



wen — the Civil

Traditional Chinese Scholarly Education

The Civil Way (wen 文) as One Side of *wen wu* 文武
Volume II of a Three-Volume Series on the Martial, the Civil,
and the Cultivated Human Being

A Source-Based Scholarly Investigation of Its History,
Its Transmission, and Its Integration into Modern Life

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A Scholarly Work for Practitioners, Teachers, and Masters

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*This volume treats the wen, the civil and cultural. The first volume, of equal scope,
is devoted to the wu, the martial; their union,
wen wu shuang quan 文武雙全, is the guiding ideal, the two sides of the same coin.
A short third volume is devoted to inner cultivation (xiulian, including Qigong),
which underlies both sides as their common root.*

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Summary

The present work reconstructs China's civil educational tradition and asks how this tradition can be preserved and revived under the conditions of modern working life. It is the second half of a larger whole. Classical Chinese culture organized human accomplishment around the complementary pair of concepts *wen* 文, the civil and cultural, and *wu* 武, the martial; its ideal was *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全, completeness in both. The first volume of this series traced the *wu* in its entirety; the present volume takes up the *wen*, and only together do the two form the single, undivided formation of the person that the tradition pursued. Inner cultivation (*xiulian*), together with the bodily practice of Qigong, is reserved for a short third volume and is touched on here only where an understanding of the *wen* requires it.

Within the *wen*, the work treats four interlocking strands as a single, coherent curriculum, and it derives this structure from the same source from which the first volume derived the martial strands: the Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝) of Zhou education. Four of the six arts are civil: ritual (*li* 禮), music (*yue* 樂), writing (*shu* 書), and calculation (*shu* 數). Each of these four strands is presented in the mature scholarly form it assumed over the tradition's long history: ritual as ethical self-formation (*xiushen* 修身) and lived deportment; music in the form of the scholar's zither (*qin* 琴) and serious music-making; writing as a triad of classical reading, calligraphy, and poetry, with literati painting as an optional deepening; and number as the art of calculation and reckoning, which found its most cultivated form of practice in the strategic board game *weiqi* 圍棋. A fifth component, toward which the whole of classical education actually aimed, statecraft in office (*jingshi* 經世), is honored as the tradition's historical vanishing point but is no longer carried forward as a viable main strand for modern daily life. The work is addressed to a readership that includes practicing teachers and masters, that is, to readers who transmit a tradition and wish to know what its formative core actually consists of.

The work pursues six aims. First, it recovers the framework of *wen* and *wu* as the tradition's true measure, this time from the civil side, and establishes why the *wen* remains as incomplete without the *wu* as the reverse. Second, on the basis of the current state of research, it reconstructs what the civil education of the dynasties actually was, spanning a long historical arc from the founding legend of the script-inventor Cangjie through Confucius, the canonization of the classics, the imperial examination system and the academies, to the abolition of the civil examination in 1905 and the twentieth-century aftermath that directly explains the present situation. Third, it methodically and strictly separates transmitted narrative from what can be secured through source criticism. Fourth, it carefully distinguishes civil self-formation (*xiushen*) from spiritual cultivation (*xiulian*), whose full treatment remains reserved for the third volume. Fifth, it turns to the present and, on the basis of data on the waning culture of reading and attention as well as peer-reviewed evidence on the arts, calligraphy, music-making, play, and reading, works out the benefits and the honest limits of a revival. Sixth, and most practically, it presents worked-out training plans tailored to realistic modern time budgets, together with a twelve-week progression.

One clarification stands above everything and corresponds word for word to that of the first volume: the enduring value of this tradition lies not in any single skill but in its pedagogy, that is, in a method of jointly forming attention, expression, and judgment within an ethical frame. The historical institutions that bore this pedagogy cannot be restored; the pedagogy itself is transmissible. And it is, let it be said in advance, only one half of what the complete person of the tradition was meant to acquire: the book demands the bow, just as the bow demands the book.

Preliminary Note on Sources

Whoever wishes to present the history of Chinese scholarly education faces the inverse source problem of the first volume. The martial tradition is poor in contemporary documentation and rich in legend; the civil tradition is overabundant in documents, but these documents were composed, canonized, and ordered in their own interest by the very bearers of the tradition over two millennia. The scholars wrote the history of scholarship, and they wrote it as a history of success and edification: attributions of origin to sage-rulers, the transfiguration of Confucius from itinerant teacher to timeless sage, and the back-dating of texts redacted much later into a venerable antiquity are recurring patterns.¹ This work therefore distinguishes throughout, as did the first volume, three types of statement: founding legends, that is, narratives written down long after the events they describe and inclined toward transfiguration; datable institutions and texts, that is, examinations, academies, canonizations, and archaeological finds; and modern empirical findings, that is, peer-reviewed research on the effects of reading, the arts, and practice. Where a claim rests on a legend, it is named as a legend in the main text; where a date or an institution is documented, the source is given in the footnote. This source-critical stance, too, has a venerable home within China itself: the philological school of the Qing period (*kaozheng* 考證, “evidential research”) subjected its own canon to rigorous scrutiny of authenticity and is thus an ancestor of this series’ method.²

The presentation draws on five groups of sources. First, on classical primary sources and archaeological finds: the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) of Confucius, the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) with its chapter on music (*Yueji* 樂記), the *Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli* 周禮) as the locus classicus of the Six Arts, and the oracle bones of Anyang and the bamboo texts of Guodian, which considerably predate canonization. Second, on the scholarly historiography of Chinese education and examination culture, above all on the work of Benjamin A. Elman on the examination system, Thomas H. C. Lee’s comprehensive account of Chinese education, Michael Nylan’s study of the Five Classics, and Peter K. Bol’s history of Neo-Confucianism.³ For the conceptual pair *wen* and *wu*, Kam Louie’s cultural-historical analysis remains authoritative.⁴ Third, for the individual arts, on the respective specialist literature: Richard Kraus on calligraphy, Robert van Gulik and Kenneth DeWoskin on music and the scholar’s zither, Marc Moskowitz and Paolo Zanon’s translation of the Song-dynasty Go classic on *weiqi*, and the ritual-theoretical work of Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon.⁵ Fourth, on the scholarly reference apparatus of ChinaKnowledge.de for data and institutional detail. Fifth, for the sections addressing the present, on peer-reviewed epidemiological, psychological, and neuroscientific research on the arts, calligraphy, music-making, play, and reading, weighted by strength of evidence;

¹ On canon formation and its retrospective idealization, fundamentally Nylan, Michael: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, New Haven 2001; on examination culture and its self-presentation, Elman, Benjamin A.: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley 2000.

² On *kaozheng* philology cf. Elman, Benjamin A.: *From Philosophy to Philology. Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*, Cambridge (MA) 1984.

³ Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*; idem: *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, Cambridge (MA) 2013; Lee, Thomas H. C.: *Education in Traditional China. A History*, Leiden 2000; Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*; Bol, Peter K.: *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Cambridge (MA) 2008.

⁴ Louie, Kam: *Theorising Chinese Masculinity. Society and Gender in China*, Cambridge 2002; Louie, Kam / Edwards, Louise: *Chinese Masculinity. Theorising Wen and Wu*, in: *East Asian History* 8 (1994), pp. 135–148.

⁵ Kraus, Richard Curt: *Brushes with Power. Modern Politics and the Chinese Art of Calligraphy*, Berkeley 1991; van Gulik, Robert H.: *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, Tokyo 1940; DeWoskin, Kenneth J.: *A Song for One or Two. Music and the Concept of Art in Early China*, Ann Arbor 1982; Moskowitz, Marc L.: *Go Nation. Chinese Masculinities and the Game of Weiqi in China*, Berkeley 2013; Zanon, Paolo: *Qijing Shisanpian. The “Classic of Weiqi in Thirteen Chapters”*, in: *Annali di Ca’ Foscari* 35/3 (1996), pp. 375–398; Seligman, Adam B. / Weller, Robert P. / Puett, Michael J. / Simon, Bennett: *Ritual and Its Consequences. An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, Oxford 2008.

where the evidence is provisional or contested, this is stated. The series treats spiritual cultivation (*xiulian*), together with Qigong, in its third volume; the present volume touches it only at the conceptual boundary with Confucian *xiushen*.

1. Introduction

At the outset of this inquiry stand, as at the outset of the first volume, two images. In the first, a scholar of the Song period spends his day in a single, unbroken form of formation: in the morning he recites the classics, whose sentences he has carried by heart since childhood; he writes with the brush, and the writing itself is an exercise of posture and breath; in the afternoon he receives a friend for a game of *weiqi*, which both understand as a school of judgment; in the evening he plays the zither, not to perform but to order his own disposition; and his conduct toward guests, parents, and subordinates follows a ritual form that he understands not as constraint but as shaped courtesy. Scholarship here is not an occupation alongside life; it is the form of life itself. In the second image, a person of today spends nine or ten hours at a screen, most likely reads not a single page for its own sake on an ordinary day — the share of adults in the United States who read for pleasure on an average day has fallen within twenty years from 28 to 16 percent —,⁶ scarcely writes by hand anymore, and experiences their attention as the most contested and scarcest of their possessions. The question of this work is how the path from the second image to the first can be traveled without self-deception.

The first image, however, carries a second message, decisive for the design of this inquiry, and it is the same as in the first volume, only seen from the other side. The Song scholar is not the whole ideal. Classical culture cast human accomplishment into the conceptual pair *wen* 文 and *wu* 武, the civil and the martial, whose union, *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全, was the true measure of the accomplished person.⁷ The scholar who has never drawn a bow is, by this measure, as much a half figure as the fighter who has never read a book. The present work takes this ideal as its horizon and deliberately takes up the second of its two halves: the *wen*. It traces the civil person in full — his rites, his music, his writing, and his number —, and it does so in the clear awareness that the person so formed becomes complete only through the *wu*, to which the first volume of this series is devoted. Inner cultivation (*xiulian*), together with the bodily practice of Qigong, which underlies both sides as a common root, remains reserved for a short third volume. Why this division is sensible and not arbitrary was established by the first volume; Chapter 2 repeats the justification from the civil side.

It is not a nostalgic question. The curriculum of the imperial examinations cannot be reinstated, and no one should wish it back: in its late form it was narrow, formulaic, and cruel to the lifetimes of those it winnowed out. The pedagogy behind the curriculum, however, its insistence that reading, writing, music, play, and deportment be trained together and as a matter of character, is neither obsolete nor culturally inaccessible. It can be studied, preserved, and adapted, and it is precisely in this pedagogy, not in any single technique, that the enduring value of the tradition lies. The work is therefore written for the same reader as the first volume: for the earnestly practicing, the teachers, and the masters who have received a tradition and wish to pass it on honestly.

The argument proceeds in five movements. First, it determines what “education” meant

⁶ Bone, Jessica K. / Bu, Feifei / Sonke, Jill K. / Fancourt, Daisy: *The decline in reading for pleasure over 20 years of the American Time Use Survey*, in: *iScience* 28/9 (2025), article 113349 (N > 236,000). Comparable shifts in media use are documented for most industrialized societies.

⁷ On the conceptual pair and its cultural history cf. Louie: *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*; Louie / Edwards: *Chinese Masculinity*.

within the civil tradition, recovers the framework of *wen* and *wu* together with the Six Arts as an ordering framework, and names the four strands that make up the *wen* (Chapter 2). It then traces the long history of this tradition through the dynasties: from the founding legend of the script-inventor Cangjie through the curriculum of the Zhou and the teaching of Confucius, the canonization of the classics and the imperial academy of the Han, the examination system of Sui and Tang, printing, the academies and Neo-Confucianism of the Song, the systematization and ossification under the Ming and Qing, down to the conclusion of the imperial tradition with the abolition of the examination in 1905 and its twentieth-century aftermath, which explains the field's present shape (Chapters 3 through 6). Third, it considers the four strands, ritual, music, writing, and number, as parts of an integrated education and explains why they should interlock (Chapter 7). Fourth, it turns to the present: the obstacles to integration, the evidence-based benefits, the honest limits (Chapters 8 through 10). Fifth, it sets out a series of design principles together with concrete training plans and a twelve-week progression (Chapters 11 and 12). A conclusion formulates the plea to preserve a living tradition rather than embalm a dead one, and brings the series to the threshold of its third volume (Chapter 13). Figure 1 gives an advance overview of the historical arc that Chapters 3 through 6 unfold.

