

5. Ancient Texts

An ancient text is an *advocacy* text, recommending some doctrine or giving a preferred account of events. It grows to stay current, or to deal with changes, or to appeal emotionally to a later generation of listeners. But it *does not delete*: to do so would destroy its previous status as representing a viewpoint. It simply adds an update, and expects readers to substitute it mentally for the old version. Old and new versions persist, side by side, conflicting with each other, and bothering modern readers, who expect doctrinal and historical consistency.

That is a modern problem, which we here ignore. We are interested in a technical question: Just *how* does a text add new material? Here are the four commonest places, with examples from Biblical and Chinese antiquity.

A / AFTER

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

1. 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 explanations to the changing times.¹

2. “**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.² These three would then be a parallel to, and perhaps a precursor of, the three divisions of the much larger threefold Isaiah.

3. The **Analects** (Lún Yǔ, LY) began as fourteen *remembered* sayings of Confucius in LY 4, and was later expanded by adding *invented* sayings of Confucius, as the school’s ideas, and its image of its founder, evolved.³

4. **Mwòdž 17-19** give the evolving Mician 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 school assimilated to Confucian values.⁴

The Micicians were not of the elite, but of the commercial level of society. They go back to the previous century but emerge into the textual light only with the appearance of mass literacy. They argue, not so much with the elite as for that new non-elite readership, denouncing the hardships which the wars cause to the ordinary people who are forced to serve in them.

¹Duhm **Jesaja** (1892); for later contributions, see Williamson **Book** (1994).

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

³See Brooks **Original**. For later additions, see #17 below.

⁴See Brooks **MZ 17-19**, and for the larger situation, Brooks **Ethical**. Each group of three Mician ethical texts records the development of one particular doctrine: MZ 20-22 on changing ideas of frugality, MZ 23-25 on simplicity in burials, and so on.

B / BEFORE

New material can be placed **at the head**, not the tail, of a text. That first contact will greatly affect future readers' perception of everything that follows.⁵ To do so was precisely the intent of whoever preposed that material.

5. 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.⁶

6. 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 Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, [2] in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas . . ." ⁷ 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 theological status of Jesus.

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 (like the others) that extra fingers are natural, and should be accepted; the Primitivist is arguing against enforced standardization. A paragraph added to the beginning of the set *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 could be like other people.⁸ Deformity, at first a virtue, has now become a defect.

It was a major principle of the Mencians that human beings were all alike in being at least potentially good; save for the unavoidable ravages of time, there was no such thing as an inherently bad person.

⁵It 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.

⁶For a plausible Mesopotamian source for Gen 1 story, see Speiser **Genesis** 9-10.

⁷See Fitzmyer **Luke** 1/304-312. The Lukan Birth Narrative is grander than, and for that reason alone probably secondary to, the one in Matthew.

⁸Giving 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.

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.

9. **The Torah Psalter.** At one point, the evolving Psalms collection was framed by the head-and-tail addition of Psalms 1 and 119, making the whole Psalms collection proclaim that post-monarchic theme.⁹

10. **1 Peter** was at first a widely distributed but anonymous baptismal homily. But in response to the expulsion of Jesus followers from synagogues (c85), it was reissued with new material at the head (**1:1-2**) and tail (**4:12-5:11**), which equipped it to address the new emergency (“the fiery trial among you”), and also added the further assurance that the sermon was now attributed to Peter, who by this time had come to be seen as the greatest of Jesus’ disciples.¹⁰

11. **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)¹¹ and **26** first added Lord Shāng’s name to the text, which up to then had been only tacitly associated with him.

12. **Dàu/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 the school were **DDJ 10 and 21**, where the term Dv ㊦ “power.” first occurs.¹²

The DDJ was the response of that previously unknown meditation group to the Battle of Mǎ-líng in 0343, which introduced a period of permanent warfare. DDJ offered a minimalist form of government: power should be used to nudge the world gently in the direction in which, by nature, it is moving anyway. “When your work is done, then withdraw.”

