

Behind Written Records: Rethinking the Features of Xia from the Shiji and the Hanshu

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ABSTRACT

The Shiji 史記 (“Records of the Grand Historian”) and Hanshu 漢書 (“History of the Former Han”) have been used as the main sources of the concept of Xia 俠 (“knight-errant”) in the pre-Qin and Western Han dynasties. However, these historical records may have certain emphases that may lead readers to have a partial view of Xia, due to the time gap between the authors’ era and when the events that they recorded happened, and their preferences. We can actually see some divergences in the records from the Shiji and Hanshu that somehow implicated a possible different understanding of Xia at that time. By a close reading towards the difference of the Shiji and Hanshu, this article implicated a better way that readers can deal with the information provided by historical records. Readers should be cautious of the delay of the records, the author’s possible tendency, and the limitation of original materials. Therefore, when facing some important historical records such as the Shiji and Hanshu, we should not just focus on several famous pieces but should pay attention to other materials which have been neglected for a long time. Then, through comparison, readers can try to provide a different explanation to a certain historical issue.

Keywords: Shiji, Hanshu, Xia, Historiography, Readership

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of Xia has been deep-rooted in Chinese people’s minds over thousands of years. Starting from those heroic figures depicted in novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties, we can trace back to ancient historical records of Xia in the Shiji and Hanshu. The biographies of Xia in the Shiji and Hanshu presented quite different and controversial appearances. These books have become a solid foundation for people’s imagination and attitudes towards Xia in pre-Qin and western Han dynasties. According to previous research, there are three popular opinions about Xia. Firstly, the actions of Xia were solely personal, and their motivations had nothing to do with groups. Secondly, some scholars claimed that the Xia circle in the western Han dynasty received overwhelming love and support from common people at that time, after analyzing the Shiji written by Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145–ca. 85 BCE). Thirdly, on the contrary, derived from Ban Gu’s 班固 (32–92) comments, another group of scholars believed that Xia had significantly detrimental impacts on society. However, despite the evidence from the Shiji and Hanshu, if we read the texts carefully, we can find that Xia might present different characteristics

from mainstream views. In the following sections, this article will demonstrate some traits of Xia: their behaviors implicated a larger network in pre-Qin, they received dissent by common people at that time, and some leading roles of Xia should not be separated from others when we discuss the characteristics of this social group.

2. XIA AS A GROUP

As Meng Qinglei stated in his article [1], a Xia in the pre-Qin and Western Han dynasties became a Xia purely because of their “primitive impulsion of life [2]” and personality. And Xia’s behaviors were simply out of a personal will and the pursuit of freedom. The argument can be supported by certain pieces of evidence from “Cike liezhuan” 刺客列傳 (“Biographies of the Assassins”) in the Shiji. In the description for Xia in the pre-Qin dynasties in “Cike liezhuan”, the author wrote about five swordsmen who went on their missions by themselves. Their motivations were almost the same -- fulfilling the promises they made to other people, mainly leaders of a country. It seems quite reasonable to conclude that Xia in the pre-Qin dynasties were separate individuals instead of acting in organizations.

However, this paper has a different opinion on Xia with this argument. We can also find evidence for the existence of Xia organizations in the Shiji texts as well. For instance, Jingke 荆軻 in “Cike liezhuan” had a large social network:

Although Jingke was an alcoholic, he was very trustworthy and love reading books. When he travelling in different countries, he befriended local influential people. When he returned to the state of Yan, the hermit Tian Guang also treated him nicely, knowing that he was not an ordinary person.

荆軻雖遊於酒人乎，然其為人沈深好書；其所遊諸侯，盡與其賢豪長者相結。其之燕，燕之處士田光先生亦善待之，知其非庸人也。 [3]

Through travelling, Jingke got to know and made friends with various other swordsmen in other countries. As a result, he was promoted by the king to complete a mission for the country. From how Jingke was recommended, we can see a possibility of the existence of the organization in pre-Qin dynasties. The records of Xia circles remain invisible probably because history tellers often tend to focus on single individuals such as heroes rather than focus on everyone in an entire community.