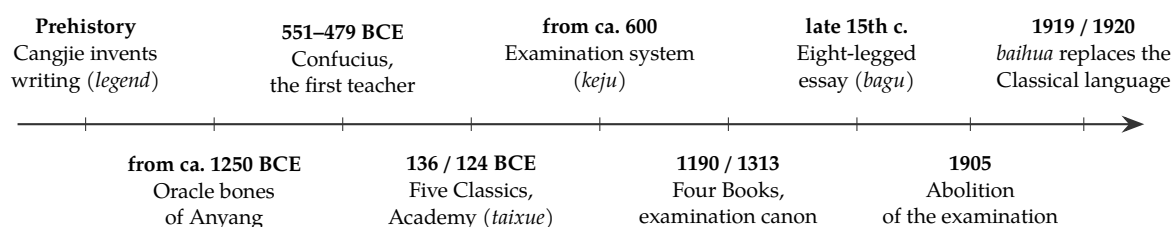


Figure 1: The historical arc of civil education (timeline not to scale; founding legend marked as such)

A word on tone belongs at the outset, the same as in the first volume. The tradition needs no exaggeration to be worth preserving; it gains when examined closely.

2. The Concept of Education in the Civil Sphere

2.1 Wen and wu: the civil and the martial as unity — and this work as the wen

The character *wen* 文 originally denoted a pattern, a design, the ordered lines on a woven fabric or a bronze vessel; from there it migrated to writing, to literature, and finally to the very embodiment of the cultivated as such: order made visible.⁸ Classical culture set beside this *wen* the *wu* 武, the martial, and demanded of the accomplished person both: *wen wu shuang quan* 文武雙全. The first volume of this series showed that this unity actually existed at the documented origin of the tradition, that bow and book lay in the same hands, and that the later separation of the scholar from the fighter was a development of the middle and late empire.

Viewed from the civil side, this history takes on its own coloring. For in the hierarchy of careers the *wen* prevailed: the civil examination consistently carried more prestige than the military one, the ambitious streamed toward scholarship, and the cultural ideal of the *caizi* 才子, the refined talent, displaced the ideal of the martially accomplished gentleman across large parts of the elite.⁹ Kam Louie has shown that *wen* and *wu* are not a rigid opposition but a mobile, mu-

⁸ On the conceptual history of *wen* cf. Nylan: *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, ch. 1; Louie: *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, ch. 1.

⁹ Louie: *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, ch. 1–2; Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, on the institutional

tually complementary pair; but he has also shown how strongly Chinese elite culture tended to overweight the *wen* side.¹⁰ For this work that is not a footnote but a warning. The first volume had to defend the *wu* against the suspicion of crudeness; this volume must defend the *wen* against the opposite danger: against confusing education with pallor, cultivation with bodily remoteness, and erudition with conceit. The tradition itself knew this danger and named it; its remedy was never less *wen*, but complementation through the *wu*. Wherever the presentation touches the boundary with the martial — as with *weiqi*, which speaks the language of the art of war, or with the bodily posture of calligraphy —, it names this boundary and points to the sister volume, rather than blurring it. Figure 2 shows the architecture of the series from the civil side.

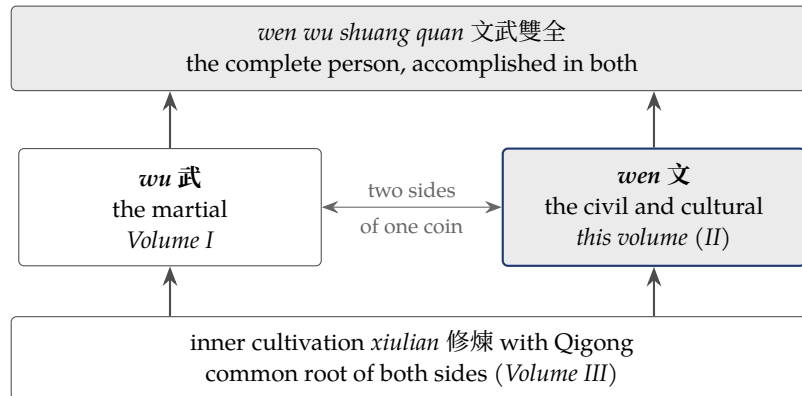


Figure 2: The conceptual pair *wen* and *wu* from the civil side: the design of the three volumes

2.2 The Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝): the four civil arts

The clearest documentary evidence for civil education as formation is the same one the first volume adduced for martial education: the curriculum of the Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝) in the *Baoshi* chapter of the *Zhouli*, according to which the sons of the nobility were educated by means of six practical skills: ritual (*li* 禮), music (*yue* 樂), archery (*she* 射), charioteering (*yu* 御), writing (*shu* 書), and calculation (*shu* 數).¹¹ Two of the six are martial and were treated in the first volume. The remaining four are the subject of this volume: ritual, which orders behavior; music, which structures feeling; writing, which carries expression; and calculation, which binds the intellect to number.

The internal staffing of this curriculum is instructive, for it runs, for the *wen*, in exactly the reverse order from the *wu*. The *Zhouli* distinguishes “lesser arts” (*xiaoyi* 小藝), learned by children, namely writing and calculation, from “greater arts” (*dayi* 大藝), taken up by adolescents and young adults, namely ritual, music, archery, and charioteering.¹² Civil education thus begins in childhood, with the brush and with number, and matures into the formal arts of ritual and music; martial education builds upon this foundation. For the staffing of the modern training plans in Chapters 11 and 12 this order, first writing and number, then music and ritual, will be directly authoritative, and it also explains at once why the two volumes of this series belong together: already the oldest curriculum treated the civil and the martial as stages of a single

precedence of the civil career track.

¹⁰ Louie: *Theorising Chinese Masculinity*, ch. 2.

¹¹ Theobald, Ulrich: *liuyi* 六藝, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de – An Encyclopaedia on Chinese History and Literature*, 2013; *Zhouli* 周禮, ch. *Baoshi* 保氏. The presentation of the Six Arts follows this article throughout.

¹² Theobald: *liuyi*.

education, not as subjects of two schools.

In the mature scholarly culture, the four civil arts of the Zhou grew into matured, refined forms of practice that shaped later self-understanding: the “Four Arts” (*siyi* 四藝) of the literatus, namely the zither (*qin* 琴), the board game (*qi* 棋), calligraphy (*shu* 書), and painting (*hua* 畫).¹³ This work employs both orders together: the Six Arts supply the historical foundation and the four strands; the Four Arts of the scholar show into which form of practice each strand matured within the living tradition. How the two orders fit together is unfolded in Chapter 2.5.

2.3 *Xiushen* 修身: self-formation as the core of civil education

What distinguishes traditional scholarly education from modern knowledge transmission more fundamentally than any subject matter is its declared aim: the formation of the person. The relevant verb is *xiushen* 修身, literally “to cultivate one’s own body, one’s own person.” The *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), originally a chapter of the *Liji* and, since Zhu Xi, the opening text of the Confucian curriculum, places *xiushen* at the center of a famous eight-part sequence: investigating things, extending knowledge, making one’s intentions sincere, rectifying one’s heart, cultivating one’s own person, ordering the family, governing the state, bringing peace to the world.¹⁴ The text leaves no doubt about the direction of this chain: “From the Son of Heaven down to the common man, the same holds for all: the cultivation of the person is the root.” Reading, writing, music, and ritual are, in this order, not skills one possesses but exercises through which one becomes; their measure is not knowledge but the transformation of the practitioner.

Xiushen is the civil twin of the very concept of cultivation the first volume unfolded under the term *xiulian* 修煉, and the distinction between the two carries the architecture of the whole series. *Xiushen* is this-worldly and ethical: it aims at character, family, and community, and it remains wholly within the Confucian world of ritual and scholarship. *Xiulian* is spiritual: it stems from Daoist-Buddhist cultivation, aims at the purification and transformation of the whole person beyond the ethical, and lives on to this day in its own paths of cultivation; its presentation, together with the bodily practice of Qigong, is reserved for the third volume of this series. Both, however, share the pedagogical principle on which all the plans of this series rest: the daily, patient practice, maintained over years, in small steps, that slowly transforms a person rather than quickly filling them. Already the first sentence of the *Analects* places this principle at the outset: “To learn and, at due times, to practice what one has learned — is that not also a joy?”¹⁵ The learning of which the tradition speaks is, from the very first line, a practicing.

2.4 The *Junzi* 君子 and *Ren* 仁: the ethical center

Finally, the tradition placed an explicit ethics at the center of civil education, the exact counterpart to the *wude* of the first volume. Its guiding figure is the *junzi* 君子, the “noble one”: originally a designation of rank for the son of a prince, but recast by Confucius into a term of character acquired through education and self-formation, not through birth.¹⁶ His inner standard is *ren* 仁, humaneness or humanity, and the *Analects* leave no doubt that all formal arts are

¹³ The quartet *qin qi shu hua* is attested as the ideal of the literatus from the Tang period and became a fixed topos in the Song period; cf. Lee: *Education in Traditional China*; on the zither, van Gulik: *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*.

¹⁴ *Daxue* 大學, opening chapter; cf. Gardner, Daniel K.: *The Four Books. The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*, Indianapolis 2007. The sequence reads *gewu* 格物, *zhizhi* 致知, *chengyi* 誠意, *zhengxin* 正心, *xiushen* 修身, *qijia* 齊家, *zhiguo* 治國, *ping tianxia* 平天下.

¹⁵ *Lunyu* 論語 1.1: “學而時習之，不亦說乎？” The character *xi* 習, according to traditional interpretation, depicts the repeated wingbeats of the young bird: practice as constant repetition, until what has been learned holds. Cf. Wilhelm, Richard (trans.): *Kungfutse. Gespräche (Lun Yü)*, Jena 1910.

¹⁶ On the recasting of the *junzi* concept cf. Gardner: *The Four Books*; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 1–2.

empty without this core: “A man without humaneness — what has he to do with ritual? A man without humaneness — what has he to do with music?”¹⁷

For the relation of form and substance the tradition possesses its own precise formula, which is at the same time the finest classical argument for the twofold nature of this book series: “Where substance outweighs form, one remains crude; where form outweighs substance, one becomes a mere scribe. Only where form and substance are in balance is one the noble one.”¹⁸ Education that is only form fails to reach the noble one just as much as strength that is only substance. The *junzi* is thus no scholarly ideal in the narrow sense, but the ideal of the person toward which *wen* and *wu* jointly converge; the ethics of restraint that the first volume described as *wude*, and the ethics of humaneness that this volume describes, are two expressions of the same binding of trained capacity to its rightful purpose. Every serious modern revival must adopt this binding as well, or civil education degenerates into precisely what the tradition itself warned against: mere ornament — or, in its modern form, a means of distinction and educational conceit.

2.5 The anatomy of the wen: four interlocking strands

In order to present the *wen* in its entirety, it is necessary to organize it, and the organization follows exactly the procedure of the first volume. The four strands arise from the sources: ritual, music, writing, and number are the four civil arts among the Six Arts of the *Zhouli*. What is modern, and expressly marked as interpretation, is solely the translation of these strands into present-day forms of practice, for which this work takes the matured scholarly form of each strand as its guide in each case (Chapter 7).

The first strand is **ritual and ethical formation** (*li* 禮, matured in *xiushen*): the formation of behavior, of deportment, and of character, from greeting to family ritual, the ethical backbone of the whole. The second strand is **music** (*yue* 樂, matured in the art of the scholar’s zither *qin* 琴): the discipline of ear, hand, and feeling through the earnest practice of an instrument. The third strand is **writing** (*shu* 書, matured in the triad of classical reading, calligraphy, and poetry): the slow reading of canonical texts, handwriting and brush-writing as a practice of attention, and the memorization and composition of bound language. The fourth strand is **number** (*shu* 數, matured in the art of calculation and in the strategy game *weiqi* 圍棋): exact, counting, forward-looking thought, for which the tradition created its most cultivated form of practice with the Go board.

