Courtly Institutions, Status, and Politics in Early Imperial China (206 BCE-9 CE)

By

Luke Ronald Habberstad

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Nylan, Chair
Professor Nicholas Tackett
Professor Mark Csikszentmihalyi
Professor Robert Bagley

Abstract

Courtly Institutions, Status, and Politics in Early Imperial China (206 BCE-9 CE)

by

Luke Ronald Habberstad

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Michael Nylan, Chair

This dissertation investigates the imperial court during the Western Han dynasty, the first period of sustained, unified rule in imperial China. It asks the following questions: what was the court? How was it conceived? How did these conceptions of the court change over the two centuries of the Western Han? As in many European languages, the word for "court" in classical Chinese, *chao* 朝, could refer equally to a space, a ritual action, or a group of people. The dissertation investigates changes in these three meanings of the word in order to answer the above questions. In the process, it shows that key changes in Western Han political culture were rooted in the transformation of the imperial court, which grew significantly in size, population, and wealth over the course of the dynasty. Participants in court life and political began to fashion their own definitions of court institutions, articulating new ideals about courtly status and life at court and fashioning new conventions in administrative and literary writing. This capacity of the imperial court to absorb more people and afford them a personal interest in the court ultimately contributed to the longevity of the dynasty. The dissertation thus argues that the imperial court was just as much a product of courtier writings and political struggles as it was a tool for the exertion of centralized political power.

In making this argument, the dissertation emphasizes that almost all of our extant received sources from the Western Han period, particularly the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, were produced at the imperial court. It highlights the problems of culling these court sources in order to outline institutions of power and court social groups. As an alternative approach, the dissertation instead emphasizes critical readings of these same sources in order to understand how members of the court during the Western Han characterized and understood the world that they inhabited. In doing so, it draws connections between studies of court culture and literature on the one hand and court institutions and political power on the other.

Courtly Institutions, Status, and Politics in Early Imperial China (206 BCE-9 CE)

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

When I first met Michael Nylan, I was lost and confused, like most UC Berkeley students trying to navigate the labyrinths of Dwinelle Hall. I am glad I finally found her office on that first day of my first semester, for in her I found the best possible guide. Michael's passion for early Chinese history in particular and all forms of academic inquiry in general is infectious. Her steadfast rejection of disciplinary boundaries and willingness to revel in the contradictions of our sources, whether written in the 1st century BCE or the 21st century CE, have always inspired me. I could not have finished this dissertation without her comments on everything from my most subtle word choices to the project's overall significance. Equally important has been the care Michael shows to me as a person. Whether sharing joyful dinners (with extra persimmon cake), music and movie suggestions, political anxieties, or personal stumbles and successes, Michael continually rejects all distinctions between the life of the mind and of the heart. In doing so, she provides a model of life lived to the fullest. I look forward to more friendship and learning with her in years to come.

At key points, Nicholas Tackett provided criticism that made me rethink the dissertation in productive ways. In his final and thorough reading he raised numerous problems and questions that improved my project and will keep me thinking in the years to come. Mark Csikszentmihalyi offered steadfast support throughout graduate school. Courses and discussions with him always yielded new insights. For years now, Robert Bagley has offered me his critical eyes and ears, and my writing and thinking have benefited as a result. While taking a course with him, he once mentioned that descriptions of courts in received Warring States texts were so different from the material record that he sometimes thought writers never saw the inside of a court. The statement inspired me in my research and also epitomized Professor Bagley's thinking: elegant in its simplicity, sharply insightful in its logic, and profound in its implications. I continue to aspire to his example.

Other scholars at Berkeley and beyond provided assistance during various stages of research and writing. While first conceptualizing the project, Gene Irschick offered a much needed reminder to set aside Elias and get my nose back in the sources. Mary Elizabeth Berry offered probing comments that always forced me to keep the "so what" question at the front of my mind. Michael Loewe and Griet Vankeerberghen both read drafts of Chapter 6, giving valuable feedback on both the details of my argument and my overall picture of court institutions. Antje Richter corrected my translation of Ben Qie's letter in Chapter 5, saving me from numerous errors. Robert Ashmore and Paula Varsano both provided critical comments at the very last stages of the project. Taking the long view, I owe a special thanks to Professor Varsano and also to Jeffrey Riegel. As my first teachers of classical Chinese, I could not have conceived this project without them. While in Taipei, Liu Tseng-kuei and Hsing I-t'ien welcomed me and provided me with numerous resources at Academia Sinica. Kuang Yun-wen at the International Chinese Language Program gave me maximum freedom in selecting and reading texts relevant to my work. Her formidable command of early historical writing saved me as we waded through the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. While in Beijing (and elsewhere), Huang Yijun and Arlen Lian were always ready to talk and help. Thanks also to Enno Giele and Nicholas Standaert. They are both models of careful scholars and caring people. In Munich, Hans Van Ess and his students offered criticism, encouragement, and warm hospitality.

I have been blessed to work with a particularly smart and supportive group of graduate student colleagues and friends. First and foremost, I am happy to finally thank April Hughes. Whether reading chapter drafts, giving me interview advice, checking in to make sure I was hitting my deadlines, or talking about everything else under the sun, April has been my constant companion on the dissertation journey. She is a model friend and colleague, and I quite simply could not have completed this project without her steady support. Michelle Wang, Cameron Moore, Jesse Watson, Trenton Wilson, Zhang Zhaoyang, David Bratt, Sharon Sanderovitch, Wang Yun-ling, Aglaya

Glebova, You Yifei, Amanda Buster, and Yang Shao-yun have all given me comments and raised questions that consciously or unconsciously helped me think through a host of different problems. I look forward to learning more from all of them in the future. Thanks to Margaret Tillman for her kind questions and steadfast support. In addition to his warmth and good humor, Karl Whittington provided critical comments at the end that helped me immensely in framing my project.

This dissertation was completed with the support of many institutions and the people who work at them. The Department of History at UC Berkeley gave me research funds and numerous teaching positions. I cannot overemphasize my gratitude to Mabel Lee, the friendliest and most helpful Graduate Affairs Officer that a student could hope for. The Center for Chinese Studies and Institute for East Asian Studies at Berkeley provided several different grants throughout my course work and research. Special thanks are due to Elinor Levine at CCS and Martin Backstrom at IEAS for their assistance and good cheer. The Blakemore Foundation, and in particular Cathy Scheibner, provided me with generous support while in Taiwan. A dissertation completion grant from the Mellon Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies supported me in the final year of writing. The excellent librarians at Berkeley's C.V. Starr East Asian Library, especially He Jianye, Tomoko Kobayashi, and Bruce Williams, have given critical assistance throughout graduate school.

My own court faction of friends in the Bay Area and beyond was no less important to completing this project and so deserves mention here. At low and high moments alike, Candace Chen was there to cook and talk with. Heather McCarty never failed to give encouragement. I have grown even closer to Patrick Hazelton and Quang Dang while writing, a good testament to their kind and generous friendship. Melissa Chan gave me helpful advice and her enthusiasm. Andrea Finlay has been a constant support. Thanks to her for continually convincing me to set aside the books and jump in the pool for a swim. Anne Mercogliano and Sean O'Malley have opened up their hearts, home, and kitchen to me, for which I am exceedingly grateful. For getting me out of the house and the alternative dissertation titles, thanks to Adam and Mollie Starr. Though we do not see each other enough, I have always felt Meridee Wilson at my side. Ruth Schwartz Cowan provided guidance at a critical time. I am happy to extend special thanks to Tim Zenker, still my teacher and now, happily, my friend. Tim first showed me the joys of historical inquiry, and I still try to emulate his curiosity and sharp thinking. Thanks to Joan and Pat Kelly for the love and countless kindnesses.

Rebecca Weinstein has been a tireless support. Our walks, talks, and hot tub soaks never failed to keep me calm and focused. Thanks to Rebecca and Ingrid Good as well for delicious and sustaining meals. Sarah Cowan and Andy Katzman are constant companions, and Sarah was always just a phone call away when I needed to think through a problem. I simply do not have the words to express my appreciation for Sarah and Andy's friendship and support. All I can say is that I cannot imagine life without them. My writing partner and now dear friend Sarah Anne Minkin has been quite literally at my side for the last year, rejoicing and despairing with me as we composed our dissertations at coffee shops, libraries, and a lakeside cabin. Her intelligence, passion, and dedication to her work and to making the world a more just place continue to inspire me. The only sad thing about finishing my dissertation is that in the years to come I will not be writing at Sarah Anne's side.