The circle of Xia was even more obvious in the case of the Western Han dynasty. We can easily find evidence in the records of “Youxia liezhuan” 遊俠列傳 (“Biographies of Rangers”) in the Shiji:

When (Guojie) went to other countries to do something that other people asked, he would definitely finish it if he could. If he couldn't finish it, he would satisfy all the parties before he went to have meals with them. Therefore, people especially respected him and were eager to work for him. Dozens of young people in the town and influential people in nearby places would visit him even at midnight to ask for bringing them home and treat them nicely.

之旁郡國，為人請求事，事可出，出之；不可者，各厭其意，然後乃敢嘗酒食。諸公以故嚴重之，爭為用。邑中少年及旁近縣賢豪，夜半過門常十餘車，請得解客舍養之。 [4]

The more obvious reference of Xia circles in the Western Han dynasty probably is pre-Qin is far away from the Western Han where Sima Qian was. So there might not enough materials for Sima Qian to write about Xia in pre-Qin.

By looking at the passages related to Xia in the Shiji, if we think about the period from the first Xia and the last one depicted in “Youxia liezhuan”, it is roughly a hundred years (from 200 B.C. to 100 B.C.). The total number of Xia mentioned in “Youxia liezhuan” is seventeen. On the contrary, in the passages about Xia in pre-Qin, the period is roughly five hundred years. “Cike

liezhuan” contains five Xia altogether. If we divide the number of Xia by the period in the two eras, the number we will get from western Han is much greater than the number from pre-Qin. The density of the records of the Xia is very different.

According to the analysis above, perhaps because the time of pre-Qin swordsmen was too far away from Sima Qian's time, the materials of pre-Qin were not sufficient for Sima Qian. Hence, the description of this social group tends to only include a few people. Actually, Sima Qian himself acknowledged the lack of materials in his own words in “Youxia liezhuan”:

I have never heard of common Xia in ancient times. In recent times, knights-errant like Yanling, Mengchang, Chunshen, Pingyuan and Xinling were well-known because they were relatives to the kings, and recruited talented people by using their wealth. While it does not mean that they were not gifted. ... As for common Xia living in the alleys, they focused on promoting their morality, and everyone praised them for their good characteristics, which was a very hard thing to do. However, Confucianists and Mohists dissented them and did not record them in their documents. Records of common Xia in the pre-Qin dynasties have remained unknown. I am very sorry about that.

古布衣之俠，靡得而聞已。近世延陵、孟嘗、春申、平原、信陵之徒，皆因王者親屬，藉於有土卿相之富厚，招天下賢者，顯名諸侯，不可謂不賢者矣。...至如閭巷之俠，修行砥名，聲施於天下，莫不稱賢，是為難耳。然儒、墨皆排擯不載。自秦以前，匹夫之俠，湮滅不見，余甚恨之。 [5]

Because of the lack of primary sources, a lot of information about Xia in pre-Qin is staying unknown. But they indeed existed in history. Those who had greater social status (e.g. relatives to the king) were recorded because they had greater influence at that time. However, those who lacked enough social influence were forgotten.

In short, I think that Xia in pre-Qin was quite likely organized, but the record of organizations was lost in history, either because of the long time gap or the author's tendency of narration. As a result, people nowadays think that there weren't Xia organizations in the pre-Qin.

3. PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS XIA

The second opinion suggested by Cai Sheng [6] is that over history, Xia has been regarded as heroes against unfair political systems. Therefore it was common that they were respected and praised by ordinary people at that time. This argument might seem reasonable because of certain words below in the Shiji:

Zhujia who lived in the country of Lu was at the same time as the first emperor of Western Han. ... From Hangu

Guan to the east, all the people were looking forward to become friends with him.

魯朱家者，與高祖同時。... 自關以東，莫不延頸原交焉。 [7]

When Ju Meng's mother passed away, thousands of people came from places far away to attend the funeral.

然劇孟母死，自遠方送喪蓋千乘。 [8]

But the young people admired Guo Jie's behaviors and also revenged for him. While did not let him know. ... People heard about it and all praised Guo Jie for his faith and became attached to him even more.

而少年慕其行，亦輒為報仇，不使知也... 諸公聞之，皆多解之義，益附焉。 [9]

From the quotations about people's will to befriend Xia, it is plausible to conclude that Xia in the Han dynasty was a popular social group with high status in the society.