There are two components that this work deliberately does *not* carry as independent main strands, and both decisions mirror those of the first volume. The first is **statecraft** (*jingshi* 經世, the “ordering of the world”): the whole of classical education aimed at office, at administration, adjudication, and politics, and the *Daxue* sequence makes this vanishing point explicit. As an independent strand of practice, however, statecraft is as ill-suited to modern daily life as the martial medicine of the first volume, for it is bound to institutions that lie outside the lives of most practitioners; it is honored as a historical vanishing point (Chapter 7.5), and what remains transferable from it is the disposition that education is obligated to the commonwealth. The second is **painting** (*hua* 畫), the fourth of the scholarly arts. It is not passed over here but is carried, following the principle “writing and painting spring from the same source” (*shu hua tong yuan* 書畫同源), as an optional deepening of the writing strand, exactly as the first volume carried horse-riding as an optional deepening of the mobility strand: whoever seriously takes

¹⁷ *Lunyu* 3.3: “人而不仁，如禮何？人而不仁，如樂何？”

¹⁸ *Lunyu* 6.18: “質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。” *Wen* 文 here stands literally for cultivated form, *zhi* 質 for unformed substance.

up brush, ink, and pictorial composition deepens the strand; the core of the strand remains complete even without it.¹⁹

Finally, to be distinguished from the four strands is, as in the first volume, inner cultivation (*xiulian*): it is the true ground on which all practice rests, but it belongs, as its own path, in the third volume; in the *wen* volume, what remains of it is the pedagogical principle of daily, transformative practice (Chapter 2.3) and the still, gathered attention that recurs in calligraphy, zither, and play as a component of every exercise.

3. Historical Development I: From Legend to the Curriculum of the Zhou and to Confucius

3.1 The founding legend: Cangjie and the invention of writing

Chinese tradition traces writing, the very heart of all civil education, back to a legendary origin that corresponds exactly to the founding myth of the martial arts. Cangjie 倉頡, scribe to the Yellow Emperor, is said to have devised the characters after the tracks of birds and animals; he is depicted with four eyes, and the narrative reports that at the invention of writing Heaven rained millet and the spirits wept in the night, because with writing, deception and strife entered the world.²⁰ Strictly from a source-critical standpoint, this is, as with the Yellow Emperor's victory over Chiyao in the first volume, a founding legend: there are no contemporary sources whatsoever for the claimed prehistoric age, and the narrative was written down millennia later.

The documented beginning is of more recent date and, for that, firm. The oldest surviving Chinese written records are the oracle bones (*jiaguwen* 甲骨文) of the late Shang period from the area of Anyang, divinatory inscriptions on cattle bones and turtle shells that begin around 1250 BCE; they were recognized as a writing medium in 1899 and systematically excavated from 1928 onward.²¹ Already these earliest testimonies show writing as a fully developed system in state and ritual use: writing was, from the outset, knowledge of rulership and ritual, not private amusement. The legend is nonetheless culturally significant, for it shows how the tradition understood itself: writing was held to be coeval with civilization itself, the work of a sage in the service of a sage-ruler — the same framing the first volume found for the martial arts. *Wen* and *wu* begin, in Chinese self-understanding, at the same legendary court.

3.2 The educational order of the Zhou: schools, ritual, and music

With the Zhou the ground becomes firmer, and it is the same ground the first volume surveyed. The ritual classics describe an articulated school system of the Zhou period, from local schools (*xiang* 庠, *xu* 序) up to the court's institution of higher learning, and the *Baoshi* chapter of the *Zhouli* names the Six Arts as its curriculum.²² The description is in part the idealization of later redactors, which must be noted from a source-critical standpoint; secured, however, is that the education of the Zhou nobility joined ritual, music, writing, and calculation with archery and charioteering in a single course of formation. Ritual (*li*) here was no catalog of manners but

¹⁹ The topos *shu hua tong yuan* has been a fixed part of literati aesthetics since the Tang and Song periods; literati painting (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) understood itself expressly as a sister art to calligraphy. Cf. Kraus: *Brushes with Power*, ch. 2.

²⁰ The Cangjie legend appears, among other places, in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (2nd c. BCE); on the legendary character and function of such culture-hero narratives cf. Nylan: *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, ch. 1.

²¹ On oracle-bone script and its discovery cf. Nylan: *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, ch. 1; Theobald, Ulrich: *Oracle Bone Inscriptions*, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de*.

²² Theobald: *liuyi*; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 2, on the idealized school order of the ritual classics, whose description is partly later systematization.

the operating knowledge of an order in which rulership was exercised ceremonially: sacrifices, audiences, embassies, mourning and festival forms — including the military rites, as the first volume showed. Music (*yue*) stood beside them as statecraft in the literal sense: the court maintained music masters, court ritual music (*yayue* 雅樂) belonged to the apparatus of rule, and education through music was regarded as the education of feeling toward order.²³

The theoretical interpretation of this pairing of ritual and music is preserved in the music chapter of the *Liji*, the *Yueji* 樂記, in a formula of great clarity: “Music unites; ritual distinguishes.” Music forges a commonality of feeling, ritual gives each their place; only both together form the person from within and from without.²⁴ For this work that is more than a fine quotation: it is the oldest evidence that the tradition understood its civil arts as a coherent, mutually complementary system, not as separate subjects, exactly as it understood its martial arts.

3.3 Confucius: the first teacher and the opening of education

The decisive figure of the civil tradition is a man who held no office of significance for long and left no writing in his own hand: Kong Qiu 孔丘, Latinized Confucius (551–479 BCE). His contribution was not a teaching in the sense of a system, but a twofold revolution in education itself. First, he detached the curriculum of the nobility from birth: he taught, for a modest fee, any earnest student, and the *Analects* capture this principle in four characters: “In teaching there is no distinction of origin.”²⁵ With this begins, in principle, the career of education that the empire later institutionalized: that scholarship and character, not blood, qualify a person. Second, he gave education a sequence and a goal that this work adopts directly. The *Analects* transmit his pedagogical formula: “Be stirred by poetry, take your stand in ritual, be perfected by music.”²⁶ Education begins with language, which awakens feeling, gains footing in formed practice, and is perfected in the art that orders the inner self: a staffing of the civil arts from the mouth of the tradition itself.

Two points must be noted from a source-critical standpoint. The *Analects* were compiled by generations of disciples and offer no verbatim transcripts; and the historical itinerant teacher is to be distinguished from the timeless sage into which the imperial cult of later centuries made him.²⁷ Neither diminishes his place in this inquiry, for that place is pedagogical: with Confucius, the formation of the whole person becomes an explicit program, and the texts his school gathered and transmitted became the canon of the following two millennia.

3.4 The canon: the Five Classics

This canon, as fixed by the Han period, comprised five works, the “Five Classics” (*wujing* 五經): the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), the *Book of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經), the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), the ritual books (*Liji*, with the *Zhouli* and the *Yili*), and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋); a sixth classic, the book of music (*Yuejing* 樂經), was already considered lost by the Han period.²⁸ The attribution of these works to the redacting hand of Confucius is tradition, not finding; the texts are compilations of various periods, and their canonization is a datable

²³ On music as an art of state and education in early China cf. DeWoskin: *A Song for One or Two*; Theobald: *liuyi*.

²⁴ *Liji* 禮記, ch. *Yueji* 樂記: “樂者為同，禮者為異。” Cf. DeWoskin: *A Song for One or Two*, ch. 2.

²⁵ *Lunyu* 15.39: “有教無類。” On the historical placement of Confucius as the first private teacher cf. Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 1; the hagiographic exaltation of Confucius in the later tradition is to be distinguished from his attested teaching activity.

²⁶ *Lunyu* 8.8: “興於詩，立於禮，成於樂。”

²⁷ On the textual history of the *Lunyu* and the cult history of Confucius cf. Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*; Gardner: *The Four Books*, introduction.

²⁸ Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, introduction and ch. 1; on the question of the lost music classic *ibid.*

process of the Han period, treated in the following chapter. For the concept of education, what is decisive is what this canon was *not*: specialist knowledge. Odes, documents, rites, changes, and annals formed a mirror of human situations on which judgment, expression, and character were trained, and precisely for this reason it could serve for two millennia as the foundation of the formation of persons, just as the first volume's Seven Military Classics served as the foundation for the formation of the strategist's judgment.

4. Historical Development II: From the Warring States to the Han Period

4.1 The Hundred Schools and the manuscript culture of the bamboo texts

The period of the Warring States (475–221 BCE), which gave the first volume the birth of war theory, is at the same time the birth era of the Chinese schools of thought: Confucians, Mohists, Daoists, Legalists, and many others, which tradition summarizes as the “Hundred Schools,” competed for a hearing at the courts, and their medium was writing on bamboo and silk. How tangible this manuscript culture was has been demonstrated by archaeology, with a find that plays the same role for the *wen* that Yinqueshan and Mawangdui play for the *wu*: the tomb of a scholar or teacher from around 300 BCE, opened in 1993 at Guodian 郭店 (Jingmen, Hubei Province), contained bundles of inscribed bamboo strips, including the oldest known version of parts of the *Laozi* and a series of Confucian texts that considerably predate canonization.²⁹ The find proves that around 300 BCE philosophical texts were copied, collected, and given as grave goods, that is, that an educational world existed in which texts carried authority, and it proves at the same time that these texts were still in flux: the canonical versions of later centuries are the result of selection and redaction, not the original state.

4.2 Qin: imperial unification, script standardization, and the burning of books

The imperial unification of 221 BCE repeated for the *wen* what the first volume showed for the *wu*: the centralizing state needed the skill and feared it in private hands. The Qin standardized script, weights, and axle widths, an administrative achievement of lasting effect; at the same time, tradition reports for the year 213 BCE the edict of burning against privately held copies of the odes, documents, and school writings, and for 212 BCE the execution of scholars.³⁰ Here too a source-critical distinction is required: the drastic narrative was transmitted by the succeeding dynasty, which had an interest in portraying itself as the savior of culture, and scholarship holds the scale and details to be disputed. What is secured is the basic process: the state claimed sovereignty over texts. This tension, education as a good to be fostered and as a power to be controlled, accompanies the civil tradition through its entire history, into the twentieth century, and it is the exact counterpart to the weapons control of the first volume.

4.3 Han: canon, academy, and the beginning of the educational career

The Han dynasty gave civil education its institutional shape, and the dates are firm. In 136 BCE Emperor Wu established academic chairs (*boshi* 博士) for the Five Classics and thereby made a particular body of texts into state doctrine; in 124 BCE followed the founding of the imperial

²⁹ On the Guodian find (1993) and its significance for the history of texts and education cf. Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, ch. 1; the texts attest a living, not yet standardized state of transmission around 300 BCE.

³⁰ *Shiji* 史記, ch. 6 (*Qin Shihuang benji* 秦始皇本紀). On the source-critical evaluation cf. Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, ch. 1: the accounts stem from the Han period, which staged its own cultivation of the canon as a restoration after Qin destruction; the scale and details of the “burning of books” are correspondingly disputed.

academy (*taixue* 太學), where these classics were taught and graduates were recommended for service.³¹ The growth of this institution is one of the most telling numerical series in the history of education: the academy began with about fifty members, numbered around three thousand students by the end of the Western Han, and after the expansion of 126 CE, up to thirty thousand in the Later Han period.³² Figure 3 shows this development. Alongside it arose, with the recommendation system (*xiaolian* 孝廉, the recommendation of the “filial and incorrupt”), the forerunner of the examination idea: the state sought personnel by attested character and ability, not yet by anonymous examination, but already by merit rather than birth.³³

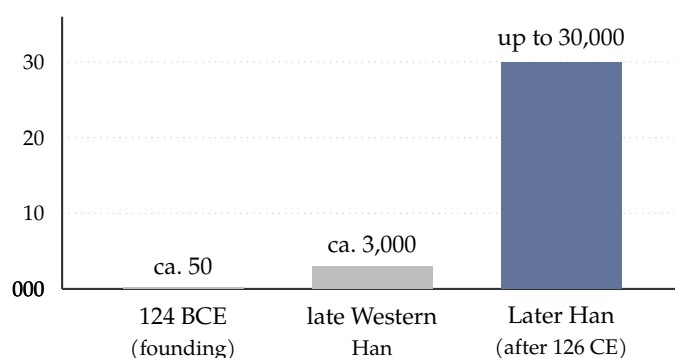


Figure 3: Students of the imperial academy (*taixue*) in the Han period (after Theobald 2011)

Two further Han-period dates complete the picture. Around 105 CE, the court official Cai Lun 蔡倫 is credited with improving papermaking, which determined the carrier medium of education for centuries to come; archaeological finds show paper somewhat earlier, so the attribution is a tidy simplification by tradition.³⁴ And in the years 175 to 183 CE the court had the Five Classics carved in stone and set up before the academy, the Xiping stone classics: the text as a public, verifiable norm against which every copy was to be measured.³⁵ Canon, academy, recommendation system, paper, and stone text: by the end of the Han period all the components of the later educational career are present in embryo, just as the first volume found the components of the martial tradition assembled by the end of the same epoch.