My sister Laura and brother Joel have always cheered me on in all of my endeavors. What more could a little brother ask for? It is to my mother and father that I owe my enthusiasm for learning, politics, and other places and cultures, for which I am unendingly grateful. My parents never failed to encourage us as we explored the world near and, sometimes, very far away. I have always been inspired by their kindness, curiosity, and integrity. Finally, I owe the deepest thanks to Ethan Guillén, my husband. Life with Ethan is an adventure, full of excitement and new discoveries. Wherever we are, and whatever I am doing (even writing a thesis), I never fail to have fun with him, learn from him, and feel loved by him. To borrow a question that, I think, preoccupied some Western Han courtiers as they pondered their own good fortune: How could I be so lucky?

Introduction

Around 142 BCE, a local official from a minor nobility (*guo* 國) in present-day Kongjiapo 孔家坡 near Suizhou 隨州, Hubei, died. He was interred with a collection of ceramics and lacquers, as well as a manuscript composed of some 478 bamboo strips, bound together with string and wrapped in silk.[1] The manuscript, found in the northeast corner of the tomb's outer coffin, was a "daybook" (*rishu* 日書). Daybooks, which detail systems for determining auspicious and inauspicious days to conduct a range of activities (e.g., travel, marriage, construction), have been found in several Qin 秦 (221-210 BCE) and Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE-9 CE) tombs.[2] The Kongjiapo daybook, however, contained a diagram absent from other known daybook manuscripts. The diagram is comprised of concentric circles marked with the sexagenary stems and branchs (*gan zhi* 干支), with an explanatory text running below the diagram in the lowest register of the bamboo strips (see Image I.1).

Image I.1 Kongjiapo diagram

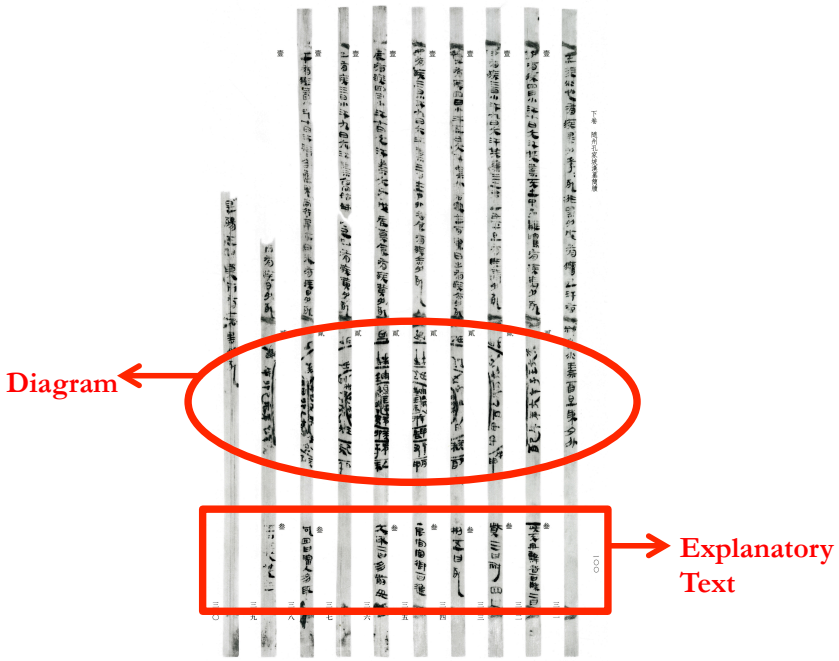


Image after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo and Suizhou shi kaogu duibian 2006, 100, with English added

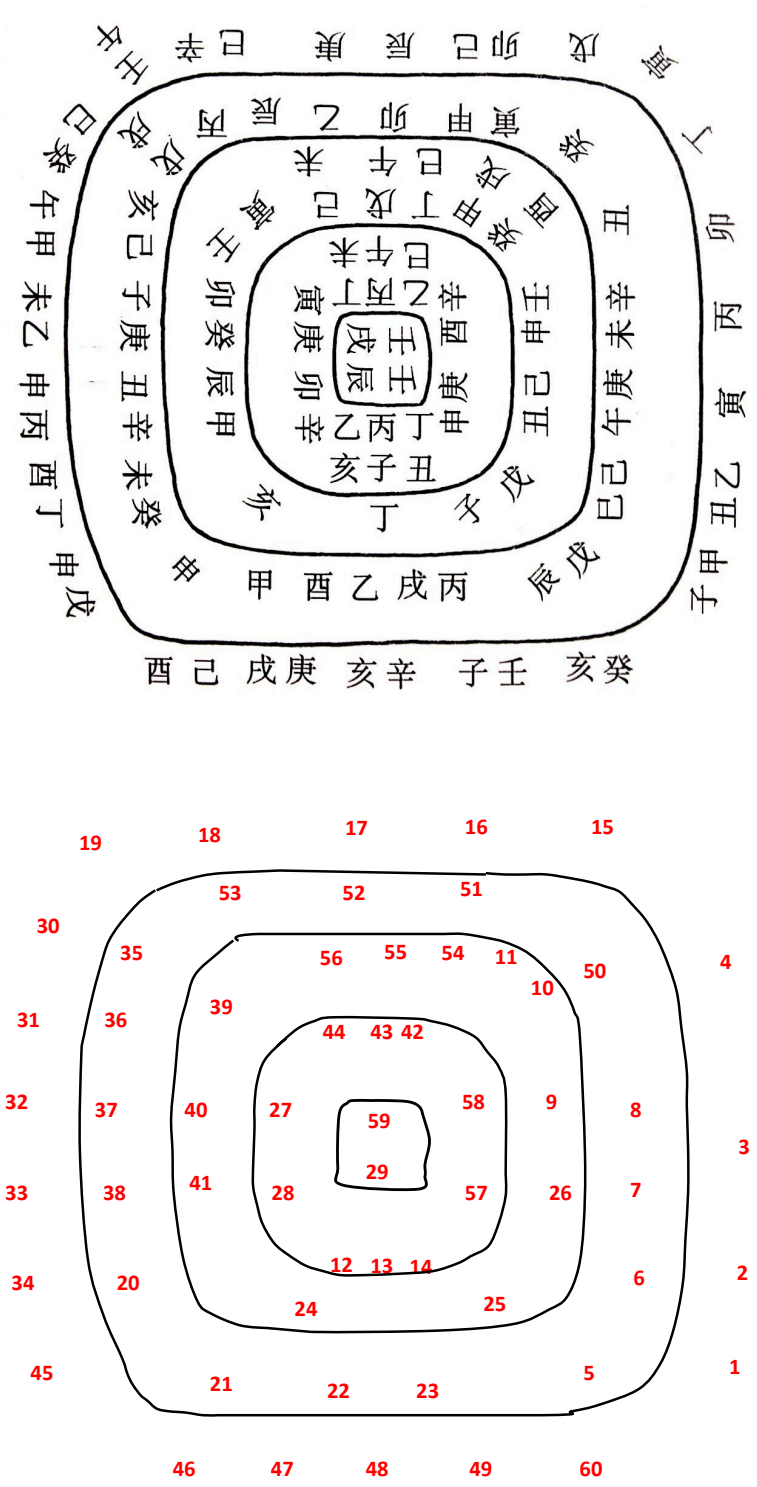
The archaeologists helpfully created a drawing of the diagram, reproduced below along with a version that replaces the stems and branches with their Arabic numeral equivalents (see Image I.2).

---

[1] The burial goods, two bamboo manuscripts, and four wooden boards (one with writing on it) found within the Kongjiapo tomb, numbered eight (M8) by the archaeologists, are described in Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo and Suizhou shi kaogu duibian 2006. For a concise description of the tomb in English, see Harkness 2011, 27-9. The nobility in question, mentioned in the "grave contract" on the wooden board, is unattested in received texts.

[2] Kalinowski 2010 and Harkness 2011 both surveyed the existing daybook finds.

Image I.2: Drawings of Kongjiapo diagram



Top image after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo and Suizhou shi kaogu duibian 2006, 174; Bottom image author's own design, based on top image

As Image I.2 shows, the stem-branch combinations comprise five concentric circles, with each side of the outermost ring containing four to six combinations and the inner core of the diagram just two. Starting from number one, the sequence moves from the lower right side of the diagram up and then inward to number fourteen in the fourth concentric circle before moving back to the outer top edge with number fifteen. It then repeats the movement towards the center, ending with number twenty-nine at the center of the diagram. Number thirty starts back at the outer edge, this time in the upper left corner, the position opposite to number one. The sequence again moves in, then out, and then back in again, stopping at number fifty-nine in the center before moving once more to the outer circle with number sixty at the lower right. With that, the stem-branch combinations have taken us back to the beginning, with the starting position at number one just one space to the right. The diagram thus moves in regular and repeated fashion from the fifth, outermost circles across the fourth, third, and second circles before arriving in the first, central circle, at which point the whole cycle repeats.