On the other hand, there was also an opposing view regarding Xia not as a respected social group, but as a dangerous, even subversive power. For example, Wang Jixun [10] proposed that Xia was a incontrollable social power to the rulers of the Western Han dynasty. Because they often broke the laws and did a lot of very bad things to ordinary people in the Western Han such as robbery and killing. Therefore they were regarded as a challenge to social order at that time. This point can find its supporting evidence in the Hanshu either:

Ordinary Xia like Ju Meng and Guo Jie wander around in alleys, running wild in states and regions, and had powers greater than the royal family. Although they were often punished by law, they risked being killed to become famous; just like Ji Lu and Qiu Mu, they did not regret it even if they die.

布衣遊俠劇孟、郭解之徒馳驚於閭閻，權行州域，力折公侯。雖其陷於刑辟，自與殺身成名，若季路、仇牧，死而不悔也。 [11]

As for people like Guo Jie, using their ordinary identity to kill people was a behavior that must receive the death penalty. ... It was reasonable to kill them and destroy their families.

況於郭解之倫，以匹夫之細，竊殺生之權，其罪已不容於誅矣。... 殺身亡宗，非不幸也。 [12]

Ban Gu, the author of Hanshu, claimed that despite some good qualities that Xia may have, they exert a larger bad impact on the society instead of good impacts. Because they challenged the authority of the central government of western Han and also influenced regional military forces, which led to a social disorder.

Clearly, these two different attitudes were come from the different attitudes of Sima Qian and Ban Gu towards

this community. Sima Qian, from a private perspective, demonstrated an obvious positive attitude towards Xia and praised them in the Shiji. However, Ban Gu's fierce criticism towards Xia probably derived from a more official and large-scale perspective. He considered ensuring the power of the central government is more important than the lives of Xia.

I think that despite a lot of people in the western Han might worship Xia, there probably also existed certain dissenting voices. Those voices might be ignored by readers and not becoming a part of the mainstream view. Because we tend to focus on famous paragraphs and the author's final judgmental statements. As a result, some narrative paragraphs where some nuanced details exist were neglected. Despite the different preferences of history recorders, they might still leave traces suggesting a different possibility. In Sima Qian's Shiji, certain words are contradictory to the views he proposes in his judgements. There are two examples in a story of Guo Jie, a famous swordsman in the Western Han Dynasty in the Shiji:

When Guo Jie went out or came back, people all avoided to see him. Once a person sat on the ground and looked at him with arrogance. Guo Jie sent people to ask about his name. One of his followers wanted to kill him.

解出入，人皆避之。有壹人獨箕倨視之，解遣人問其名姓。客欲殺之。 [13]

Once, an official was working on Guo Jie's case and also accompanied with a Confucianist from the town named 'Zhi'. Guo Jie's follower praised Guo Jie, and the Confucianist said, "Guo Jie simply does illegal things by using his cunningness. How can you describe him as a good person?" When Guo Jie's follower heard this, he killed the Confucianist and cut his tongue off.

軹有儒生侍使者坐，客譽郭解，生曰：“郭解專以奸犯公法，何謂賢！”解客聞，殺此生，斷其舌。 [14]

The universal appeal of Xia might be questionable from the description of Sima Qian. For instance, when Guo Jie is out, people would avoid meeting with him. If common individuals indeed love Guo Jie, they would greet him instead. So maybe the feeling of fear was more dominant than respect towards Xia in their minds. Besides, a man in this case directly displayed his scornful attitude towards Guo Jie. In the second quotation, a Confucianist who had negative comments on Guo Jie was killed. It is another example for common people's fear towards Xia. The reason why negative voices about Xia was hard to existed in the Western Han might be people who disliked Xia were killed or they were under the afraid of death, hence unwilling to speak out their opinions.

There are two explanations for why Xia seemed to be so loved and respected by common people in the Shiji. Firstly, Sima Qian selected some most famous

swordsmen. In the Shiji, Sima Qian only wrote about positive comments on three Xia particularly. However, a number of swordsmen existed in the western Han who were not as famous as Zhu Jia 朱家 or Guo Jie 郭解. They also counts as a member of the community of Xia. Nonetheless, they did not receive as much praise as their famous group member. But as the Shiji only shows a few members of the community, readers would probably tend to think that people's attitudes towards the most famous ones would apply to the other members of the group as well.