4.4 Calligraphy and the zither: the arts step forward

In the centuries of transition from the Han period to the Six Dynasties, the two practice-arts that would give the scholarly tradition its daily shape finally step forward. Writing detached itself from mere administrative function and became an art: with Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (ca. 303–361), whose preface to the Gathering at the Orchid Pavilion (*Lantingji xu* 蘭亭集序, 353) was held by tradition to be the most perfected specimen of running script, calligraphy gained its classical reference point; it is telling for the state of the sources that the original is lost and the fame rests

³¹ Theobald, Ulrich: *taixue* 太學, the National University, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de*, 2011; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 3.

³² Theobald: *taixue*. The figures (50 at the outset, 3,000 in the late Western Han, up to 30,000 *taixuesheng* after 126 CE) according to the same source.

³³ Theobald, Ulrich: *The Chinese Imperial Examination System*, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de*; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 3.

³⁴ On the history of paper and the Cai Lun attribution cf. Theobald, Ulrich: *Paper and Printing*, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de*.

³⁵ On the Xiping stone classics (*Xiping shijing* 熹平石經, 175–183) cf. Nylan: *The Five “Confucian” Classics*, ch. 1; Theobald: *taixue*.

on copies and transmission.³⁶ At the same time, the scholar's zither (*qin* 琴) became the very embodiment of self-cultivation through music: the poet and thinker Xi Kang 嵇康 (223–262) celebrated it in his rhapsody on the zither as an instrument that serves not an audience but the ordering of one's own disposition, and the later tradition, as Robert van Gulik has reconstructed it, made of this ethos an entire ideology of the sages' instrument.³⁷ Calligraphy and the zither are the matured forms of two Zhou arts, writing and music, and they show what maturation means in this tradition: a childhood skill or court technique becomes the lifelong practice of the adult, whose measure is not usefulness but formation.

5. Historical Development III: Sui, Tang, and Song — Institutionalization

5.1 The examination system (*keju*): education becomes a career

The decisive institutional step of the civil tradition is the same one the first volume described for the martial tradition, only a generation earlier and with incomparably greater effect: the state examination. The civil examination system (*keju* 科舉) took shape under the Sui (581–618) and was perfected under the Tang; Empress Wu Zetian introduced, around 702, alongside the military examination, the concealment of candidates' names.³⁸ The most coveted degree of the Tang period was the *jinshi* 進士, and its selection was fierce: of roughly 800 to 1,200 candidates each year, only a dozen to a few dozen succeeded, which is why success resembled the proverbial "ascent through the Dragon Gate."³⁹ Telling for the spirit of the Tang examination is its material: the *jinshi* required the composition of poetry in prescribed rhymes and forms. The state examined its future administrators in verse, because the tradition held formed expression to be a credential of the formed person — a decision one may dispute, and one the tradition itself later limited, but one that shows how seriously the writing strand was taken as a measure of character.

5.2 Song: printing, anonymization, and the expansion of education

What the Song period was for the martial arts, it was to an even greater degree for book culture: the epoch of institutionalization. Two developments carried it. The first is printing: between 932 and 953 the complete canon of the classics was published for the first time in woodblock print, and with the Song period the printed book became an everyday object of scholarship, which freed education from laborious hand-copying and dramatically widened its circle of bearers.⁴⁰ The second is procedural fairness in the examinations: the Song sealed the names of candidates (*mifeng* 彌封) and had the papers copied out by clerks (*tenglu* 謄錄), so that no examiner could recognize a handwriting.⁴¹ One should pause a moment to appreciate what this means: a medieval state built an anonymized, standardized, empire-wide performance examination with copy-protection against bias — an institution structurally closer to modern examination systems

³⁶ On the standing of Wang Xizhi and the *Lantingji xu* in the history of calligraphy cf. Kraus: *Brushes with Power*, ch. 2–3.

³⁷ Van Gulik: *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, esp. ch. 1–2, on the ideology of the *qin* as the scholar's instrument; on Xi Kang's *Qin fu* 琴賦 *ibid.* Zithers of the *qin* type are archaeologically attested already from tombs of the 5th–2nd centuries BCE.

³⁸ Theobald: *The Chinese Imperial Examination System*; cf. Volume I of this series, ch. 5.1. On the early history of the *keju* also Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 1.

³⁹ Theobald: *Examination System*; cf. Volume I, ch. 5.4.

⁴⁰ On the printing of the classics of 932–953 and Song book culture cf. Theobald: *Paper and Printing*; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 4.

⁴¹ Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 1–2; Theobald: *Examination System*.

than anything Europe knew before the nineteenth century. The meritocracy had documented limits, for preparation cost years and money, and access remained in practice bound to social class; but as an idea and a procedure, the educational career track was now fully built.⁴²

5.3 The academies (shuyuan) and Neo-Confucianism: Zhu Xi and the Four Books

Alongside the examination machine there arose in the Song period its counterforce, and for the concept of education in this work it is the more important institution: the private academy (*shuyuan* 書院). Academies were foundations with a library, teaching operations, and their own ethos, often located away from the cities, and their explicit claim was to defend education as self-formation against mere examination preparation.⁴³ Its most famous figure is Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), the systematizer of Neo-Confucianism. He renewed the White Deer Grotto Academy (*Bailudong shuyuan* 白鹿洞書院) and gave it study rules that explicitly bound learning to ethical formation rather than examination success; and he assembled from the *Liji* and the *Analects* that group of texts which, as the “Four Books” (*Sishu* 四書: *Daxue*, *Zhongyong*, *Lunyu*, *Mengzi*) together with his commentary, became the entry curriculum of the entire later tradition.⁴⁴ The canonization of this selection is datable, like that of the military classics: in 1313 the Yuan court decreed that examinations should henceforth be based on the Four Books in Zhu Xi’s edition, in force from 1315.⁴⁵ From then on, every schoolchild in the empire read the same four texts in the same commentary: perhaps the most consequential curricular decision in world history, in force for six hundred years.

5.4 The Four Arts of the scholar and the scholar as a cultural figure

In the same epoch, the life lived between examinations gained its classical shape: the culture of the Four Arts. The zither, the Go board, the brush, and painting became the fixed image of the cultivated existence, and the Song period supplied this image with its theory. For *weiqi*, around 1049–1054, the “Classic of Go in Thirteen Chapters” (*Qijing shisanpian* 棋經十三篇) arose, a treatise that explicitly interprets the game in the language of the military classics and the *Book of Changes*: position, fullness and emptiness, the weighing of gain and loss before the move.⁴⁶ The scholar’s board game speaks the language of the art of war: there is no more beautiful evidence for the inner unity of *wen* and *wu*, and Chapter 7.4 will return to it. The painting of the literati (*wenrenhua* 文人畫) understood itself as a sister art to calligraphy, an expression of the person rather than the craft of professional painters. And the epoch produced the most enduring icon of the scholarly ideal: Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), poet, calligrapher, painter, statesman, and exile, in whose figure the tradition demonstrated that the arts are a form of life and not a collection of subjects.⁴⁷ Here too source criticism demands its due: the quartet of arts was retrospectively ennobled with founding legends, Go for instance with the tale that the primordial emperor

⁴² On the social reach and its limits, Elman: *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China*, Cambridge (MA) 2013.

⁴³ Walton, Linda: *Academies and Society in Southern Sung China*, Honolulu 1999; Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 4.

⁴⁴ Bol: *Neo-Confucianism in History*, ch. 4–6; Gardner: *The Four Books*, introduction; on the study rules of the Bailudong Academy, Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 4.

⁴⁵ Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 1; Bol: *Neo-Confucianism in History*, ch. 3.

⁴⁶ Zanon, Paolo: *Qijing Shisanpian. The “Classic of Weiqi in Thirteen Chapters”*, in: *Annali di Ca’ Foscari* 35/3 (1996), pp. 375–398 (translation and transmission history); dating to the Huangyou era (ca. 1049–1054), attributed to Zhang Ni 張擬.

⁴⁷ On Su Shi as the embodiment of the literati ideal cf. Bol, Peter K.: “This Culture of Ours.” *Intellectual Transitions in T’ang and Sung China*, Stanford 1992, ch. 8.

Yao invented it to educate his son — an attribution that stems from the same workshop as the martial-arts legends of the first volume and, like them, must be carried as legend; the earliest secure mentions of the game come from texts of the Zhou period, and the *Analects* already mention it in passing.⁴⁸

6. Historical Development IV: Ming and Qing — Systematization, Ossification, Conclusion

6.1 Ming: the eight-legged essay and the examination machine

The Ming period systematized civil education as it systematized martial methods, and the systematization bore the same double character of maturity and rigidification. Its epitome is the “eight-legged essay” (*baguwen* 八股文), the examination form that became canonical in the late fifteenth century: a strictly structured discussion of a canonical quotation in prescribed parts, with parallel sentence pairs and in the voice of the ancients.⁴⁹ As a form of practice, the *bagu* had a genuine pedagogical core, discipline of argument and of expression; as the sole criterion of selection it became the epitome of dead formalism, and the sharpest criticism came from within the tradition itself: the scholar Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) judged that the eight-legged essay corrupted scholarship worse than the Qin burning of books.⁵⁰ Note the structure of this criticism: it is directed not against education but against the confusion of education with its testability — the very confusion against which the first volume warned in the guise of performance Wushu.

6.2 Qing: flourishing, ossification, and the philological turn

Under the Qing the system reached its greatest extent and its deepest crisis at once. The number of students and lower degree-holders grew far faster than the number of offices; quotas regulated the degrees per prefecture, waiting periods and repeated attempts consumed decades of life, and in times of need the state sold degrees for money, which hollowed out the merit principle from within.⁵¹ At the same time, Qing scholarship produced its greatest methodological achievement, *kaozheng* philology: a source-critical movement that, by means of textual collation, phonology, and epigraphy, scrutinized its own canon and thereby demonstrated that parts of venerable classics were later forgeries.⁵² The tradition turned its own rigor against itself; the critical method of this book series has here, not in the West, its oldest lineage of ancestors.

6.3 The abolition of the examination (1905)

In 1905, four years after the military examination, the civil examination system was abolished by edict; schools of a new type were to take its place.⁵³ The double significance of this date cor-

⁴⁸ On the Yao legend and the early attestation of *weiqi* (among others *Zuozhuan*; *Lunyu* 17.22) cf. Zanon: *Qijing Shisanpian*, pp. 375–377; Moskowitz: *Go Nation*, ch. 1.

⁴⁹ Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 8, on the emergence and structure of the *baguwen* in the 15th century.

⁵⁰ Gu Yanwu, quoted and contextualized in Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 8; cf. Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 5.

⁵¹ Elman: *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy*, ch. 3–5, on quotas, biographies of failure, and the sale of degrees (*juanna* 捐納).

⁵² Elman: *From Philosophy to Philology*, esp. ch. 1–3. The most famous result is Yan Ruoqu’s 閻若璩 demonstration that the “old script” chapters of the *Shujing* are a later compilation.

⁵³ Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, ch. 11; Theobald: *Examination System*. On the abolition of the military examination in 1901 cf. Volume I, ch. 6.3.

responds exactly to that of 1901 in the first volume. On the one hand, an institution died that had, for thirteen centuries, treated education as a testable qualification and as a path of advancement, and whose examination idea had by then traveled around the world. On the other hand, the modern situation began: the civil educational tradition lost its career track, its curriculum, and, a little later, its language, and it had to survive, if at all, in schools of foreign design, in families, and in voluntary care.