The rhythmic and looped path through the diagram bears some resemblance to modern board games such as Monopoly or Life. This interpretation of the diagram as an ancient board game is probably not too inaccurate, since the written explanation found below the diagram is clearly keyed to its five concentric circles.[3] This text might be one of our earliest examples of board game instructions. Like their modern counterparts, the instructions can tell us much about the values and concerns of the players:

此天牢擊（繫）者：一曰除，二曰	(end of strip 352, register 3)
貲，三曰耐，四曰	(end of 353, register 3)
刑，五曰死。	(end of 354, register 3)
居官宦御：一曰進	(end of 355, register 3)
大取，二曰多前毋	(end of 356, register 3)
…[no text] …	(end of 357, register 3)
句（拘），四曰深入多取	(end of 358, register 3)
五曰臣代其主。	(end of 359, register 3)

> These are the heaven-sent punishments: The first is called dismissal; the second is called (end strip 352) fines; the third is called shaving; the fourth is called (end strip 353) mutilating punishment; the fifth is called death (end strip 354).
>
> Holding office and performing official duties: The first is called recommendation (end strip 355), a great reward; the second is called increasing what you previously lacked (end strip 356)…[4] The fourth is called entering deeper and increasing your take (end strip 358). The fifth is called acting in the ruler's stead.[5]

[3] Most scholars have attempted to understand the Kongjiapo diagram and the explanatory text in astro-calendrical terms or as a divination board. See, e.g., Yan Changgui 2008. As far as I am aware, Li Ling 2011 is the only study to have characterized the diagram and text as a board game. Of course, we need look no further than Ouija boards (or Monopoly and Life for that matter) to remind ourselves that the line between a divination board and a game board is thin at best.

[4] Instructions for step two presumably extended on to strip 357, but the photograph of strip 357 in the archaeology report reveals no visible trace of text. The report gives no explanation and I can offer no solutions. The character *ju* 句 at the beginning of strip 358 is clearly the concluding

The text thus describes two paths through the diagram: one of criminal punishment and the other of promotion (and material gain) in office. The laconic nature of the text renders most details of play unknowable. We can only speculate as to how players moved through the diagram. Perhaps they rolled dice,[6] using the text as a guide for determining what players won or lost with each move from one concentric circle to another. Players no doubt followed countless variations and the relationship between the punishment and promotion iterations of the game remains unclear. Nonetheless, the text and diagram together strongly indicate that moves within the game could ultimately result in either the most intense form of punishment (death) or the most exalted form of promotion (serving at the ruler's side).

Note that to "act in the ruler's stead" (代其主) and to be executed both occurred by movement towards the center of the diagram. As the instructions indicate, for example, step four of the promotion path has players "entering deeper and increasing their take" (深入多取). The highest reward and most serious punishment were located in the center. Moreover, in the case of the promotion path, the journey to the center was marked by ever increasing material rewards. In this game, "promotion" was not a journey through discrete offices or levels of the imperial bureaucracy, but rather an ascent up ever-richer rungs of a ladder of material wealth that ultimately led players to the ruler's side at court.[7] It was a journey propelled not by qualifications, competency, or performance, but rather good fortune: the mention of "Heaven" (*tian* 天) at the beginning probably refers to nothing more than run-of-the-mill luck. An official career, then, was a highly materialist journey, governed by fate and chance, which was beyond the control of players. The ruler, ensconced in the imperial court at the center, rested at the heart of this mysterious cycle of wealth and punishment.

***

The Kongjiapo board game paints quite a different picture of Western Han officialdom than most secondary literature. The Western Han government has comprised an important topic of inquiry for centuries, arguably since the Eastern Han, which saw the composition of treatises (most now lost or in fragmented form) on Han administration.[8] In the 20th and 21st centuries these

---

character of the instructions for step three, but since we lack any text for strip 357 I have not attempted to translate it here.

[5] Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo and Suizhou shi kaogu duibian 2006, 100 (photograph) and 174 (transcription).

[6] Many dice have been recovered from early tombs. See, e.g., Shandong sheng zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 241 (photograph) and 242 (transcription).

[7] In contrast to Li Ling 2012, my interpretation here emphasizes the differences between this board game and the "promotion board games" (*sheng guan tu* 升官圖) that became extremely popular during the southern Song 宋 period (1126-1279), if not earlier. The boards of the promotion games contained highly detailed depictions of the entire bureaucracy, from low-level county offices to the highest administrative posts in the capital. Players moved through the board by advancing up the bureaucratic hierarchy. The Kongjiapo game, by contrast, details no discrete offices or ranks. In spirit, then, the Kongjiapo game is perhaps closer than the promotion games to the naked materialism (not to mention fear of punishment) seen in the modern game of Monopoly. For the promotion board games, see Lo 2004.

[8] These texts include the "Table of Offices and Ministers" (*Bai guan gong qing biao* 百官公卿表) from the *Hanshu* (comp. ca. 100 CE). For a detailed consideration of the rhetorical strategies of the

traditions have in some ways continued in modern scholarship as "institutional history" (*zhidu shi* 制度史) or "bureaucratic history" (*guanzhi shi* 官制史).[9] This vast scholarly literature has examined topics ranging from the generation, transmission, and management of official documents to the selection and promotion of officials. Modern institutional history has greatly benefited from newly excavated evidence of which pre-20th century scholars were largely unaware. Moreover, scholarship from the last few decades has increasingly paid greater attention to the transformations in officialdom that occurred during the early imperial era.[10] Nonetheless, traditional and modern scholars alike have primarily focused on combing through sources (be they received or excavated) in order to recreate the political and administrative institutions of the Han as accurately as possible. As a result, most studies of early imperial institutional history have been driven by questions such as: How was the imperial bureaucracy structured? How did government bureaus operate? How did people gain office and promotion?

These are critical questions. Nonetheless, as the Kongjiapo game demonstrated, officials during the Western Han did not necessarily imagine their careers as a series of promotions up a hierarchy of defined offices. The external structure of the early imperial bureaucracy was not necessarily where officials and would-be officials began when they conceptualized their service in the government. At least in the Kongjiapo game, the government was not a hierarchical pyramid but rather a series of nested zones that offered greater wealth and privilege, ultimately culminating in service to the ruler at the imperial court. As this dissertation aims to demonstrate, this focus on the imperial court was not uncommon, since the court was both the setting *and* the object of almost all Western Han meditations on officialdom. In order to better understand how officials understood the government in which they served, we will focus on the court. We will not ask how the government worked. We will ask instead: What was the court? How was it conceived? How did conceptions of the court change over the course of the Western Han? Or, to put the question in the terms of our Kongjiapo game: When players reached the center of the diagram to "act in the ruler's

---

"Table," see Chapter 5. Such texts also include a range of works that touch upon different aspects of Han administration, such as *Han guan yi* 漢官儀 (attributed to Ying Shao 應邵 [fl. 189-194 CE]). Most of these texts were transmitted in fragmented form, primarily within commentaries. The Qing 清 (1644-1911) scholar Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753-1818) assembled and annotated many of these fragments in an attempt to reconstruct the original texts. See Sun Xingyan and Zhou Tianyou 2008 [1990].

[9] Chinese and Japanese scholars have their own voluminous traditions of scholarship, while European and North American scholars have also produced many critical works. Scholars in Japan have been the pioneers, producing countless books and articles for over a century on all aspects of early imperial institutional history (Jp: *seido shi*). For an overview, see Yoneda Kenshi 2000.

[10] Yoneda Kenshi 2000 emphasized this difference between pre-modern and modern investigations of institutional history. This change in perspective can be seen most clearly by comparing two classic works on the bureaucracy, separated by roughly one quarter century: Hans Bielenstein's *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (1980) and Michael Loewe's *The Men Who Governed Han China* (2004). The former presented a remarkably detailed and still indispensable overview of Han officialdom based on exhaustive analysis of relevant treatises in the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu*, and supplemented by reference to the *Shiji* and the fragmented treatises on officialdom from the Eastern Han (see n.8 above). Loewe's work, by contrast, focused only on the Qin, Western Han, and Xin periods, presenting a series of studies on different administrative structures and practices, noting important changes in both.

stead," what sort of world did they imagine themselves inhabiting? How did notions of that world change over the course of the Western Han?