Secondly, Sima Qian's personal life experience might affected his private attitude, which further influenced the impression of readers. Sima Qian likes Xia so much and held such a completely different opinion from Ban Gu. It was partly because he loves certain traits that were shown particularly strongly through Xia. For instance, Sima Qian really cherished the characteristic of 'friendship'. As a man who received torture by trying to support his friend in the front of the emperor. Sima Qian valued friendship, thus praising Xia for possessing such characteristics. Hence, he might value and wish to promote the way that Xia interact with each other in the society: always standing up for friends and willing to sacrifice themselves regardless of any difficulties or dangers. More affections come with a more vivid description of Xia. consequently, the image of Xia would be built up as very positive.

On the contrary, Ban Gu's experience probably let him have a different view from Sima Qian. Because Ban Gu lives in the Eastern Han Dynasty when the society was stable for a long time. He probably accepted the opinion that well-functioning country must be based on stability of the society. As a result, he would against elements that posed a threat to social stability, which leads to his negative opinion towards Xia. By contrast, Sima Qian lives in the beginning of Western Han dynasty, whose founders were members of social groups similar to Xia. Therefore perhaps Sima Qian and people in his era could have a more open and tolerant attitude towards Xia.

In fact, this rule might not only applies to Xia. If Sima Qian likes another social group that demonstrated such good traits. He would probably praise that group either. Xia became not just a real-existed community in the Shiji, but a symbol for Sima Qian's personal attitudes and thoughts. There is an example from "Weiji Wuanhou Liezhuan" 魏其武安侯列傳 in the Shiji:

After the mother of the emperor passed away, the emperor further estranged Weiji and did not give him any political position. Hence, Weiji lost his power and social status. All his guests and followers gradually left him and had an arrogant attitude towards him. The only one who treated him as he previously did was General Guan. Every day, Weiji was sad because he could not realize his

ambitions, but he only favored General Guan and treated him well.

魏其失竇太後，益疏不用，無勢。諸客稍稍自引而怠傲。唯灌將軍獨不失故。魏其日默默不得誌，而獨厚遇灌將軍。 [15]

Weiji tried to save Guanfu. His persuaded him: "General Guan has offended the prime minister and the family of the mother of the emperor. How can you save him?" Weijihou said: "My title of nobility as a marquis was earned by myself, and now I can decide to throw it away. So there is nothing to feel sorry about. Besides, I cannot leave Guanfu to die alone and I will live without him!" Hence Weiji lied to his family and wrote a letter to the emperor by himself. The emperor immediately summoned him to the palace; Weiji, therefore, elaborated on the situation that Guanfu said something inappropriate because he was drunk at that time, and stated that Guanfu should not receive a death penalty. The emperor thought that he was right, and rewarded Weiji to eat with him, and said: "Debate in public about the issue in the eastern palace."

魏其銳身為救灌夫，夫人諫魏其曰：“灌將軍得罪丞相，與太後家忤，寧可救邪！”魏其侯曰：“侯自我得之，自我捐之，無所恨。且終不令仲孺獨死，嬰獨生！”乃匿其家，竊出上書。立召入，具言灌夫醉飽事，不足誅。上然之，賜魏其食，曰：“東朝廷辯之。” [16]

In the tenth month of the fifth year of the emperor's rule, Guanfu and all his family members were killed. Weiji only heard about it a long time afterwards; after he heard about it, he became very angry and got a stroke. He stopped eating and lost the desire to live.

五年十月，悉論灌夫及家屬。魏其良久乃聞，聞即恚，病瘵，不食，欲死。 [17]

From this example, we can also get a sense of how Sima Qian's private preferences can affect the portrayal and images of certain characters in the Shiji. In the quotation above, Weiji and Guanfu were two very good friends. When Weiji lost his social status and other people looked down upon him. While Guanfu was the one who accompanied him and treated him all the same. When Weiji heard that Guanfu was about to receive a death penalty that almost seemed irreversible. He insisted to try to save him despite his family thought that it would be dangerous and pointless to do so. He even had the courage to go to persuade the emperor to save his best friend's life. After Guanfu's death, Weiji got so angry and sad that he did not want to live any more. The friendship they shared was conveyed in this article by Sima Qian. Even though Weiji and Guanfu were not necessarily morally good characters. Their behaviors and friendship received fairly positive comments from Sima Qian. We could see that those characteristics of Weiji and Guanfu were actually similar to the characteristics of Xia:

willingness to sacrifice themselves for a friend. Hence, we can conclude from examples above. Instead of a particular social group, Xia maybe only served as a symbol to express Sima Qian's preference towards certain characteristics.