6.4 Aftermath in the twentieth century: iconoclasm, language change, and return

The aftermath was harder for the *wen* than for the *wu*. The Fourth of May Movement of 1919 and the New Culture Movement declared Confucianism the very epitome of backwardness; their most effective blow was the language change: at the instigation of reformers such as Hu Shi 胡適, the written vernacular (*baihua* 白話) became the language of literature and, from 1920, of schooling, whereby Classical Chinese, the medium of the entire canon, fell out of general education within a single generation.⁵⁴ The People's Republic continued the break: script simplification from 1956, and in the Cultural Revolution the campaign "Criticize Lin Biao and Confucius" (1973/74) as open iconoclasm against the tradition; the scholarly arts survived in niches, in the diaspora, and in Taiwan, where the classical educational stock never entirely fell out of the schools.⁵⁵ Since the 1990s a countermovement has followed: a "national studies fever" (*guoxue re* 國學熱), classics-recitation movements for children, restored academies, Confucius as an export brand — a return that inseparably mixes genuine cultivation with state and commercial appropriation.⁵⁶

For the question of this work, this aftermath is doubly instructive, and the lesson is, word for word, the same as in the first volume. Institutional upheavals and revivals are possible and powerful; but every institution that carries a tradition reshapes it according to its own purposes, the nation, the party, the market, the examination. What is regularly lost first is the pedagogy of formation, which is this work's concern. A revival in the sense of this series therefore does not begin with a new institution, but with the practice of the individual and the small community (Chapter 11).

6.5 The social world of transmission: families, village schools, academies

How was civil education actually carried across the dynasties? The answer explains why it was so robust for so long and why it became fragile in modern times, and it runs parallel to the social world of the first volume. Education was carried by a web of overlapping institutions: families and clan foundations, which had sons (and, to a remarkable extent, usually informally, daughters as well) instructed; village and family schools (*sishu* 私塾) with their teacher, often himself a failed examination candidate; academies with library and ethos; and, above all, the examination career, which gave direction to the whole and accountability to the teacher, for his reputation depended on the success of his students.⁵⁷ The daily method of this world was loud memorization and recitation, the copying-out of models, correction by the teacher: a peda-

⁵⁴ On the *baihua* reform and the 1920 decree of the Ministry of Education converting the lower primary grades to the vernacular, cf. Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, epilogue; Elman: *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy*, epilogue.

⁵⁵ On the anti-Confucius campaign and the People's Republic's handling of the scholarly tradition cf. Kraus: *Brushes with Power*, ch. 4–6, using the example of calligraphy in the modern state.

⁵⁶ On the return of tradition-cultivation and its political and commercial overlay cf. Moskowitz: *Go Nation*, ch. 1 and 6 (using the example of *weiqi*); Kraus: *Brushes with Power*, epilogue.

⁵⁷ Lee: *Education in Traditional China*, ch. 5–6; Elman: *Civil Examinations and Meritocracy*, ch. 2, on the social infrastructure of examination preparation.

gogy of dense repetition under personal supervision, whose kinship with the master-apprentice teaching of the martial arts is unmistakable.

The modern landscape possesses none of these structures and must improvise a substitute: adult-education centers, music schools, clubs, online courses, apps, and a vast, unvetted market of translations, guidebooks, and “Eastern wisdom.” The strength of this landscape is open access; its weakness is the loss of the old accountability, for where once a student’s examination success vouched for the teacher, the market today rewards reach and promise. The habit of verification urged in Chapter 8.4 is therefore indispensable in the *wen* as well.

6.6 What was lost and what was preserved

The long history permits a precise determination of what a modern revival can recover. What was lost were the institutions: the career track, the academy, the social world of the *sishu*, and, deeper than all of these, the taken-for-grantedness of the classical language, which made the canon directly accessible. Also lost is the vanishing point of office toward which the *Daxue* sequence aimed. What was preserved, and is recoverable, is the pedagogy: the cultivation model of *xiushen*, the daily small practice of hand, ear, and language; the ethics of the *junzi*, which binds education to humaneness rather than distinction; the staffing of the arts from writing to music to ritual; and the forms of practice themselves, reading, handwriting, instrument, play, and formed conduct, which require no institution in order to be practiced. The remainder of this work takes these preserved elements as the raw material of revival — as the *wen*-half of a formation whose *wu*-half the first volume presented.

7. The Four Strands as the Integrated Education of the Wen

The task of this work is to present the *wen* in its entirety. The historical sections have shown that it did not consist of four mutually independent occupations, but of four branches of a single formation. This chapter names explicitly what each branch trains and how the four interlock: ritual and ethical formation, music, writing, and number. It closes with a word on statecraft, toward which classical education aimed, but which is no longer a viable main strand in modern daily life.

7.1 Ritual and ethical formation (li → xiushen): behavior as practice

The first strand is the one most easily misunderstood. *Li* 禮 encompasses everything from the state sacrifice to the manner of offering a guest tea, and modern discomfort with the word “ritual” easily obscures what is trained here: the formation of behavior, until tact, consideration, and composure are no longer decisions but dispositions. Recent ritual theory has sharpened this point: ritual is not the expression of an already finished interiority, but an “as if,” a shared formal space that trains a person to act better than they feel, and thereby forms them.⁵⁸ That is exactly how the tradition understood it: the child learned the bow, the address, the sequence, and the table form not as compulsion but as a grammar of living together, and the adult went on practicing them as a daily self-examination of character. The modern translation of this strand is unspectacular and precisely for that reason effective: cultivated manners as a conscious practice; small, fixed forms of the day, the shared table, the greeting, the thanks, attention to elders and guests; and the cultivation of recurring family and annual rituals, whose regulating and

⁵⁸ Seligman / Weller / Puett / Simon: *Ritual and Its Consequences*, esp. ch. 1–2, with explicit reference to Confucian ritual theory.

bonding effect modern psychology can by now describe well (Chapter 9.4). What this strand trains is the counterpart to the *wude* of the first volume: the binding of one's own conduct to consideration and rightful purpose, ingrained through form.

7.2 Music (yue → qin): the instrument as discipline

The second strand is music, and the tradition means by it not listening, but practicing. Its matured form is the scholar's zither: a quiet instrument that, according to the transmitted ethos, is played not for an audience but for the ordering of one's own disposition.⁵⁹ What the earnest practice of an instrument trains is a distinctive, irreplaceable combination: the incorruptible ear that hears one's own error; the fine hand that corrects it; the tempo that enforces patience, because sound cannot be hurried; and the experience that daily small practice, over months, audibly transforms what no single day's effort can achieve — the cultivation model in its most sensory form. For the modern practitioner, the translation rule of this series applies: function counts, not artifact. Whoever can obtain a *qin* practices in the classical line; whoever practices guitar, piano, or violin, earnestly, daily, with the ear as judge, practices the same strand. The evidence on music-making across the lifespan is treated in Chapter 9.1; the *Yueji* anticipated the core of it: music orders the inner self, as ritual orders the outer.

7.3 Writing (shu → reading, calligraphy, poetry): the hand, the book, and the verse

The third strand is the richest, and the tradition unfolded it into a triad. **Classical reading** is the slow, repeated, questioning reading of few, dense texts, which the tradition always preferred to fast, broad reading; Zhu Xi's instructions for reading describe it minutely: little at a time, aloud, repeated, with one's own life as the touchstone.⁶⁰ **Calligraphy** — and, in its shadow, plain handwriting — is the strand's daily bodily exercise: posture, breath, pressure, and rhythm shape the character, and the character shows incorruptibly the state of the writer; the tradition read handwriting as a testimony of character, and modern physiology confirms that in practiced brush-writing, breathing and heartbeat measurably calm (Chapter 9.2).⁶¹ **Poetry**, finally, is the bound form of expression: memorizing verse as a lifelong possession, and writing one's own in small, strict form as an exercise in condensation. Confucius placed poetry at the beginning of education, and the Tang examined it in the state examination; its modern remainder, memorizing beloved poems and keeping a writing notebook, is modest, but it trains the same faculty: not merely to consume language, but to shape it. As an optional deepening, **painting** joins in, following the principle of the shared source of writing and image (Chapter 2.5): whoever draws or paints with the brush extends the practice of the hand into the pictorial, just as the first volume's rider extends mobility into the living.

7.4 Number (shu → the art of calculation and weiqi): counting and strategic thought

The fourth strand is the most underestimated. The calculation of the Six Arts was administrative knowledge, land surveying, calendar, tax, and the Han period gave it its canon with the *Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art* (*Jiuzhang suanshu* 九章算術).⁶² Its matured form of practice,

⁵⁹ Van Gulik: *The Lore of the Chinese Lute*, ch. 1–2.

⁶⁰ On Zhu Xi's reading method cf. Gardner: *The Four Books*, introduction; Bol: *Neo-Confucianism in History*, ch. 6.

⁶¹ Kao, Henry S. R.: *Shufa: Chinese calligraphic handwriting (CCH) for health and behavioural therapy*, in: *International Journal of Psychology* 41/4 (2006), pp. 282–286.

⁶² On the art of calculation as an educational good and on the *Nine Chapters* cf. Theobald, Ulrich: *Jiuzhang suanshu* 九章算術, in: *ChinaKnowledge.de*; the nine calculation methods (*jiushu* 九數) already appear in the *Zhouli* among the Six Arts.

however, found counting thought in *weiqi*: the Go board is the place where scholarly culture cultivated strategic judgment, and its own treatise, the Song-period Go classic, explicitly speaks the language of the *Sunzi* for it: weigh first, then move; the middle path of advantage often lies in renunciation; whoever does not see the whole context loses it.⁶³ Thus *weiqi* is this volume's natural bridge to the *wu*: what the art of war was there as a read discipline of judgment, the game is here as a practiced discipline of judgment, the same faculty in a civil key, assessment of situation, economy of means, foresight, losing with composure. What this strand trains can be named soberly: concentrated calculation of variants, memory for patterns, humility before the incorruptible result — the board strikes back, as the target of the first volume does — and the habit of counting before acting. The modern evidence on play and thought is treated in Chapter 9.3, including the requisite skepticism toward transfer claims.

7.5 Statecraft (*jingshi*): the honored vanishing point, not a modern main strand

A fifth component must not go unmentioned, for the whole of classical education aimed toward it: statecraft, the “ordering of the world” (*jingshi* 經世). The *Daxue* sequence does not end with the cultivated person, but with family, state, and world peace; education was an obligation to the commonwealth, and office was its intended fulfillment. As an independent strand of practice, statecraft is as ill-suited to modern daily life as the martial medicine of the first volume: it is bound to institutions, careers, and responsibilities that lie outside the lives of most practitioners. This work therefore honors it as a historical vanishing point and as an ethical admonition: what remains of it is the disposition that the four strands do not serve self-refinement for its own sake, but are meant to make a person more fit for their family, their occupation, and their commonwealth. Education that enjoys only itself would not have been called education by the tradition.

7.6 The interlocking of the four strands

The four strands form a deliberate structure, and the tradition itself has named its order. The staffing of the *liuyi* places writing and number, the arts of childhood, at the beginning: reading, writing, and counting are the foundation on which everything else rests. The formal arts of maturity build upon it: music takes the trained hand and the patient ear and shapes feeling; ritual takes the formed person and places them within the community. Confucius's formula gives the same movement from within: be stirred by poetry, take one's stand in ritual, be perfected by music. And running through all four is a common mechanism of effect, the civil counterpart to the trained breath of the first volume: gathered, slow, form-bound attention. Whether over the book, under the brush, at the string, or before the board — each of the four exercises demands and produces the same state of calm gathering, and in the case of the brush the physiological bridge to the breath of the first volume has even been measured (Chapter 9.2). The connecting ethical thread is the *junzi*: at every level, trained skill is bound to humaneness and rightful purpose, as in the *wu* trained power is bound to *wude*. Figure 4 illustrates this architecture; the following table summarizes the division of labor.

8. The Modern Problem: Why Integration Is Difficult

Before describing how the tradition can be revived, intellectual honesty demands a clear statement of why revival is difficult. Four obstacles stand in its way, and to underestimate them is

⁶³ Zanon: *Qijing Shisanpian*, pp. 380–395; the treatise repeatedly quotes and paraphrases the military classics.