In raising these questions, we will address a critical change in the political culture of early imperial China. As historians and political scientists have long pointed out, the unification in 221 BCE of a collection of warring realms under the leadership of the First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇帝 (260-210 BCE) was a seminal event in the history of imperial China, since it provided a host of precedents for emperors and officials alike to follow in later centuries. Some have gone so far as to call the Qin a "modern" state, since the ruler was able to mobilize massive amounts of resources through a hierarchical bureaucracy in order to achieve state goals.[11] Most would admit that this situation changed significantly over the course of the Western Han, with the later Western Han emperors mostly incapable of wielding the type of power attributed to the First Emperor.[12] Traditionally, scholars explained this change by reference to the rise of "Confucianism" as a state ideology that at least implicitly limited the power of the emperor by endowing virtuous and meritorious officials with true governing powers.[13] In recent decades, however, so many scholars have critiqued narratives about Confucianism from such a diversity of perspectives that the concept no longer holds much weight as an explanation for changes in political culture and administrative practice.[14]

This dissertation argues that key to the transformation in Western Han political culture were changes in the imperial court, which as we will see underwent a significant transformation over the course of the Western Han as it expanded in size, population, and wealth. Participants in court life and politics began to fashion their own definitions of court institutions, articulating new ideals about courtly status and life at court and fashioning new conventions in administrative and literary writing. In other words, the expansion of the Western Han court allowed ever more people to carve out spheres of influence and to gain greater stakes in court institutions. This capacity of the imperial court to absorb more people and afford them a personal interest in the court ultimately contributed to the longevity of the dynasty. In historiographical terms, this dissertation thus challenges a long-standing assumption in the field that the political and factional battles of the late Western Han were part of a larger decline in imperial institutions that led to the collapse of the dynasty and provided an opportunity for Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9-23 CE) to seize power and establish his Xin 新 ("New") dynasty.[15] In fact, the intensity of political battles and interest in all aspects of the court through the

---

[11] See, e.g., Fukuyama 2011 and several essays in Pines, et. al. 2013.

[12] Of course, the extent and nature of the First Emperor's power and the power of the Qin state remain hotly debated topics in the field of early Chinese studies, the details of which must remain outside the scope of this dissertation. For two different perspectives, see Pines 2013 and Nylan (forthcoming). As van Ess 2013 illustrated, images of the First Emperor were refracted in complex ways through the prism of Western Han sources such as the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, which tended to use the First Emperor to project criticisms of Western Han rulers and governing practices.

[13] See, e.g., Wang 1949, esp. 164.

[14] The literature is extensive, but see Nylan 1999 and 2009, Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003, Fukui Shigemasa 2005, and Loewe 2011.

[15] On this point, see also Tian (forthcoming). This narrative is partially rooted in a distinction between Western Han and Eastern Han politics that surfaces in the secondary scholarship: whereas the latter was dominated by factional politics and the imperial consort families (*waiqi* 外戚), the former was supposedly freer of this sort of factionalism. As Michael Loewe has noted for years, however, there is no reason to assume that *waiqi* influence was necessarily greater in the Eastern Han than the Western Han. Even from the early decades of the Western Han, consort families played a

late Western Han (and beyond) are a testament to the robustness of court institutions right up to the founding of the Xin. Moreover, the chapters below emphasize that transformations in early imperial political culture were not due to the adoption or rejection of an ideology. They were rather rooted in the development of new practices and conventions by members of the early imperial court, who sought to articulate their own status in a wealthy and politically treacherous world.

Study of the Chinese Court: Sources and Scholarship

In advancing these ideas and avoiding purely ideological explanations for changes in early imperial political culture, this dissertation adopts a perspective that combines material, institutional, literary, and intellectual histories of the early empire. Archaeological work conducted over the last few decades has provided new opportunities for study of the imperial court, since excavators have unearthed foundations and remnants of multiple palaces and administrative structures around the Western Han capital of Chang'an 長安. Moreover, newly recovered texts and material from tombs (Kongjiapo being just one of them) provide a means to compare and contextualize still fundamental received sources composed at the imperial court, including the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Senior Archivist* or, more commonly, *Historical Records*, comp. ca. 87 BCE) and *Hanshu* 漢書 (*History of the Han,* comp. ca. 100 CE).[16] Indeed, perhaps one of the main barriers to continued study of the imperial court has been a perceived lack of new sources related to the topic, since the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* have been studied so closely. Whether or not this is actually true – close study of texts as rich as the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* will always yield fresh insights – newly excavated sources provide an undeniable opportunity to reassess the imperial court by combining study of the material world of the court with insights from literary and institutional history.

We must linger for a moment on the "literary" and the "institutional." Scholars of literature have been the pioneers in the study of the early court. Above all, the work of David Knechtges has opened up the world of early Chinese court culture for deeper study. His translations and studies of Han dynasty "rhapsodies" (*fu* 賦), the dominant form of poetry at the early imperial court, have revealed multiple aspects of court life, from the most minute details of palace architecture to practices of rhetoric and performance at the court.[17] They have also provided the foundation for a series of comparative works written together with scholars focusing on the literary culture of courts in other times and places.[18] These studies are immensely valuable for all scholars of early Chinese history and literature, as well as scholars interested in court culture more generally. As a whole,

---

decisive role and observers of the court did not fail to point out the prevalence of factional alliances at court (see Chapter 4).

[16] See below for a more detailed discussion of both of these texts.

[17] Many of these translations are assembled in Knechtges's translations of the *Wenxuan* 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature), compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531 CE) (Knechtges 1982, 1987, and 1996). Knechtges 1976 provided an early and important discussion of Han dynasty *fu*, focusing in particular on those composed by Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE). For a discussion of *fu*, especially those by Yang Xiong, as "criticism of the court," see Knechtges 1999. Kern 2009 provided a concise discussion of Knechtges, with extensive citations of his work as well as other work related to the rhetoric and literature of the court. Kern himself has also explored these topics in detail. See, e.g., Kern 2014 for a discussion of *fu* as court performances.

[18] See, e.g., Knechtges and Vance 2005.

however, they tend to assume the institutional context of the court as a backdrop: while focusing on the rhetorical and literary practices used at court, the nature of the court itself receives little attention.

Scholarship from a rather different perspective, meanwhile, has addressed the institutional context of the court in detail, with historians completing most of this work. In English-language scholarship, Hans Bielenstein, Michael Loewe, and Enno Giele have provided some of the most important investigations of the institutional workings of the court (though, as we will discuss below, the focus has been on the "bureaucracy" and not the "court").[19] Moreover, we have already noted above the long traditions of "institutional history" (Ch: *zhidu shi*, Jp: *seido shi*) in East Asian and Euro-American scholarship alike, some of which has touched upon the court. It is an important and revealing fact, however, that this historical study of the early imperial court in China has remained almost entirely separate from comparative historical study of the court more broadly. Revealing, because the trajectory of the "court" as a topic of inquiry amongst historians of Europe has been tightly bound up with debates about the origins of Western political organization and state formation that seem quite removed from the Chinese context. Nonetheless, a brief detour into this scholarship here will provide helpful context for understanding the assumptions and debates that have guided study of the court, and some justification for this dissertation's combined focus on the literary depiction and institutional organization of the early imperial court.

The court did not emerge as a viable subject of research for scholars of any discipline until the sociologist Norbert Elias's (1897-1990) work on the court became more widely known.[20] Elias advanced two main points. First, the centralization of power in the courts of medieval and early modern Europe transformed behavior, as rulers and courtiers acquired and elaborated "civilized" notions of etiquette that governed all manner of physical actions, from nose-blowing to cutlery use.[21] These forms of etiquette served as embodied modes of status expression, since they provided a framework for elite, "civilized" behavior at the royal court. Etiquette thus contributed to the solidification of new political hierarchies within royal courts, hierarchies that were ultimately presided over by ever more powerful kings. Second, Elias argued that court protocol and spatial arrangements allowed the autocratic ruler to assert power over the nobility, even if both were constrained by the court's elaborate rules of etiquette. Elias took the court of Louis XIV at Versailles as his ideal type: the ruler sat at the center of the court, which he used to consolidate absolutist political power even while he became captive to his own institutions. Prior to Elias's emergence as an influential scholar, most sociologists and political scientists cast the court as an ancillary institution of "feudal" rule, one that was hardly relevant for understanding the switch to modern forms of economic and political relations. For Elias, however, the court was no mere epiphenomenon of the economic superstructure, but a key institution in the historical development of the nation-state. After all, the court was the key institution by which early modern European rulers eliminated the noble aristocracy, a class that in Elias's view had no place in modern, centralized states.

---

[19] See Bielenstein 1980; Loewe 2004 and 2008; Giele 2006.

[20] The publication history of Elias's key studies on the court is complicated, since disruptions caused by World War II forced him to cease most work. For a discussion, with a table listing the relevant works and publication dates of the German books and their French and English translations, see Smith 2009, 3. The first English translation of *The Civilizing Process* [*Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*] appeared in 1978; of *The Court Society* [*Die höfische Gesellschaft*] in 1983.

[21] This argument is primarily articulated in *The Civilizing Process*. See Elias 2000 (1936-9, 1969).