⁹The shift from a Davidic focus to a post-monarchical focus parallels the end of the monarchy, recorded in the Books of Kings, which concludes with the death, without a successor, of Jehoiachin, the last King of Judah, in his Babylonian captivity. Nothing could be more discouraging. Then came the Songs of Ascent (Psa 120-134), celebrating the return of the Exiles, and the sudden possibility of a Davidic renewal. Life moved on, and the Psalms kept pace with it.

¹⁰See Beare **First**.

¹¹For 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.

¹²See Brooks **Formation** and Liebenthal **Lord**. His successor, Lǎudž, 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.

D / DISTINCTIVE MATERIAL: INTERPOLATIONS

A passage may differ in tone or content from its neighbors, or interrupt a narrative. If you tentatively remove it, and its neighbors become consecutive, like your finger when you take a splinter out, *that* was an interpolation.

13. The Hebrews had escaped from captivity in Egypt, and were heading south, where they would later receive a decisive revelation at Mount Sinai.¹³ They are told to avoid the northern coastal road as too dangerous:

Exod 13:17. “And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near, for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt, [18] But God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea.”

But suddenly, a *change of direction* to that dangerous sea route is ordered:

Exod 14:1. And Yahweh spake unto Moses, saying, [2] Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn back and encamp . . . between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon.

There, Pharaoh’s pursuing chariots are defeated, when magically withheld waters magically return; a very dramatic episode.¹⁴ Then, without any comment, the Hebrews continue their previous southward journey. Its late literary style and its interruptive placement identify that episode as an interpolation.

14. 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 Jesus’ “last words” advice to his disciples, who would later transmit his message to Christian posterity.¹⁵

15. Analects 3:4 and 3:6 (c0342) are sayings about Lín Fàng’s knowledge of ritual. *Interrupting* that pair, and thus interpolated, is **Analects 3:5** (c0310), on an *unrelated topic*: the superiority of Chinese to barbarian culture.

16. Analects 18:6, picking up elements from several Jwāngdǔ 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” is the most eloquent statement in all world literature of 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.

It is precisely the social need that creates the individual duty.

¹³For the eventual Sinai Covenant, see §22.

¹⁴For the full story, see §18. Its literary success is manifest: this incident is often referred to in the Psalms and other later literature.

¹⁵See Wellhausen **Erweiterungen** 7-15.

F / A FINAL CONSIDERATION

If you are in charge of a growth text, where do you stop? An accumulation may reach a satisfying total number of chapters (12, 40, any multiple of 10), which will then be protected against further additions – or maybe not.

15. The Iliad, the story of the Wrath of Achilles, logically ends at Iliad 22, the death of Hector and the lament of his wife. Later, there were added **Iliad 10** (the manifestly late 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, since they produce chapters twice as long as the Iliad norm). In preserving that total, the Iliad acknowledges the power of 24, *the number of letters in the Greek alphabet*. The first lays of Troy were probably oral, but "Homer," the author of our Iliad, seems to have been operating in an age of writing.

16. Szmǎ Tán's Shǐ Jì was planned as a double sixty: 120 chapters, 30 of them (SJ 31-60) allotted to hereditary rulerships. Unfortunately, during the course of the work, the Emperor created new hereditary kingships for his sons. Tán added them as SJ 60 ("The Three Kings"), but compensated by pushing together two already written chapters, on Gwǎn and Tsà, as the present **SJ 34**. Tán's son Chyēn, on taking up the unfinished Shǐ Jì, added ten collective biographies to the last half of the work. No compensation was made, and the Shǐ Jì now stands at 130 chapters.

17. The Psalms had reached a total of 150, but some Maccabean Psalms, responding to the 0168 desecration of the Temple, demanded to be included. Room was made for them by eliminating some Psalms, or by pushing two together as one. For the first option, notice the double heading of Psa 88-89, which implies the existence of an Ezraite Psalm; that Psalm *no longer exists*.