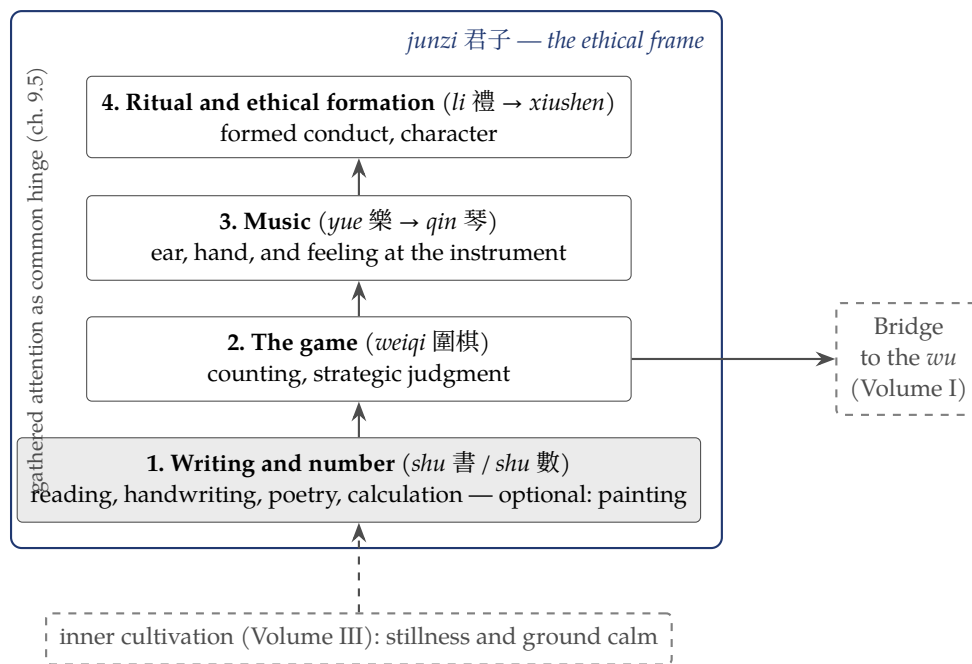


Figure 4: The four strands of the *wen* as a cumulative curriculum, bound by the *junzi* ideal and joined by gathered attention; the staffing follows the order of *xiaoyi* and *dayi*

Table 1: The four strands of civil education (*wen*) at a glance

Strand	Chinese term	What is primarily trained	Modern evidence (cf. ch. 9)
Ritual and ethical formation	<i>li</i> 禮 / <i>xiushen</i> 修身	deportment, character, composure, binding to rightful purpose	Psychological ritual research (regulation, bonding)
Music	<i>yue</i> 樂 / <i>qin</i> 琴	ear, fine motor skill, tempo, patience, expression	Music-making and cognitive aging (reviews); limits of transfer
Writing	<i>shu</i> 書 (reading, calligraphy, poetry)	sustained attention, expression, memory, hand steadiness	Calligraphy physiology and interventions; handwriting EEG; reading and longevity
Number and play	<i>shu</i> 數 / <i>weiqi</i> 圍棋	counting thought, situational judgment, foresight, losing with composure	Brain findings in long-term players; transfer skepticism noted

the surest path to failure.

8.1 The attention economy of the modern adult

The first obstacle corresponds to the physical inactivity of the first volume, only it concerns this volume’s organ: attention. Civil education lives on slow reading, on practice by hand, and on undivided gathering, and it is precisely these goods that the modern media environment consumes. The scale is measurable: according to the analysis of twenty years of the American Time Use Survey, the share of adults who read for pleasure on an average day fell from 28 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2023, a decline of roughly forty percent within a generation (Figure 5).⁶⁴ Handwriting is disappearing from daily life, music-making competes with streaming, and the

⁶⁴ Bone / Bu / Sonke / Fancourt: *The decline in reading for pleasure*, in: *iScience* 28/9 (2025), article 113349 (N > 236,000). The survey concerns the USA; comparable shifts in time use are documented in most industrialized societies.

long game competes with the short one. The traditional curriculum presupposed a world in which attention was the normal state; the modern practitioner must reclaim it against an industry that lives off its fragmentation. Every honest program must proceed from this constraint rather than wish it away.

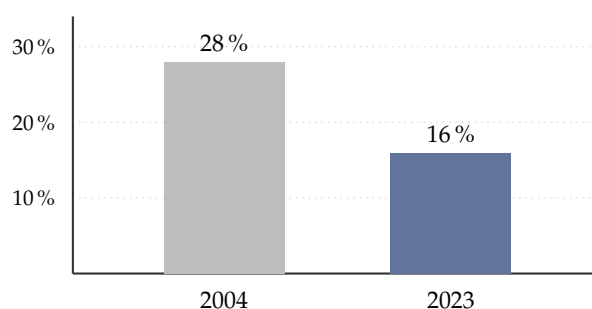


Figure 5: Share of adults (USA) who read for pleasure on an average day (after Bone et al. 2025)

8.2 The pedagogical gap: recitation pedagogy versus self-instruction

The second obstacle is structural in nature and corresponds to the master-teaching gap of the first volume. The classical method was dense, personal, daily supervision: the teacher of the *sishu* heard what had been memorized, corrected the stroke, set right the reading; the instrument was learned at the master's ear, the game at the board of the stronger player. Embodied skills of this kind, the stroke, the touch, the pronunciation of the verse, resist being written down as stubbornly as the bodily skills of the first volume. The modern practitioner who learns characters with an app in the evening or practices from videos attempts, through thin contact, to acquire what the tradition conveyed through dense contact. The gap can be narrowed, through lessons, clubs, reading circles, and playing partners, but not closed, and to pretend otherwise produces practitioners who know the shape of an art but not its substance.

8.3 Decontextualization and loss of meaning

The third obstacle is the loss of the sense-giving context, and it strikes the *wen* more deeply than the *wu*. The canon was written for people whose lives it was meant to order, in a language they internalized from childhood, with office as the vanishing point and the family as the stage of ritual. Detached from this world, classical reading threatens to become a treasury of quotations, calligraphy a decoration, ritual folklore, and the whole that "Eastern wisdom" which is good as merchandise but worthless as education. Revival is therefore, here too, not the reproduction of techniques but the reconstruction of a sufficiently meaningful frame: a reading community, a teacher, a household that takes its forms seriously. For the *wen*, the language barrier compounds the difficulty: the canon is composed in Classical Chinese, and most modern practitioners read it in translation. This is no reason for exclusion, the tradition itself taught through commentaries and paraphrases, but it demands the honesty to choose good translations, to know their limits, and not to mistake the translation for the text.

8.4 Authenticity, commercialization, and the crisis of transmission

The fourth obstacle is the corrupted information environment, and it is, in the *wen*, arguably even more corrupted than in the *wu*. Around "Confucius says," a world market of invented quotations has formed; around mindfulness, tea ceremony, and calligraphy, a wellness industry

that hollows out concepts and charges prices; and state-sponsored cultivation of tradition mixes genuine scholarship with political staging.⁶⁵ For the aspiring practitioner, distinguishing serious transmission from decorative imitation is just as difficult as in the martial-arts market of the first volume, and a wrong choice costs just as many years. The countermeasure is the same: the habit of verification, critical editions instead of quotation posters, credentialed translations instead of retellings, teachers who honestly state the origin and limits of their skill — the same source-critical skepticism this work applies to history, directed at the present-day market.

9. The Benefits of a Revival: The Evidence

Against these named obstacles stands a substantial case for revival, and it is presented, as in the first volume, in descending order of strength of evidence. A warning belongs at the outset and frames the whole chapter: the educational research of recent decades has, precisely, *not* confirmed this field's most popular promises, that music makes one clever, that chess makes one smart. The methodologically strictest reviews find scarcely any robust effects for such "far transfer" from a practiced domain to general intelligence or school performance.⁶⁶ This work therefore deliberately builds its case not on transfer promises, but on three more modest and better-documented pillars: on the effects of the arts on health and well-being, on the domain-specific and physiological effects of the individual exercises, and on what the tradition itself promised — formation in the matter itself, not magic beyond it.

9.1 The arts, health, and well-being: the broad finding

The broadest body of evidence concerns the connection between artistic practice and health. The World Health Organization's 2019 scoping review, which surveyed more than three thousand studies, concludes that artistic engagement, music-making, crafting, reading, dance, plays a documented role in prevention, health promotion, and illness management across the entire lifespan, from stress regulation to social inclusion.⁶⁷ For music-making in old age there is a dedicated systematic review with meta-analysis, which finds musical practice associated with better cognitive function in healthy aging, with an honest caveat: the findings are largely correlational, and those who make music also differ from those who do not in other respects.⁶⁸ For reading, finally, there exists a remarkable epidemiological finding: in a cohort of more than 3,600 older adults, regular book reading over twelve years was associated with a survival advantage of about 23 months, robust to controlling for education, income, and health; this too is not a proof of causation, but a strong signal that the slow reading of whole books is a good in itself.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ On the commercial and political overlay of tradition-cultivation cf. Kraus: *Brushes with Power*, epilogue; Moskowitz: *Go Nation*, ch. 1 and 6.

⁶⁶ Sala, Giovanni / Gobet, Fernand: *Does far transfer exist? Negative evidence from chess, music, and working memory training*, in: *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26/6 (2017), pp. 515–520; idem: *Cognitive and academic benefits of music training with children: A multilevel meta-analysis*, in: *Memory & Cognition* 48/8 (2020), pp. 1429–1441 (overall effect near zero with active control groups).

⁶⁷ Fancourt, Daisy / Finn, Saoirse: *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*, Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe 2019 (Health Evidence Network Synthesis Report 67).

⁶⁸ Román-Caballero, Rafael / Arnedo, Marisa / Triviño, Mónica / Lupiáñez, Juan: *Musical practice as an enhancer of cognitive function in healthy aging — A systematic review and meta-analysis*, in: *PLoS ONE* 13/11 (2018), e0207957.

⁶⁹ Bavishi, Avni / Slade, Martin D. / Levy, Becca R.: *A chapter a day: Association of book reading with longevity*, in: *Social Science & Medicine* 164 (2016), pp. 44–48.

9.2 Calligraphy and handwriting: the physiology of the brush

The densest experimental literature on any single *wen* exercise concerns calligraphy, and it builds the most direct bridge to the first volume. The research group around Henry S. R. Kao has shown over decades that practiced brush-writing coincides with a measurable calming: slowed breathing, lowered heart rate and blood pressure, reduced muscle tension together with heightened alertness — the profile of gathered attention that the first volume described in the archer and in trained breathing.⁷⁰ A systematic review with meta-analysis of 21 studies finds significant, though small to medium, effects of calligraphic interventions on cognitive measures and neuropsychiatric symptoms, with acknowledged methodological heterogeneity in the field.⁷¹ And for plain handwriting, the everyday form of the strand, a high-resolution EEG study shows that writing by hand produces widespread, learning-relevant patterns of brain connectivity that are absent when typing the same content.⁷² The samples are small and the field is young; but the direction is consistent, and it confirms what the tradition taught about the brush as an exercise of posture, breath, and gathering.

9.3 Weiqi and strategic thought: formation in the matter itself

For the board game the evidence is two-part, and the division is instructive. On the one hand, imaging studies of long-term Go players show structural peculiarities of white matter in networks of executive control and problem-solving, compared with control subjects: decades of play leave measurable traces in the systems drawn upon.⁷³ On the other hand, the already cited transfer skepticism applies: there is no robust evidence that chess or Go training raises general intelligence or school grades.⁷⁴ This work draws from this a conclusion that captures the spirit of the whole series: the value of *weiqi* lies not in transfer, but in the matter itself. What the board trains, situational judgment, patience in calculation, composure in losing, is genuinely acquired at the board and is available as a practiced disposition in life, just as the first volume's art of war does not form because it is brain training, but because it trains judgment on real situations. The tradition never promised that Go would make one clever; it promised that it would make one more composed, and this promise is modest enough to be true.

9.4 Rites and rituals: the psychology of form

For the ritual strand, modern psychology provides a strikingly direct confirmation of the classical theory. The integrative review by Hobson and colleagues assigns the experimental findings on ritual to three areas of effect: rituals regulate emotion, particularly and precisely under loss and strain; they improve performance on subsequent tasks by binding arousal and focusing attention; and they establish and consolidate social bonds.⁷⁵ One may read alongside this the

⁷⁰ Kao: *Shufa*, in: *International Journal of Psychology* 41/4 (2006), pp. 282–286.