As historians digested Elias's work, some began to criticize his larger model of pre-modern politics and society.[22] The explicit details of these criticisms need not concern us here, but two problems with Elias's approach are particularly relevant for this dissertation. First, Elias's argument that the court transformed relations between rulers and nobles, with the latter losing power to the former in the institutional space of the court, does not hold up to scrutiny. As many have pointed out, nobles wanted access to the court, and indeed participated in the creation of courtly institutions and rules, because both gave them access to greater power and prestige. Elias's idea that the court was the tool for the ruler to assert absolutist, centralized power, then, is not an accurate portrayal of court power dynamics. Second, "etiquette," which Elias wrote was an important means for the court-building ruler to assert his superior status and power, is a term so broad as to be analytically weak. In Elias's work, "etiquette" encompasses a variety of practices that in fact required varying levels of formality and held a wide range of meanings. Even if we set aside quite valid concerns about Elias's strong interpretation of all court etiquette as a tool for the assertion of political power, the fact remains that nobles and officials used etiquette for their own purposes, since courtiers were almost always organized into finely graded levels of rank. Except for those relatively unfortunate souls at the bottom of the court hierarchy of ranks, courtiers could always find an inferior over whom they could claim supremacy. In consequence, the ruler did not have a monopoly on "etiquette" as a tool for exerting political power and asserting status. Moreover, even the ruler could find himself caught by obligations due to various types of etiquette, insofar as both parties to etiquette-bound exchanges and interactions were obligated to act in certain prescribed forms. In this light, courtly etiquette was as important for creating social and communicative bonds as for expressing status divisions.

In the meantime, even while Elias's shadow loomed large, historians began to move beyond the parameters of the debate that his work had established. One of the leaders in the field has been Jeroen Duindam, a historian of the courts of early modern Europe and one of Elias's most important critics. In a 2003 comparative study of the courts of Versailles (Bourbon France) and Vienna (Hapsburg Austria), Duindam made the case that detailed examination of courtly societies and institutions is both possible and necessary. He moreover situated his work as a political historian's response to the literary and cultural studies of the court that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. As Duindam wrote:

> "While the impetus from these disciplines was and remains indispensable…the discussion of the 'rhetoric' or 'presentation' of power was not sufficiently connected to the processes of decision-making at court, nor were the rationale or the audiences of courtly splendor systematically analyzed."[23]

As Duindam continued, under the broad influence of the different "cultural" and "linguistic" turns, studies of courtly art, music, theater, architecture, and language could not "put into perspective the unwarranted hegemony of Versailles, nor…effectively integrate the revision of absolutism."[24] Duindam argued that careful study of the court allows us to understand the political realities and considerations of rulers, officials, and members of the ruling household. In other words, if we want

[22] Duindam 1994 is the most important critique of Elias's work in English. The discussion in this paragraph borrows heavily from Duindam's analysis.
[23] Duindam 2003, 10.
[24] Duindam 2003, 10.

to understand how these various groups inhered into a court society, we must understand the broad institutions and practices that served as the "glue."

Until very recently, students of early China in particular and the ancient world in general have been almost entirely absent from this conversation. Why? We begin with historiographical reasons before moving to challenges associated with the sources available for the study of ancient courts. For students of imperial Chinese history trained in the tradition of Western sinology, the early Jesuit admiration for the "meritocratic" civil service examination system and supposed rule by Confucian scholar-officials attracted more attention than the imperial court.[25] By the 19th and 20th centuries, orientalist depictions cast the courts of Asia as nothing more than smoky dens of back-stabbing factional conflict and bizarre ritual.[26] The other most important orientalist barrier to study of the court has been the persistent notion that early imperial China was ruled by an "autocratic" or "despotic" (in Chinese, *zhuanzhi* 專制) political system. As Wang Yü-ch'üan, writing in the mid-20th century, put it: "The structure of the central government of the Former Han was that of an autocracy supported by a bureaucracy."[27] Wang was hardly the first to characterize early imperial government in these terms, though the idea of a Chinese "autocratic" political tradition is still modern, having been first deployed by scholars in Meiji 明治 (1868-1912) Japan interested in comparing East Asian political systems to their Western counterparts.[28] Later scholarship from China, deeply inflected by nationalism and Marxism and eager to show that modern China was shedding its oppressive "feudal" past, borrowed the idea. Bielenstein expressly refuted the "autocracy" thesis, emphasizing the limited range of options available to emperors who wished to exercise power.[29] Loewe has done likewise.[30] Despite these two scholars' kindred rejection of the idea, some scholars continue to investigate an emperor-centered Han "autocracy," "despotism," or affiliated concepts.[31] More importantly for our purposes: while rejecting "autocracy," both Bielenstein and Loewe threw all of their analytical attention to the bureaucracy, without really considering in detail the world of the court itself,[32] which after all was the world that produced all descriptions of the bureaucracy as a whole.

Students of the ancient Mediterranean world, meanwhile, were as influenced by the bias against the court as colleagues studying the medieval and early modern European world (see above),

---

[25] On European views of China, see Dawson 1967. For Jesuit depictions, see Frainais-Maitre 2013.
[26] See the fascinating discussion of pop-culture depictions of the Qing court and Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1835-1908) In Barmé 2012, 91-113. Sober-minded scholars no doubt paid little attention to such fanciful images, but the fact remained that talk about the court seldom occupied the attention of historians of any period of Chinese history until the 1990s. Pioneering studies of the Qing court, its institutions, and ways of governing, for example, include Bartlett 1991 and Rawski 1998. For court ritual, the key early work is McDermott 1999. The late imperial court continues to attract scholarly attention. See, for example, the essays assembled in Volume XII, No. 1 of the journal *Asia-Pacific Perspectives* (Fall/Winter 2013-14).
[27] Wang 1949, 181.
[28] The aim for some Japanese scholars was to show that Japan had advanced to more modern forms of state organization and political economy, while China was still wedded to an "autocratic" system. See Hou Xudong, 2008.
[29] Bielenstein 1980, 143-55.
[30] See, e.g., Loewe 1981.
[31] See, e.g., Liu Zehua 2000; Tsai 2002; Pines 2009.
[32] Van Ess 2007 made this same point.

holding the court in low esteem as a "moribund social formation."[33] Historians of ancient monarchical institutions, then, spent most of their time investigating their "legal basis" without interrogating the dynamics of court institutions, politics, and society.[34] The role of the court was effectively effaced from histories of the ancient world. The trend was no doubt compounded by another form of orientalism that was no less influential than the orientalism cited above that long influenced study of the Chinese court. Greek and Roman descriptions of ancient Persia and other Near Eastern polities and peoples, after all, tended to criticize their courts as scandalously corrupt and opulent institutions. When Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) decried the corrupting influence of absolutism and the obsession with "trifling and solemn ceremonies" at the Byzantine court, all the while contrasting Byzantium unfavorably with the institutions of the Roman Republic, he expressed a remarkably durable bias against the ancient courts of the Near East that persisted through most of the twentieth century.[35] The recent attention scholars have begun to pay to the imperial and royal courts of ancient Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome is an enthusiastic admission that the institutions and dynamics identified in studies of medieval and early modern European courts can shed new and interesting light on the politics and society of earlier times and other geographic areas.

That said, students of both early imperial China and the ancient Mediterranean suffer a lack of sources for the court, while the very nature of the sources themselves complicate any attempt to fully outline a "court society," with all of its institutional glue, in a manner similar to Duindam's work on the courts of Versailles and Vienna. A recent edited volume by A. J. S. Spawforth, *The Court and Court Societies in Ancient Monarchies* (2007), epitomizes the dilemma. This pioneering collection of essays on courts from ancient Egypt's Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1292 BCE) to late antique Rome applied the Eliasque model of the court to ancient sources. Each of the essays unpacked "the court," identifying the terminology used to specify the ancient court in question as well as the social, political, and cultural patterns that defined court life. In doing so, the essays emphasized the extreme paucity of sources faced by the student of the ancient court. As a close reading of the essays makes clear, however, the problem is not just one of "information gaps" that prevent a detailed institutional history. Rather, most of the sources for the ancient court are almost invariably limited to documents and artifacts produced by actual participants in and members of the court. There are precious few "outside" takes on the ancient court, nor is there a robust administrative record that can provide an alternative perspective to the normative visions of the court found in our sources.

As a result, students of the ancient court cannot escape the conflation of representation and reality in our sources. Though Duindam's call to move away from studies of court "rhetoric" or "presentation" of power in favor of careful studies of court institutions and decision-making processes is well-taken, the lack of sources for the ancient court puts such an approach on tricky methodological ground.[36] As Rowland Smith's perceptive and highly engaging essay on the late antique Roman court put it:

> We must acknowledge at the outset that the 'late Roman court' is a convenient shorthand expression for a complex historical category: the underlying subject at issue is a distinctively

[33] Spawforth 2007, 1.
[34] Spawforth 2007, 1.
[35] Gibbon 1985, 340.
[36] That said, we do have a few impressive studies of such processes, especially Giele 2006.