18. The Shī repertoire of Chinese court poetry expanded until it included 300 poems, all in their different ways hymning the glory of the Jōu tradition. The addition of poems celebrating Confucius' state Lǔ forced the elimination of six poems (the Máu commentary preserves their titles and general purport). Later, when five poems supposedly from the Shāng Dynasty appeared, their addition was not accepted by all parties. Those who did accept them numbered them as **Shī 301-305**, giving up the previous attempt to protect the old total.

Retrospect

The patterns of text formation are not recent discoveries; some have been known since antiquity. For interpolations, we have Zenodotus and the other Alexandrian critics (the Iliad); for detecting spurious texts, Valla (the Donation of Constantine, a forgery of Charlemagne's time); for early versions underlying late texts, Lachmann (again the Iliad). We offer them as reminders of what is gained by taking into consideration more than one ancient literature.

In Conclusion: Some Recurring Patterns

Related passages in one or two texts may differ in doctrine or in situation. But which is earlier, and which is later? Here are some recurring OT types:

- (1) **Yahweh**. He constantly intrudes to create updated versions of stories.
 - In 1Sam 11, Saul is chosen king by acclamation of the people. In 1 Sam 9-10, he is anointed by Samuel *as chosen by Yahweh*. The latter is the later.
- (2) **Priests**. Later stories prefer to show priests as having access to Yahweh.
 - In Exod 3, Moses is called to lead the people out of Egypt; in Exod 4, Aaron, ancestor of the priests, is called to speak for him. The Aaron version is later.
 - In Num 16, the Korahites claim access to Yahweh; they are sent to Sheol. The Korahites are the losers. The winners, the Aaron faction, are the later.
- (3) **Rulers**. Later stories tend to associate an individual's deed with a ruler.
 - In 1Sam 17:20-58, David kills Goliath; Saul knows him not. In 1Sam 17:31-40, David kills Goliath *at the request of King Saul*. The latter is the later.
 - In 1Kgs 17:8-16, Elijah helps a poor widow during a drought. In 1Kgs 17:1 and 18:41-46, Elijah *causes a drought for King Ahaz*. The latter is the later.

Later passages tend to stress (4) **Emotion**, as Ruth's devotion to Naomi in Ruth 1, (5) **Women**, as the Daughters of Zelophehad in Num 27 and 36, or are (6) **Long**, as Jacob's wooing in Gen 29-31, or (7) **Detailed**, as the Neh 7 list of returnees. Details imply an eyewitness: *How else could he know all that stuff?* But to an experienced reader, those details are a warning, not a guarantee.

There are also several ways of *correcting* a previous text:

- (8) **Amelioration**. The Bible likes to leave its major figures in a positive light.
 - In Num 12, Miriam opposes Moses. In Exod 15:20-21, she and her maidens join in *celebrating a victory of Moses*. The latter is the later.
 - In 1Sam 8:1-5, the corruption of Samuel's sons is the reason for shifting Yahweh's favor from priests to kings. In 1Sam 12:1-5, Samuel is shown to have been at least honest *in his own judgements*. The latter is the later.
- (9) **Patches**. If two passages lack narrative continuity, a patch may be added.
 - Hagar *twice* flees Sarai, when she is pregnant (Gen 16), and after her son Ishmael is born (Gen 21:9-21). Each time, Ishmael gets a blessing. A patch at Gen 16:6 gets Hagar back to Sarai, so she may be driven out a second time.
 - The people leave Egypt with little more than the clothes on their backs (Exod 12:34). When the Tabernacle is being built, they give so much gold and fine fabric (Exod 35:4 - 36:7) that the collection is halted. *Where did they get all that stuff?* Patches were added at Exod 3:22, 11:2, and 12:35, saying that, before departure, the people had "despoiled the Egyptians." These are later.
- (10) Finally, we have the **Completest**, who at the last minute adds an old text, such as the famously incompatible story of Abram's rescue of Lot in Gen 14, not because it fits, but *just because it is there*, and he wants it not to be lost.

And with that much by way of orientation, we may now turn to reading some actual ancient texts, starting with the traditions of the Canaanites.