⁷¹ Chu, Kuan-Yu / Huang, Chiu-Yueh / Ouyang, Wen-Chen: *Does Chinese calligraphy therapy reduce neuropsychiatric symptoms: a systematic review and meta-analysis*, in: *BMC Psychiatry* 18 (2018), article 62.

⁷² Van der Weel, F. R. / van der Meer, Audrey L. H.: *Handwriting but not typewriting leads to widespread brain connectivity: a high-density EEG study with implications for the classroom*, in: *Frontiers in Psychology* 14 (2024), article 1219945.

⁷³ Lee, Bumseok et al.: *White matter neuroplastic changes in long-term trained players of the game of “Baduk” (GO): A voxel-based diffusion-tensor imaging study*, in: *NeuroImage* 52/1 (2010), pp. 9–19. Cross-sectional design; self-selection cannot be excluded.

⁷⁴ Sala / Gobet: *Does far transfer exist?*, pp. 515–520.

⁷⁵ Hobson, Nicholas M. / Schroeder, Juliana / Risen, Jane L. / Xygalatas, Dimitris / Inzlicht, Michael: *The psychology of rituals: An integrative review and process-based framework*, in: *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 22/3 (2018), pp. 260–284.

Yueji: music unites, ritual distinguishes and orders; or the ritual theory of the “as if,” according to which form lets a person act better than they feel.⁷⁶ The vocabularies are two, the subject is one. The claim remains measured: the ethical formation the tradition ascribed to *li* is not measurable as a whole. But its building blocks, emotion regulation through form, gathering through repetition, bonding through shared practice, belong to the better-documented findings of social psychology, and they answer a real modern need for forms that carry the day.

9.5 Gathered attention as a common mechanism of effect

A single mechanism connects much of the foregoing and is the civil counterpart to the trained breath of the first volume: slow, form-bound, gathered attention. All four strands train it, each in its own key, the book in slow reading, the brush in the guided stroke, the string in the heard tone, the board in silent calculation, and calligraphy physiology shows that this gathering is no metaphor but registers in breath, heart rate, and muscle tone, the very quantities through which the first volume documented the benefit of slow breathing.⁷⁷ In an environment whose business model is the fragmentation of attention (Chapter 8.1), a tradition all of whose exercises produce gathering is no luxury, but a counterweight. This is the single strongest reason to practice the strands together rather than separately: each rehearses the same basic skill, gathering and holding one’s own state, and each supports the others in doing so — and, beyond the breath, the martial exercises of the first volume as well, which live on the same gathering.

10. Challenges and Honest Limits

10.1 The transfer myth and the danger of exaggeration

The first limit was already drawn in Chapter 9 and deserves emphasis in its own right: this tradition does not make one clever, and whoever sells it with that promise deceives. The “Mozart effect” and its relatives are not scientifically tenable; the rigorous meta-analyses on far transfer are sobering.⁷⁸ It would be a betrayal of this series’ source-critical stance, in the spirit of the *kaozheng* philologists and of Tang Hao, the founder of critical martial-arts historiography (Volume I, preliminary note), to overstate the science after having dismissed the legends. The honest position is this: the arts are well documented for health and well-being, the individual exercises for their domain-specific and physiological effects; the rest is formation in the matter itself, well-founded but not measured.

10.2 Limits of the evidence

The second limit is that of the strength of evidence in particular. The reading-longevity association is observational, not experimental; the music-aging findings are predominantly correlational; the calligraphy literature is small and methodologically heterogeneous; the Go brain findings are cross-sections of self-selected populations. Publication bias is to be suspected in all of these fields. This work has noted these limitations in each place and repeats them here together, so that no reader takes the state of evidence to be denser than it is. A revival built on

⁷⁶ Seligman / Weller / Puett / Simon: *Ritual and Its Consequences*, ch. 1–2.

⁷⁷ Kao: *Shufa*; on the physiology of slow breathing, Volume I, ch. 9.5, with the literature cited there (Zaccaro et al. 2018).

⁷⁸ Sala / Gobet: *Does far transfer exist?*; idem: *Cognitive and academic benefits of music training*. On the reanalysis debate surrounding the music meta-analysis cf. the response by Bigand and Tillmann (2021), which partly disputes the null findings; the dispute itself demonstrates how uncertain the field is.

this honest slope will outlast one built on exaggeration — the same sentence with which the first volume concluded the same point.

10.3 Cultural bias, appropriation, and the language barrier

The third limit is cultural, and it weighs more heavily in the *wen* than in the *wu*. This is a Chinese tradition with a particular language, a particular canon, and a particular ethical world. To extract its forms while discarding their meaning, calligraphy as wall decoration, Confucius as a calendar saying, tea culture as lifestyle, is intellectually mistaken and a form of disrespect. Added to this is the language barrier: whoever reads the canon only in translation, and most will, must treat the translation as a translation, choose good editions, carry the original terms alongside central concepts, and relinquish the claim to render final interpretations at second hand. A serious revival studies the history, uses the terms correctly, learns where possible from teachers within living traditions, and admits what it has changed and why. This work's insistence on precise source work is itself part of this ethic.

10.4 The unavoidable expenditure of time

The fourth limit is the same one the first volume described under the word *gongfu*, and it applies undiminished in the *wen*: embodied skill takes time. No one reads the classics in a month with profit, no one learns an instrument or legible calligraphy in twelve weeks, and any program that promises education in weeks is, on principle, to be distrusted. What a well-designed modern program can achieve is to let the available time count: to keep the practitioner at the practice over years rather than months, and to stage the work so that real, if slow, progress accumulates. The plans in Chapter 12 are built on this realistic premise.

11. A Model of Integration: Design Principles

The following training plans are not arbitrary. They are derived from six principles that correspond point for point to the six principles of the first volume; whoever practices both volumes side by side will experience this correspondence as a relief, for it allows both halves to be fitted into the same daily life by the same logic.

The first principle is the minimal effective dose. In place of the WHO movement measure of the first volume comes here an attention measure: at least half an hour daily of gathered, screen-free practice, reading, writing, exercising, playing, in whatever mixture. The threshold is deliberately low; it falls short of what each individual line of evidence uses as a dose, but against the situation described in Chapter 8.1 it is already a program, and it is one nearly every adult can sustain.

The second principle is daily ritual plus weekly depth. The cultivation model of *xiushen* rewards the little-and-often: short daily units that keep hand, ear, and language in training, interspersed with one or two longer weekly units for real depth, the long reading, the lesson, the earnest game. A quarter-hour of handwriting maintained over a year teaches more than a calligraphy course abandoned after a month.

The third principle is the staffing of the four strands in the order the tradition itself suggests: first the arts of childhood, writing and number, that is, reading, handwriting, and the fundamentals of the game, for they are the foundation and demand the least equipment and instruction; then the arts of maturity, music and ritual, the instrument and the conscious form of conduct. Confucius's sequence, poetry, ritual, music, and the *xiaoyi-dayi* order of the *Zhouli* point the same way.

The fourth principle is progress without competition. The classical standard was the transformation of the practitioner, not victory; the examination, where it existed, was a career, not a meaning. Progress can be tracked by simple, private standards: pages read and reread, verses memorized, characters mastered, a piece played fluently, a game without a gross error. Ranks and tournaments, in Go as in music, are optional; cultivation is the point.

The fifth principle is verified transmission. Because the old accountability of the examination career is absent and the market rewards reach (Chapters 6.5 and 8.4), the modern practitioner must consciously replace two things: living contact and verification. Wherever possible, regular instruction, music lessons, a calligraphy course, a reading circle, an evening of play, belongs in every program, for there the error is recognized that no video shows. And the same source-critical skepticism this work applies to history must be directed at editions, translations, teachers, and claims.

The sixth principle is the ethical frame. Following the *junzi* ideal, the program should be practiced as formation, not as distinction: with patience toward oneself, courtesy toward others, service to family and commonwealth as the vanishing point, and without the conceit that turns education into a badge. This is no moral ornament to a study plan; it is, as the whole history has shown, the element that turns practice into education, and at the same time the point at which the *wen* most clearly calls for its *wu* complement: form without substance makes a mere scribe.

The following table makes the gulf between classical and modern conditions explicit; the principles are answers to each row.

Table 2: Classical versus modern conditions of civil education

Feature	Classical condition	Modern condition	Design response
Integration	A single curriculum (Six Arts) uniting <i>wen</i> and <i>wu</i>	Fragmented into school subjects, hobbies, and consumption	Practice reading, hand, ear, play, and form together in one program
Attention	Gathering as the normal state of reading and practice	Attention economy; reading in free fall	Daily screen-free minimum dose; gathering as a trained skill
Transmission	Dense supervision: recitation, correction, the master's lesson	Apps, videos, self-instruction	Secure regular instruction and community wherever possible
Accountability	Examination career and the teacher's reputation	Market rewards reach and promise	Critical editions, vetted teachers, private standards
Standard of progress	Transformation of the person (<i>xiushen</i>)	Certificates, badges, self-presentation	Cultivation before competition; measure yourself, not others
Ethics	<i>Junzi</i> ideal, embedded in family and office	Education as distinction and commodity	Keep the ethical frame explicit and central

12. Sample Training Plans for Modern Workloads

The following three plans apply the principles to the same three life situations as the training plans of the first volume and are built so that they can be combined with those: whoever practices both volumes places the *wen* units in the quiet hours of the day (early morning, evening, the commute), in which physical training rarely falls in any case. All plans presuppose little: a few good editions of the classics in a vetted translation, paper and pen or brush, where possible an instrument and a Go board (or a reputable practice platform), and, as the single most

valuable investment, a regular lesson or community hour. The times are deliberately set on the modest side, so that the plans survive contact with a full week.

12.1 Plan A: The working professional (ca. 3 to 4 hours per week)

This plan foregrounds short daily practice, grounds it in handwriting and reading, and concentrates depth on the weekend.

Table 3: Plan A for the working professional

Day	Practice	Strand	Time
Mon	Handwriting or calligraphy: a few characters or lines, slow and with posture	Writing (hand)	15 min.
Tue	Classical reading: a short passage (<i>Lunyu</i>), read aloud, with notes	Writing (reading)	20 min.
Wed	Instrument: tone and piece work per practice plan	Music	20 min.
Thu	<i>Wei qi</i> : problems (life and death) or a short game on a small board	Number/play	15 min.
Fri	Repeat a memorized verse, begin a new one; skim the week's reading	Writing (poetry)	10 min.
Sat	Longer unit: reading with commentary, followed by a written summary by hand	Writing/ritual (reflection)	60 min.
Sun	Music lesson, reading circle, or earnest game; the shared table as cultivated form	Music/ritual	60 min.

The weekly total is about 3 hours 20 minutes of gathered, screen-free practice; the first principle's daily minimum is thereby met on a weekly average, all four strands are touched, and the Sunday unit carries the community and formal component. In weeks without instruction, the Sunday hour is replaced by a long reading or practice unit.

12.2 Plan B: The committed practitioner (ca. 6 to 8 hours per week)

This plan suits the reader who wants to develop real depth across all four strands, and it builds in weekly instruction as a fixture.

Table 4: Plan B for the committed practitioner

Day	Practice	Strand	Time
Mon	Calligraphy: model-copying, then free lines	Writing (hand)	45 min.
Tue	Classical reading with commentary and excerpting by hand	Writing (reading)	45 min.
Wed	Music lesson with a teacher (correction!) plus follow-up practice	Music	90 min.
Thu	<i>Wei qi</i> : game with post-game review, or a problem set	Number/play	45 min.
Fri	Poetry: memorizing and writing one's own in small form	Writing (poetry)	30 min.
Sat	Long unit: a reading project; monthly, painting or museum study instead	Writing (deepening)	90 min.
Sun	Community: reading circle, game evening, or house music; conscious guest-form	Ritual/all	90 min.

The weekly total is about 7 hours, distributed so that no strand crowds out the others, with

one supervised hour for correction and two community units. The Wednesday hour is treated as non-negotiable: there the ingrained error is recognized.