> configured field of collective human activity and social experience, and the terms in which late Romans understood and represented it are themselves an aspect of the subject.[37]

As Smith suggests, exploring these terms of reference and representation must be central to any investigation of ancient courts. Perhaps in their drive to chart the social groups that inhabited the "court society," many of the essays in *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies* fail to effectively account for the issue of representation that Smith so eloquently calls to our attention.[38] All contributors were forced to perform the difficult task of outlining a court "society" via a highly limited source base, which in effect forced them to complete a feat of analytical double duty: a) to cull the sources in order to outline the societies, and b) to provide a critical reading of those same sources as products of these societies and its institutions. This dissertation emphasizes the latter approach in order to understand how members of the court during the Western Han characterized and understood the world that they inhabited. In doing so, it attempts to draw connections between literary studies of the court, exemplified by the work of Knechtges and other literature scholars, and studies of court institutions and political power.

A Vocabulary of Courtly Life

Taking a cue from Rowland Smith, this dissertation proceeds with an eye towards the terms by which Western Han subjects understood the court. In the process, we will of course not disregard its "numbers and costs,"[39] but only recognize that the quantitative data available to scholars (such as Duindam) of the early modern European court, not to mention later periods of East Asian history, are simply unavailable.[40] Moreover, without a working understanding of the

---

[37] Smith 2007, 163.

[38] The essay by van Ess (2007) on the Han (both Western and Eastern), conveniently, helps illustrate the problem. Van Ess set out many of the structural features of the Han court as well as the social groups that populated it (e.g. emperor, eunuchs, imperial consorts, members of the *waiqi* 外戚 clan of the emperor's mother, officials). No doubt due to space limitations, however, van Ess did not reflect on the changing definitions or understandings of the court by courtiers themselves, who wrote the vast majority of all extant sources from the Western Han. Nor did van Ess's analysis account for discrepancies between the material record and writings on the court. In his essay, archaeological excavations of Chang'an palaces provide information only about the spatial "background" to the action at court. As this dissertation will emphasize, such discrepancies can tell us much about the concerns of courtiers and their own understandings of the court.

[39] The reference is to Chapter 3 of Duindam 2003, 45-89, which provided a comprehensive overview of the population and expenditures of the courts of Versailles and Vienna.

[40] Establishing a definitive population for the Western Han court, for example, encounters several problems. First, and perhaps most importantly, the population of the court grew over the course of the Western Han. At the same time as population increased in the Guanzhong 關中 area, of which Chang'an became the center (partly due to forced transfers of population to the imperial mausoleum towns that surrounded the capital), the number of officials, consorts, and attendants at court also went up. This trend is perhaps intuitively convincing, but also confirmed by anecdotal evidence. According to one source, for instance, the number of personnel working under the Chancellor (*Chengxiang* 丞相) had increased to 382 people by 117 BCE (Bielenstein 1980, 8). Second, it is not clear what insights a precise population of "the court" would provide, since for courtiers "who had access" was a question that was just as if not more important than "how many?" How many of the

terms and parameters of the Western Han court, to even attempt a rigorous quantitative study of the court would be premature. In this spirit, we note here that the most important word for "court" in Chinese, *chao* 朝, could refer equally to a space (e.g. palaces and halls), the ritual action of attending ceremonies at court, or the group of people who belonged to and inhabited the court.[41] This dissertation is organized into three different sections, with each section focused on changing understandings of one of these three meanings (see below for a summary of chapters).

Thus far, we have used the word "courtier," if sparingly, nonetheless without offering a definition. This move has been deliberate, since the final two chapters on court offices will show how debates about the proper structure and composition of the court, changes in the system of orders of merit and honor (*jue* 爵), and political fights all transformed the imperial court. At the same time, a working definition is necessary to proceed. For our purposes, the "courtier" is any person who enjoyed regular physical access to the imperial palaces, either as an officer, advisor, imperial family member, or attendant. Courtiers were by no means a monolithic group: as we will see, some courtiers took pains to emphasize their membership within a regular officer corps that was nominally superior to imperial advisors who did not hold official positions. Struggles over who held a "legitimate" position at court were ongoing throughout the Western Han. Our use of a broad definition of courtier here, then, rather than "officer" or "official," allows us to refrain from siding with members of the bureaucracy in struggles over access and influence at court.

We have already indicated some of the limitations in sources that confront any student of the Western Han court. Nonetheless, a wide range of excavated evidence can be compared with a significant amount of information from the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. A few words about both of these texts are thus in order here. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145-?86 BCE), the Senior Archivist (*Taishi gong* 太史公), compiled the *Shiji* based on the writings of his father Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE), completing the work around the end of Wudi's reign (i.e. ca. 86 BCE). The text is a collection of Basic Annals (*Ben ji* 本紀) of dynastic houses and rulers, Tables (*Biao* 表), Treatises (*Shu* 書), Hereditary Houses (*Shijia* 世家), and Accounts (*Liezhuan* 列傳) of famous individuals. In composing these different sections, Sima Qian covered the legendary Xia 夏 rulers of high antiquity

---

382 people who worked in the Chancellery, for example, had access to "the court"? Population figures would of course be necessary if we had the sources to investigate a social history of the entire court and its range of low-level servants, attendants, and guards. Unfortunately, those sources are not at our disposal. Rather than focusing on such numbers and figures, this dissertation strives to understand the changing institutional arrangements at court and transformations in how courtiers themselves understood the world they inhabited.

[41] Notably, words for court in European languages share a similar range of meanings. See Duindam 2003 and Strootman 2007, 13-14. Bastid-Burguière 2013 noted that the "social" valence of "court" in European languages was always stronger than in Chinese. As this dissertation shows, however, Han courtiers were nonetheless very concerned with who belonged to the court and who did not. It Note also that the ritual significance of *chao* as a verb is quite specific in Chinese: "to attend a court audience," especially the New Year's audience ceremony in front of the emperor (see Chapter 4).

Chao is not the only word that means "court." We read in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* of the *Han ting* 漢廷 ("Han court") and, more rarely, the *Qin ting* 秦廷 ("Qin court") and the *Shanyu ting* 單于庭, referring to the court of the leader of the Xiongnu 匈奴 federation. References in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* to the *ting* of the Shanyu only use the orthography 庭, while both 庭 and 廷 are used for the Han. Unlike *chao*, the word *ting* has no verbal meaning, but it retains the other two meanings of *chao* as a physical space and the group of officers and associates surrounding the ruler at court.

all the way down to the important men and events of his own day, drawing upon a wide range of sources available to him both within palace archives and beyond the court.[42] We need not consider in detail here the factors that drove Sima Qian to compile the text.[43] While the *Shiji* is famous for its sharp criticism of Wudi's 武帝 (r. 140-87 BCE) dabbling in religious cults and reliance on magicians (*fangshi* 方士), it is not only or even primarily an extended criticism of Wudi's policies. Rather, it is the collected writings of a trenchant observer of and participant in mid-Western Han court life.

The *Shiji* provides a helpful, if complicated point of comparison with the *Hanshu*, which was compiled almost two centuries later during the Eastern Han 東漢 (25-220 CE) by members of the prominent Ban 班 family: Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE), his father Ban Biao 班彪 (3-54 CE), and sister Ban Zhao 班昭 (?45-?117 CE). Unlike the *Shiji*, the *Hanshu* covers the two-hundred-year period from the establishment of the Western Han to the collapse of its ruling Liu 劉 ruling clan upon the rise of Wang Mang and the Xin dynasty. Though the *Hanshu* clearly drew upon the *Shiji* in chapters devoted to the early Western Han, it also covers the period of the late Western Han, which came after the completion of the *Shiji*.[44] As a court officer during the reign of Mingdi 明帝 (r. 58-75 CE), Ban Gu was allowed access to imperial archives in order to finish his work. Part of his charge was to explain the demise of the Western Han and the rise of Wang Mang, a topic of particular concern for Mingdi, who wished to uphold the legitimacy of the Eastern Han dynasty as the rightful heir to the Western Han. Ban Gu probably had access to more documents produced in the Western Han court than anybody else of his era. As many have noted, some of the accounts in the *Hanshu* of early and mid-Western Han figures are much more detailed than those in the *Shiji*, particularly since the *Hanshu* included long quotes from official documents and correspondence submitted to the throne. By no means is the *Hanshu* more "reliable," however, and comparison of the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* is a difficult interpretive exercise. We cannot always assume, for example, that a given *Shiji* chapter was necessarily written before corresponding material in the *Hanshu*.[45] Nonetheless, contrasting what the *Hanshu* emphasized with what we read in the *Shiji* can tell us much about changing sensibilities and understandings of the court.