As a result, the attitude of people towards Xia may be different from what was written in the Shiji, but some of the negative voices might have been ignored by Sima Qian when writing about Xia, partly because of his personal preferences.

4. THE EVALUATION OF XIA

The third opinion about the social consequences of Xia is backed up by the article by Wang Jixun, in which the author claims that Xia was a group of people who only did bad things to the society, therefore causing significant damages. This view tends to regard Xia as an organization of purely negative qualities. Plenty of evidence can be found in the Hanshu to support this statement:

The government at that time focused on suppressing the violence and helping the poor. There were neither officials in the royal court who abused their power, nor Xia in the villages.

而政在抑強扶弱，朝無威福之臣，邑無豪桀之俠。 [18]

Xia in Yang Zhai had a lot of followers. Such as Zhao Ji and Li Kuan. They abused people in their village by power, even sexually assault other's wives and daughters. They knew the weaknesses of local officials and threatened them...

陽翟輕俠趙季、李款多畜賓客，以氣力漁食閭裏，至奸人婦女，持吏長短，從橫郡中... [19]

He knew all about the places where thieves and knights-errant in the local regions dwelled in and the corruption of local officials.

郡中盜賊，閭裏輕俠，其根株窟穴所在，及吏受取請求銖兩之奸，皆知之。 [20]

However, Sima Qian depicted Xia as a very positive group in the Shiji:

Nowadays, although Xia might have behaviors that do not meet moral or legal standards, they stick to their promises, are honest and willing to sacrifice themselves to help others in need. ... Maybe that is worth a lot of praise!

今遊俠，其行雖不軌於正義，然其言必信，其行必果，已諾必誠，不愛其軀，赴士之危困，... 蓋亦有足多者焉。 [21]

Although Sima Qian admits that the behaviors of Xia could be immoral or against the law at sometime, he claimed in "Youxia liezhuan" that those who did bad

things to the society should not be viewed as a part of the Xia circle. He argued that real Xia should meet some good standards, such as honesty and kindness:

As for those people who formed gangs, connecting with each other to bully those who were weaker than them, indulging themselves to pure enjoyment were looked down upon by Xia. I feel sad that common people cannot understand the difference. But they mistakenly see the robbers as the same kind of people as Zhu Jia and Guo Jie and laugh at them all the same.

至如朋黨宗強比周，設財役貧，豪暴侵凌孤弱，恣欲自快，遊俠亦醜之。余悲世俗不察其意，而猥以朱家、郭解等令與暴豪之徒同類而共笑之也。 [22]

However, I do not think that the Xia mentioned by Sima Qian in "Youxia Liezhuan" had that much distinction from ordinary ones, such as Zhu Jia and Guo Jie. While they belonged to the same circle. For instance, Guo Jie also presented certain traits shared by all Xia. He formed gangs with others and had the same kind of territoriality as other Xia. And He had very bad influences for society, which is not very different from those who were despised by Sima Qian.

Guo Jie told the two conflicting parties, "I heard that some influential people in Luoyang tried to persuade you to stop fighting. However, you were not willing to listen to them. Now it is a pleasure that you listened to me, but how can I come from other towns and deprive people in this town of their right to persuade you?" So Guo Jie left that night not letting anyone know. And he said "Do not listen to me for a moment. After I left, letting people in Luoyang persuade you, and you should listen to them."

解乃謂仇家曰：“吾聞雒陽諸公在此間，多不聽者。今子幸而聽解，解柰何乃從他縣奪人邑中賢大夫權乎！”乃夜去，不使人知，曰：“且無用，待我去，令雒陽豪居其間，乃聽之。” [23]

But the young people admired Guo Jie's behaviors. These young people also killed his enemies while did not let him know.

而少年慕其行，亦輒為報仇，不使知也。 [24]

The son of Guo Jie's sister relied on Guo Jie's power when he drank alcohol with others. If the others could not drink anymore, he would force them to keep drinking.