12.3 Plan C: Family or shift work (fragmented time)

This plan forgoes the fixed weekly grid in favor of a menu of short modules, assembled according to the week's circumstances; it holds an advantage over the first volume's plan, for the *wen* exercises are even more fragmentation-resistant than the physical ones.

Table 5: Plan C for fragmented time (module menu)

Module	Practice	Strand	Time
M1	Read a page slowly (keep the book at hand)	Writing (reading)	10 min.
M2	Write a few lines by hand: copying, journal, letter	Writing (hand)	10 min.
M3	Instrument: a single exercise or passage	Music	10 min.
M4	Three <i>weiqi</i> problems or a 9×9 game	Number/play	10 min.
M5	Repeat a verse (on the way, without a device)	Writing (poetry)	5 min.
M6	Weekly: a consciously cultivated shared meal or guest-form	Ritual	30 min.
M7	Monthly: lesson, reading circle, or game evening	all	90 min.

The goal is to complete modules totaling at least 200 minutes over the week, with at least one module from each strand and the weekly ritual module as a fixed anchor. The plan accepts that some weeks will be thin; its purpose is to keep the practice alive through difficult stretches.

12.4 A twelve-week progression and its adaptation

Whichever weekly plan is chosen, the following twelve-week arc gives the practice direction; following the staffing of the third principle, it moves from the arts of childhood to the arts of maturity and sets private, competition-free standards.

Table 6: Twelve-week progression with private standards

Weeks	Focus	Writing standard	Number/play standard	Music/ritual standard
1–4	Foundations	Establish daily handwriting; read <i>Lunyu</i> , books 1–7, slowly; memorize a first verse	Rules and basic forms of <i>weiqi</i> ; daily small problems; 9×9 games	Choose an instrument and practice posture/basic tone; consciously cultivate one fixed daily form (greeting, table)
5–8	Refinement	Finish <i>Lunyu</i> ; keep an excerpt notebook; calligraphy: copy a model; second and third verse	13×13 games; count simple endgame forms; replay a game	A short piece in progress; weekly correction by a teacher or recording
9–12	Integration	Read the <i>Daxue</i> and relate the Eight Steps to one's own practice; write a page about it by hand	First 19×19 game; lose, review, repeat	The piece performable; consciously host a guest-form (invitation, tea, thanks)

The progression is deliberately measured and repeatable: at the end of the twelve weeks the practitioner begins anew at a higher baseline, with the next text, the next piece, the larger

board, and this is exactly how the cultivation model is meant to work (Figure 6). Adaptation is built in: whoever cannot obtain an instrument strengthens poetry and recitation, the music of language; whoever has no one to play with uses problem collections and reputable platforms and concentrates live play monthly; whoever is under heavy work pressure falls back, without guilt, on the menu of Plan C, for constancy over years, not intensity over weeks, is the whole point.

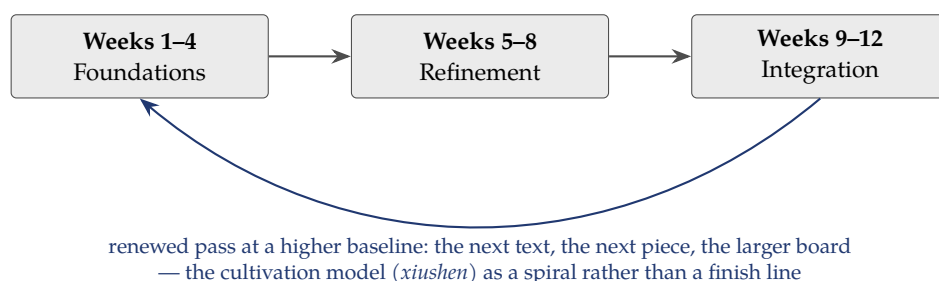


Figure 6: The twelve-week progression as a repeatable cycle

13. Conclusion

The present work has asked how traditional Chinese scholarly education, in all its civil strands — ritual and ethical formation, music, writing, and number — can be preserved and revived within a modern working life, and why the attempt is worthwhile. It has done so explicitly as a presentation of the second half of a larger whole: the *wen*, the civil, as one side of the conceptual pair *wen wu*, whose other side, the *wu*, the first volume unfolded, while a short third volume is devoted to inner cultivation (*xiulian* and Qigong) as the common root of both.

The historical inquiry has yielded a clear answer to the “why.” From the documented origin of the tradition onward, civil education was formation, not knowledge transmission: the Six Arts educated the whole person; Confucius opened this education regardless of origin and gave it a sequence and a goal; the institutions that carried this synthesis — the canon of the Five Classics and the academy of the Han, the examination system from Sui to Qing, the academies and the Four Books of the Song, the thirteen centuries of the career track down to 1905 — are datable facts, not legends. The twentieth century added the same lesson to this history as to the martial one: institutions collapse and are reinvented, and each reshapes the tradition according to its own purposes; what is worth preserving and transmissible is the pedagogy, not the institution.

What a modern revival recovers is precisely this pedagogy: the cultivation model of *xiushen*, the daily, patient practice of hand, ear, language, and judgment; the staffing from the arts of childhood to the arts of maturity; gathered attention as the common hinge of all the exercises; and the binding of education to the *junzi* ideal, to humaneness rather than distinction. The case for this revival is strong and, where it can be tested, has been made on the basis of evidence: with the broad findings on the arts and health, the physiology of calligraphy and handwriting, the psychology of ritual, the long-term findings on reading and music-making — and with the explicit rejection of the transfer promises that rigorous research does not support. The challenges have been named without embellishment: the attention economy, the thin modern transmission, the loss of meaning of uprooted forms, the language barrier, the corrupted market, and the unavoidable truth that education takes years.

The honest conclusion is therefore the same as in the first volume, and it is meant literally: a living tradition can only be preserved by being practiced, and can only be practiced by being adapted. Whoever writes a few lines by hand in the morning, repeats a verse on the train, slowly

reads a page of the *Analects* in the evening, carries their instrument to the weekly lesson, loses at the board with composure, and cultivates their table as a form, is not playing at empire. This person is doing, in a modern key, exactly what the *wen* was always for: to form a calmer attention, a more shaped expression, and a more considerate conduct.

And yet even this person remains, with the *wen* alone, a half figure — the other half figure from that of the first volume, but equally half. The tradition wanted the whole person, *wen wu shuang quan*, the bow and the book in the same hands: the scholar who can stand his ground, and the fighter who can read. The two volumes of this series have each drawn one of the two sides of the coin in its entirety; what carries and joins them, inner cultivation together with the bodily practice of Qigong, the third and final volume will unfold. Only together do they depict the formation that the Chinese tradition understood as the education of the person. This is why the *wen* is worth preserving, this is how it can realistically be preserved — and this is why it, too, is not the end, but the second half of the beginning.

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Meaning
<i>baguwen</i> 八股文	the “eight-legged essay,” the strictly structured examination form of the Ming and Qing periods; epitome of the confusion of education with testability.
<i>baihua</i> 白話	the written vernacular, which from 1919/1920 replaced Classical Chinese as the language of literature and schooling.
<i>Daxue</i> 大學	the “Great Learning”; a chapter of the <i>Liji</i> , since Zhu Xi the opening text of the Four Books; contains the eight-part sequence with <i>xiushen</i> as its root.
<i>jiaguwen</i> 甲骨文	the oracle-bone script of the late Shang period (from ca. 1250 BCE), the oldest surviving Chinese written record.
<i>jingshi</i> 經世	the “ordering of the world”; statecraft as the vanishing point of classical education; here honored, but not a modern main strand.
<i>junzi</i> 君子	the “noble one”; the ideal of character, formed through education, recast by Confucius; the ethical frame of the <i>wen</i> , counterpart to the <i>wude</i> of the first volume.
<i>kaozheng</i> 考證	“evidential research,” the source-critical philology of the Qing period; Chinese ancestor of this series’ method.
<i>keju</i> 科舉	the imperial civil examination system (ca. 600 to 1905); its military counterpart (<i>wuju</i>) is treated in Volume I.
<i>li</i> 禮	ritual: formed behavior from the state sacrifice to table form; first strand of the <i>wen</i> .
<i>liuyi</i> 六藝	the “Six Arts” of Zhou education: ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, calculation; the four civil ones are the subject of this volume.
<i>Lunyu</i> 論語	the “Analects” of Confucius, compiled by generations of disciples; core text of civil education.
<i>qin</i> 琴	the scholar’s zither (<i>guqin</i>); matured form of practice of the music strand, traditionally played to order one’s own disposition.
<i>ren</i> 仁	humaneness, humanity; the inner standard of the <i>junzi</i> ; without <i>ren</i> , ritual and music are empty (<i>Lunyu</i> 3.3).
<i>shu hua tong yuan</i> 書畫同源	“writing and painting spring from the same source”; the rationale for carrying painting as an optional deepening of the writing strand.
<i>shuyuan</i> 書院	the private academies; institutions of education as self-formation against mere examination preparation.
<i>sishu</i> 私塾	the village and family schools; the social base of transmission, with memorization, recitation, and correction.

Term	Meaning
<i>Sishu</i> 四書	the “Four Books” (<i>Daxue</i> , <i>Zhongyong</i> , <i>Lunyu</i> , <i>Mengzi</i>) in Zhu Xi’s compilation; examination foundation from 1313/1315.
<i>siyi</i> 四藝	the “Four Arts” of the scholar: zither, board game, calligraphy, painting; the matured forms of practice of the civil strands.
<i>taixue</i> 太學	the imperial academy (founded 124 BCE); the first state institution of higher learning of the canon.
<i>weiqi</i> 圍棋	the “encirclement game” (Go); matured form of practice of the number strand and bridge to the art of war of the first volume.
<i>wen /wu</i> 文 /武	the civil and the martial; the complementary pair whose union (<i>wen wu shuang quan</i> 文武雙全) was the classical ideal. This volume treats the <i>wen</i> .
<i>wenrenhua</i> 文人畫	literati painting; sister art to calligraphy and expression of the person rather than craft.
<i>wujing</i> 五經	the Five Classics (Changes, Documents, Odes, Rites, Annals); raised to state doctrine in 136 BCE.
<i>xiaoyi /dayi</i> 小藝 /大藝	the “lesser” arts of childhood (writing, number) and the “greater” ones of maturity (ritual, music, archery, charioteering); basis of the staffing of the training plans.
<i>xiushen</i> 修身	the cultivation of one’s own person; core and root of civil education (<i>Daxue</i>); this-worldly-ethical counterpart to the spiritual <i>xiulian</i> of the third volume.
<i>yue</i> 樂	music as an art of education and statecraft under the Zhou; its theoretical text is the <i>Yueji</i> (“music unites, ritual distinguishes”).

Sources and Literature

The bibliography is organized by source type, following the method set out in the preliminary note. Classical Chinese titles are given with characters, pinyin, and English rendering; on contested points of premodern dating, the running footnotes report the state of research. For the sections addressing the present, sources are weighted by strength of evidence; where the evidence is provisional or contested, this is noted in the main text.

A. Classical and premodern primary sources

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Jiuzhang suanshu 九章算術 (Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art). Han-period compilation; canon of the classical art of calculation.

Liji 禮記 (Book of Rites), esp. ch. *Yueji* 樂記 (Records on Music). Han-period redaction of older material; ritual- and music-theoretical foundation.

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Methodological closing remark. This work combines the consensus of current Chinese educational and cultural historiography (above all Elman, Lee, Nylan, and Bol, in the lineage of *kaozheng* philology), the cultural-historical analysis of the *wen-wu* pair (Louie), the documentary and archaeological record (the ritual and canonical texts; Anyang and Guodian), and the scholarly reference apparatus of ChinaKnowledge.de for data and institutional detail. For the individual arts it draws on the respective specialist literature (Kraus; van Gulik; DeWoskin; Moskowitz; Zanon; Seligman et al.), and for the sections addressing the present, on peer-reviewed epidemiological, psychological, and neuroscientific research, weighted by strength of evidence, as explained in Chapters 9 and 10; the rejection of unsupported transfer claims (Sala and Gobet) is part of the method, not its contradiction. Attributions of origin and precise datings of premodern texts are fundamentally uncertain and are presented as positions within the state of research. This volume forms the *wen*-half of the conceptual pair *wen wu*; the first volume, on the *wu*, is available, and a short third volume on inner cultivation follows the same method.