In sum, the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* offer rich points of comparison to investigate the Western Han court. When combined with archaeological and material evidence, as well as poems, literature, and political writings, we can assess from different perspectives changes in the court's space, ceremonial, and participants (and changes in visions of the court held by the latter). The first two chapters of

---

[42] For a discussion of Sima's office and his work on the *Shiji*, see Watson 1958. Vankeerberghen 2010 provided a close analysis of all sources mentioned in the *Shiji*. Though this dissertation regularly refers to Sima Qian as the author of the *Shiji*, it is of course usually impossible to determine with any certainty whether or not he or his father wrote any given passage. For the purposes of our discussion here, however, it ultimately does not matter if Sima Qian or Sima Tan wrote the text.

[43] Many scholars have considered the aims of Sima Qian via close readings of the *Shiji*. See, e.g., Petersen 1994, Durrant 1995, and Nylan 1998-1999.

[44] As we will note in the chapters that follow, however, interest in the *Shiji* gradually grew over the course of the late Western Han. We know that Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (?104-?30 BCE) added explanatory notes and perhaps even added chapters to the *Shiji*. Some of this material provides helpful contrasts with accounts in both the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* (see Chapter 2). For a consideration of the relationship between the reception of the *Shiji* and the composition of the *Hanshu*, see Lü Shihao 2009.

[45] On this issue, see for example Kern 2003, which argued that the *Shiji* chapter on the poet Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (?179-117 BCE) was based on the *Hanshu* account.

this dissertation investigate courtly space. Chapter One examines material and textual evidence for Western Han palaces, the most important physical spaces of the imperial court. While our sources characterize Western Han palaces as visible expressions of the dynasty's authority, this chapter emphasizes that the Liu ruling household did not fashion its architectural gravitas whole cloth. Rather, as archaeological evidence demonstrates, Western Han emperors and builders constructed on Qin-era palace foundations, a logical strategy that saved resources while allowing them to capitalize on the remnant stature of the massive structures. Furthermore, growth and functional differentiation of all the palaces continued apace through the early and mid-Western Han, as court institutions and the empire as a whole expanded. Criticism of Wudi as a palace builder, then, was not rooted solely in his actual construction of new buildings. Rather, as the chapter will show, the fact that he continually traveled outside of Chang'an to perform rites at sacred sites throughout the empire appears to have been of equal or greater concern. Indeed, the *Hanshu* exaggerated the contrast between Wudi's peripatetic travels to the "traveling palaces" (*li gong* 離宮) outside of the capital, Chang'an, with the supposedly more stationary patterns of some of his successor emperors in the late Western Han. In doing so, the text elevated the status of Chang'an and Weiyang Palace 未央宮 as the primary residence of the emperor and the highest status locations in the empire. At the same time, the "forbidden zones" (*jin zhong* 禁中) of the palace increasingly became understood not just as physical spaces but also as a social entity, membership in which entailed the highest privileges and greatest sensitivity to confidentiality. By the late Western Han, then, the imperial palace had become overlaid by complex spatial and social norms that had little to do with broadcasting imperial power outside of Chang'an or conserving imperial resources and everything to do with courtier anxiety about what went on within and who had access to the spaces of the palace's inner sanctum.

Chapter Two moves beyond the palaces to an equally important court space: the imperial parks and preserves, especially Shanglin Park 上林苑. Though the secondary literature emphasizes Shanglin's role as a venue for the most sophisticated and fabulous forms of imperial consumption and display, the park was just as important as a production center. This role of the park became particularly pronounced after the reign of Wudi, who transformed the park from an ill-defined collection of preserves south of the Wei River 渭水 into a garrisoned manufacturing center, operated by convict laborers, that housed the imperial mint and various treasuries. An increased productive capacity of Shanglin Park allowed emperors conveniently to host ever more elaborate displays and to provide gifts for visiting dignitaries and imperial elites. This change presented problems for some members of the court, who wondered how they could properly benefit from Shanglin Park's largesse when the wealth of the park was rooted in the assertion of coercive and potentially violent imperial power. By the late Western Han, criticisms of the park as a corrupt institution that infringed on resources that could be used to benefit the populace at large are best seen as reflections on the relationship between courtiers and the imperial court than as accurate descriptions of the park itself. Statements about the park in poems and political tracts alike show that authorial attempts to cordon off the imperial court from Shanglin advertised the identity of the righteous courtier advisor who separated himself from the park and its morally dubious riches.

The next chapters investigate state funerals and audience ceremonies. Both were important court rituals that the secondary literature has neglected in favor of the imperial sacrifices. Chapter 3 explores state funerals, especially for the regional kings (*zhuhou wang* 諸侯王). As recent excavations have shown, the regional kings, all members of the Liu imperial house, received lavish funerals in enormous mausolea complexes. Secondary scholarship has sought to demonstrate their conformity to sumptuary regulations, casting the royal mausolea as key to enforcing a status order that privileged the imperial court vis-à-vis the kingdoms. The chapter argues that such regulations

allowed kings equally to display shared symbols of power and to demonstrate their membership in the ruling clan. Excavated royal tombs have also revealed distinct schema for the organization and display of funerary goods from the royal court, local subjects, the courts of other kingdoms, and the imperial court. Imperial and royal funerals alike thus provided opportunities for members of the Liu ruling house both to demonstrate their cohesion as a ruling clan and to communicate their own distinct identities as rulers. The material record indicates that funerals remained lavish until the end of the Western Han; these functions of royal and imperial funerals never disappeared. Descriptions of the royal courts in received texts completely neglect this point, however, emphasizing instead the waning power of the kings and their indulgence in an opulent material life that transgressed the bounds of propriety and sumptuary law. Statements about royal courts from advisors in the capital, then, championed the superior status of the imperial court vis-à-vis the kingdoms in the face of lateral connections that linked the two together. In doing so, of course, advisors enhanced their own status as imperial courtiers.

Chapter 4 looks at the New Year's court audience (*chao hui* 朝會), attendance at which was required of all regional kings, other members of the imperial house, nobles, and high-ranking officials. After suppressing royal rebellions in the mid-Western Han, Jingdi 景帝 (r. 156-141 BCE) changed the rank and duties of the Grand Herald (*Da Honglu* 大鴻臚), the officer in charge of audiences, in order to assert the imperial court's supremacy. Over time, these reforms proved successful and had interesting consequences for discussions of court ritual, since they provided a commonly understood institutional framework for incorporating new nobles and foreigners into an expanding court audience ceremony. Via a close analysis of different descriptions of a 51 BCE audience visit by a foreign ruler, the chapter argues that by late Western Han debates about audience ritual invoked principles that we would describe as disconnected from the regulatory details of ritual practice and performance. Glaring differences in the discussion of court ceremonial between the *Shiji* (ca. 87 BCE) and *Hanshu* (ca 100 CE) indicate that the success of court ritual as a tool for asserting imperial status opened up a space for debate, with advisors advancing new forms of ritual that invoked a restrained and benevolent classicized state. Paradoxically, then, classical models of court ritual that began to emerge in the late Western Han were predicated on a muscular form of imperial power that these models claimed to refute. Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that even if court ritual asserted the supremacy of the imperial court, by the late Western Han classicizing trends obscured a) the horizontal links connecting capital to kingdoms and b) the historical process of coercion and violence by which the imperial court had come to enjoy its supreme status.

The last two chapters investigate the structure of the court as both an imagined and institutional body. Chapter 5 analyzes excavated daybooks (*rishu* 日書), letters, and greeting tablets (*ye* 謁) in order to suggest not only that would-be officers did not always distinguish between their duties as officers and personal concerns, but also that accepted administrative practices encouraged and sanctioned the merging of official responsibilities with personal interests. Comparison of the Tables of offices in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, however, show that from the late Western Han a new conception of the imperial court emerged, one in which offices were imagined as semi-autonomous entities with set duties, divorced from dynastic events and political vicissitudes. The Tables were part of a growing late Western Han interest in defining offices and the bureaucratic hierarchy in normative terms, often infused with classicist rhetoric. We see this most clearly through a close analysis of the "Admonitions of the Offices" (*Bai guan zhen* 百官箴), which are often attributed to Yang Xiong 揚雄 (r. 53 BCE-18 CE) but more importantly constituted a new genre of verse that emerged in the late Western Han and enjoyed the favor of many courtiers. The "Admonitions" not only detail the normative duties of individual offices but also illustrate in literary terms how

individual office-holders should act as empty vessels, attending only to the single task of fulfilling the duties mandated by their office (an image just as indebted to the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 as it was to classically-inflected models supposedly based on Zhou practices). In sum, the late Western Han saw the emergence of a rhetorical and literary tradition that cast the court as a collection of bureaucratic offices with clearly defined duties, all arranged into a clear hierarchy.