解姊子負解之勢，與人飲，使之嚼。非其任，強必灌之。 [25]

Yang Jizhu who lived in Zhi had a son who worked in the government of the town. Yang Jizhu's son was the one who proposed that Guo Jie should move. The son of Guo Jie's brother cut Yang Jizhu's son's head off. ... Not a long time after, Guo Jie killed Yang Jizhu. Yang Jizhu's family sued Guo Jie, but the person who sued him was killed at the gate of the palace.

軹人楊季主子為縣掾，舉徙解。解兄子斷楊掾頭。... 已又殺楊季主。楊季主家上書，人又殺之闕下。 [26]

Once, an official was working on Guo Jie's case and also accompanied with a Confucianist from the town named 'Zhi'. Guo Jie's follower praised Guo Jie, and the Confucianist said, "Guo Jie simply does illegal things by using his cunningness. How can you describe him as a good person?" When Guo Jie's follower heard this, he killed the Confucianist and cut his tongue off.

軹有儒生侍使者坐，客譽郭解，生曰：“郭解專以奸犯公法，何謂賢！”解客聞，殺此生，斷其舌。 [27]

From the first quotation, we can know that Guo Jie insisted some rules followed by all Xia: each of them was in charge of one area, and must not interfere with issues in other areas. Guo Jie was afraid to let Xia in Luoyang know that he did something they were supposed to be in charge of. As a result, he told the two conflicting parties to pretend that they listened to Xia in Luoyang. From the rest of the quotations, we can infer that Guo Jie had his gangs just like any other Xia, and his gangs imposed bad influences on the society. Although Guo Jie himself might not have been aware of it, his power and existence enabled members of his gang to bully the weak people. For instance, his sister's son forced other people to drink, and his followers killed people just because they thought he was offended.

Therefore, I disagree with Sima Qian's definition. It might be too strict and not convincing enough. It was not reasonable to separate Zhu Jia and Guo Jie from the rest of the Xia. Because they had many things in common.

There might be a reason why Sima Qian deliberately defined and separated Zhu Jia and Guo Jie from other Xia. He was willing to praise Xia. So he had to build up very good characteristics for Xia to convince his readers to agree with them and also have a positive view towards Xia. The reason why Sima Qian showing his passion on Xia was probably his love for their spirit and temperament, such as persistence in their promises, helping those in need, and not requiring reward.

Nevertheless, these traits probably do not only belong to Xia; other social groups might share it as well. Those traits were probably just shown in a most obvious way among the Xia circle. Perhaps it is better to say that Sima Qian wanted to praise some good characteristics of a small amount of Xia instead of holding a positive attitude towards the entire organization of Xia in the Western Han society.

In the opposite of Sima Qian's view, Ban Gu seems to go to another extreme. In the Hanshu Ban Gu's opinion on Xia is clearly different from Sima Qian. Even the same historical event about Xia would receive negative comments from the author. He claimed that all Xia should be punished because they went against the law. But Sima

Qian claimed that Xia should be praised. Ban Gu mainly had an authoritative view, focusing on how Xia influenced people at that time and threatened the rulers of the country, but Sima Qian wrote about Xia from his own perspective.

Of course, the Xia circle has both good and bad qualities at the same time, and it is hard to tell whether the good qualities could outweigh the bad qualities, and vice versa. However, when Sima Qian and Bangu wrote about them, they sound like two different groups, either positive or negative. That is maybe how the author's perspective can change the profile of a social group.

5. CONCLUSION

From the complicated portrayal of Xia in the Shiji and Hanshu, we can somehow get a glimpse of how other groups or other issues were discussed in historical materials. Sometimes, the time gap can cause important records to disappear, or to become vague in historical descriptions. Besides, inevitably, when history is written down, the author would implant his or her own subjective view into the materials by some emphases or revisions of historical materials. As readers, we should be cautious of the tendency which can be seen in some historical materials to simplify an issue. Readers should be cautious of both the lateness of the records and the author's possible tendency of the emphasis, that is to say, the revisions that authors have done to the original materials. Therefore, when facing some important historical records such as the Shiji and Hanshu, we should not just focus on several famous pieces but should pay attention to other long-neglected materials. Sometimes, small details provided in narrative paragraphs could be useful for analysis as well. Through comparison, readers can try to provide a different explanation to a certain historical issue. In this way, we can have our own more objective analysis about a topic in history.

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