng's knowledge of ritual. Interrupting that pair is **Analects \*3:5** (c0310), a saying on *a different topic*: the superiority of Chinese to barbarian culture.<sup>17</sup>

18. The story of Noah (**Gen 6-9**) is really two stories, now interwound. In what is obviously the earlier, Noah saves *all* the animals; in the later version, he distinguishes between clean and unclean ones.<sup>18</sup>

19. Israel left Egypt in haste, mixing-bowls on backs (Exod 12:34). Later, they give so gold and fabric to the Tabernacle that the collection was halted (Exod 35:20-36:7). Where did all that come from? Someone added passages saying that, before they left, the people had "despoiled the Egyptians" of their treasures (**Exod 3:21-22, 11:2, 12:35-36**), thus making the story consistent.<sup>19</sup>

20. The Farewells of Jesus in **John 15-17**, coming after a brief parting scene at the end of John 14, and directly before the arrest of Jesus, were introduced in order to extend this moment, so appropriate for "last words" advice to Jesus' disciples, who would later transmit Jesus' message to Christian posterity.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup>Unless some adroit interpolator has smoothed the edges of his addition. If so, then the distinctiveness of the content will be the only evidence. But that will often suffice, and it can sometimes be reinforced by stylistics; see the next chapter.

<sup>16</sup>There are other such interpolation at 6:25-28, a description of the Hercynian forest and its animals – and elsewhere, perhaps to make the text more useful to later readers, who looked to the text nor for a story, but for geographical information.

<sup>17</sup>Early Analects sayings about neighboring peoples are balanced; later ones which postdate the wars with the united northern tribes, are hostile. Analects \*3:5 is hostile, and is thus later than its current neighbors, Analects 3:4 and 3:6. This *substantive* inconsistency reinforces the evidence of *formal* inconsistency. For another Analects interpolation considered from more than one angle, see Brooks **Word Philology**.

<sup>18</sup>Compare Gen 6:19 ("And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark") with Gen 7:2 ("of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven, . . . and of the beasts that are not clean two, the male and his female").

<sup>19</sup>An interpolation made to address a narrative infelicity we call a *patch*.

<sup>20</sup>See Wellhausen **Erweiterungen** 7-15.

## RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO TEXTS

Ancient texts grow in isolation, but sometimes in contact with other texts.

21. In c0327, someone brought from the Chí statecraft text Gwǎndǔ many passages which were taken up for comment in the Lǔ Confucian text Analects One is “the father should be a father, the son should be a son.” In the Analects (which openly recognizes its Chí origin), that passage gets this response:

**Analects 12:11.** Chí Jǐng-gūng asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, The ruler is a ruler, the minister is a minister, the father is a father, the son is a son. The Prince said, Good indeed! Truly, if the ruler is not a ruler, the minister is not a minister, the father is not a father, and the son is not a son, even if I should have millet, will I be able to eat it?

22. Analects 18:6, picking up elements from several Jwǎngdǔ stories, has Confucius “ask about the ford” (the way out of the current political turmoil); two hermits argue that this only shows his failure to realize that there *is* no way. The reply of “Confucius” eloquently states the duty of men to other men:

**Analects 18:6** . . . Birds and beasts cannot be flocked together with. Were I not a follower of other men, with whom should I take part? If the world possessed the Way, Chyōu would not be doing his part to change it.

23. Not to be outdone, Jwǎngdǔ 20:5 tells how Confucius left his disciples and went to the Great Swamp, living peacefully, at one with birds and beasts.

24. In Exodus 16, Yahweh gave quails to the Hebrews. In Numbers 11, Yahweh gives quails “until it come out at your nostrils;” many died. The latter, like many other late passages, emphasizes the disobedience of the Hebrews.

25. The Exodus 20 Decalogue was recognized as a fundamental statement of human social obligations. Its elements appear, though in different order, in Leviticus 19, and it was borrowed, with slight changes, as Deuteronomy 5, where it became the groundplan for an entire lawcode, Deuteronomy 12-26.

26. Cheyne in 1899 noted 15 short passages which occur in both Micah and Isaiah. In some, the directionality is obvious. Here is one:

**Isa 5:7.** For the vineyard of Yahweh of Hosts is the house of Israel and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry.

[8] *Woe to them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.*

[9] In mine ears saith Yahweh of Hosts, Of a truth many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. [10] For ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and a homer of seed shall yield but an ephah . . .

v8 interrupts a vineyard metaphor with a complaint against the appropriation of fields and residences. It is thus an interpolation, and so must be the other 14. All occur in First Isaiah, but *not* in the dubious Isa 24-27, and not in Isa 36-39, a later borrowing from 2 Kings 18-19, with which First Isaiah now ends.

Such were the sharings, and such the oppositions, among the ancient texts.

## NUMERICAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you are in charge of a growth text, where do you stop? A text may reach a satisfying total number, which will then be protected against further additions – or in some instances, maybe not.

27. The Iliad, the story of the Wrath of Achilles, logically ends at Iliad 22, the death of Hector. Later, there were added Iliad 10 (the Doloneia) and 23-24, which go beyond the original plan, returning Hector's body to Priam, reconciling Greeks and Trojans, and all but ending the war. To compensate for these additions, two earlier chapters were pushed together as one at three places (easily located; they produce chapters twice as long as the Iliad norm). In preserving that total number, the Iliad was clearly influenced by **24**, the number of letters in the Greek alphabet. The earliest lays of Troy were doubtless oral, but the author of the Iliad was obviously operating in an age of literacy.

28. The Shī corpus of Chinese court poetry expanded until it included **300** poems, all celebrating Jōu tradition. The later addition of poems glorifying Confucius' state of Lǔ forced the elimination of six poems previously included (the Máu commentary preserves their titles and purport). When five poems supposedly from the earlier Shāng Dynasty appeared, their addition was not accepted by all. Those who did accept them numbered them as Shī 301-305, giving up the previous attempt to protect the old total.

29. Szmǎ Tán's Shǐ Jì was planned as a double sixty: **120** chapters. Of these, 30 (SJ 31-60) were allotted to hereditary rulerships. During the course of the work, the Emperor created new hereditary kingships for three of his sons. Tán added them as SJ 60 ("Three Kings"), and compensated by pushing together two previous chapters, on Gwǎn and Tsài, as the present SJ 34. Tán's son Chyēn added ten collective biographies of his own to the last half of the work. No compensation was made, and the Shǐ Jì now stands at 130 chapters.

30. The Psalms had reached a satisfactory total of **150**, but two Maccabean Psalms, responding to the 0168 desecration of the Temple under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, demanded to be included; they are now Psalms 74 and 79. Room was made for them by eliminating the last Korah Psalm, just before the two Ezrahite Psalms, Psa 88-89, and pushing two others together as one.<sup>21</sup>

---

We offer these examples as suggesting what is to be gained by considering more than one antiquity.

<sup>21</sup>Brooks **Psalms 114-116**. Psa 44 and 83, laments for the destruction of the Temple, were also sung at this time, leading Theodore, Bishop of Mopsuestia in 392-428, to regard all four as Maccabean in origin; see Creelman **Maccabean**.