Chapter 6 argues that the emergence of this vision of the imperial court was not just due to a vogue for classicist scholarship. Rather, distinct institutional changes and political battles rendered this vision of the court attractive, even necessary. The chapter analyzes reforms and reorganizations of ministerial offices at the imperial court, focusing in particular on a reform of court offices in 8 BCE during the waning years of the Western Han. The 8 BCE reforms reorganized high court offices according to a plan submitted by reform-minded officials and approved by a supportive Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33-7 BCE) as part of a complicated attempt to suppress the power of the Wang 王 family, headed by Chengdi's mother and his uncles. The post-8 BCE imperial court was arranged in a fashion designed to enhance the position of the emperor as titular head of officialdom. It also expressed institutionally and in hierarchical fashion the supreme status of the court and the capital. The visions of the imperial court explored in Chapter 5, then, were inextricably linked to the political struggles and reformulations of power within the imperial court. Chapters 5 and 6 together demonstrate that the understanding of the early empire as a bureaucratic and meritocratic hierarchy, still seen in secondary literature, was partly the product of new forms of administrative and literary writing. These writings emerged in the context of acute political struggles over the immense wealth and resources that had coalesced in the capital and came with holding court office.

Chapter 1

Expanding and Organizing Imperial Palaces: Spatial and Social Prestige

In the autumn of 30 BCE, during a period of heavy rain, rumor spread that a dangerous flood threatened the imperial capital, Chang'an. With city residents thrown into turmoil, a top advisor urged Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33-7 BCE) to order the populace to scale the city walls and thus avoid the rising waters.[1] On the advice of a dissenting official, Chengdi ultimately decided not to issue the order and in the end the flood never materialized. Nevertheless, many people still managed to clamber to the top of the city wall. The repercussions of the flood rumor, however, were not limited to this panic amongst city residents and the ensuing debate at court. As we read in the "Basic Annals" (*Ben ji* 本紀) of Chengdi in the *Hanshu*, the incident became even more notorious for a disturbing security breach in another set of walls, those that surrounded Weiyang Palace 未央宮, where the emperor resided:

> 秋，關內大水。七月，虒上小女陳持弓聞大水至，走入橫城門，闌入尚方掖門，至未央宮鉤盾中。吏民驚上城。
>
> 九月，詔曰：「乃者郡國被水災，流殺人民，多至千數。京師無故訛言大水至，吏民驚恐，奔走乘城。殆苛暴深刻之吏未息，元元冤失職者眾。遣諫大夫林等循行天下。」
>
> In the autumn, a flood occurred within the passes. In the seventh month, a little girl from Sishang, Chen Carried-the-Bow (Chen Chigong 陳持弓), heard that the floodwaters were coming.[2] She traveled through the Heng Gate of the Chang'an city walls and then without authorization entered the barred side gate of the Imperial Workshop, traveling all the way to the bureau of the Intendant of the Imperial Palaces and Parks within Weiyang Palace. Officers and commoners, in terror, had scaled the city walls.
>
> In the ninth month, the emperor issued an edict: "Recently, the commanderies and kingdoms have suffered from flooding. The number of people swept away and killed has risen into the thousands. Within the capital, baseless rumors had it that floodwaters were coming. Officials and commoners were terrified; they fled and ran to scale the city walls. It appears that punitive and cruel officials have not let up, and there are many good people

[1] *Hanshu* 82.3370. The advisor who offered this advice was Wang Feng 王鳳 (d. 22 BCE), Chengdi's maternal uncle, director of the Secretariat (*Shangshu* 尚書), and effective head of the government. Incredibly, Feng also argued that the imperial family could escape by boat.

[2] Ying Shao 應邵 (140-206 CE), the late Eastern Han exegete, noted that Sishang was a town located near the Wei River, which ran in a northeasterly direction north of Chang'an. The Heng Gate used by the girl Chen to enter Chang'an was in the northwest corner of the capital, and thus would have been one of the closest gates to the Wei River. The Heng Gate, however, was a few kilometers north of Weiyang Palace. Before she could have reached Weiyang Palace, then, Chen would have had to walk south from the Heng Gate for several kilometers, between the Eastern and Western markets and the guard station that overlooked them, as well as between Gui Palace 桂宮 and the most exclusive villas and residences of the city.

> who, having been wronged, have lost their jobs. I will send my Advisory Council, Lin, on a tour of inspection throughout all under heaven.[3]

This passage leaves no doubt that the incidents surrounding the 30 BCE flood were of grave concern for the emperor. And yet, by pairing Chengdi's edict with the incident of the girl Chen's unauthorized entry into Weiyang Palace, the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" hinted at an interpretation of the floods quite at odds with the aims of the emperor's edict. After all, in his statement Chengdi made no specific mention of Chen. Rather, he lamented the sorry state of the officials under his command. The edict traced the chaotic scene of terrified Chang'an residents climbing the city walls to the unrelenting cruelty of government officers, which had caused good and honest people to become negligent and "lose their jobs" (*shi zhi* 失職). Surely, Chengdi concluded, a lack of good officers had allowed Chang'an residents to act so recklessly.

The *Hanshu*, however, offered a different interpretation. It highlighted the 30 BCE flood as a sign of the breakdown in the concentric rings of security and control that protected the capital and the palaces: all defensive walls had been surmounted or breached, from the perimeter walls of the city to those surrounding the innermost sanctum of the emperor. Another chapter of the *Hanshu*, the "Treatise on the *Wuxing*" (*Wuxing zhi* 五行志), made this argument clear enough:

> 入未央宮尚方掖門，殿門門衛戶者莫見，至句盾禁中而覺得。
> Chen entered Weiyang Palace through side gate of the Imperial Workshop. At the gates to the palace halls, none of the guards were to be seen. She made it all the way to the office of the Intendant of the Imperial Palaces and Parks within the forbidden zones of the palace before she was discovered and apprehended.

The "forbidden zones" (*jin zhong* 禁中) were the quarters reserved for the emperor, his palace ladies, as well as those who had permission to enter into that exclusive zone. As we saw above, in his edict Chengdi made no mention of the girl, nor does he mention the "forbidden zones." The "Treatise on the *Wuxing*," however, emphasized the highly symbolic nature of the event in an immediately following passage:

> 小女而入宮殿中者，下人將因女寵而居有宮室之象也。
> This incident of a young girl entering into the inner areas of the palace halls was a sign that low people intended to take advantage of the favors granted to a woman and thus set up residence within the palace chambers.[4]

Even without thinking about who these "low people" (下人) might have been, this interpretation of the girl Chen's entry into the forbidden zones of the palace should alert the reader to the fact that the palace spaces alluded to in these passages are not incidental details in a straightforward story about a chaotic flood. Rather, they reflect a highly politicized criticism that condemned certain undesirables who had used access provided by palace women to slip into the inner sanctum of the emperor.[5] The story of Chen "Who-Carried-the-Bow" (Chen Chigong 陳持弓)[6] provided a vivid

---

[3] *Hanshu* 9.306-7.
[4] *Hanshu* 27d.1474-5.
[5] As the "Treatise on the *Wuxing*" makes clear in the conclusion to this story, the "low people" were Chengdi's maternal relatives, the powerful men of the Wang 王 clan. For a close analysis of the

metaphor for a coterie of people who invaded the most privileged areas of the palace, threatening the security of the throne.

***

The *Hanshu* account of the flood uses architectural features of the palaces of Chang'an as metaphors for the emperor: images of people scaling the walls and incursions into the inner "forbidden zones" of the palace cast the imperial throne as highly vulnerable. Palace walls simultaneously indicated the power and prestige of the imperial household as well as this vulnerability. This metaphorical significance of the palaces and their walls have typically been lost in studies of palace architecture, since most studies of the imperial palaces have focused on identifying the names and locations of halls, gates, and other structures. Drawing upon archaeological work completed over the last decades,[7] scholars studying the imperial capital and imperial palaces typically begin with maps such as the two seen below (Map 1.1 and 1.2):

---

politics surrounding the Wang clan and the impact those politics had on institutional arrangements at and normative conceptions of the imperial court, see Chapter 6. Sources suggest that the rhetorical point of the Chen "Carried-the-Bow" story become even clearer in the decades after Ban Gu compiled the *Hanshu*. For example, Xun Yue 荀悅 (148-209 BCE), in his *Records of the Former Han* (*Qian Han ji* 前漢紀), made no mention of Chen's entry through the "side gate" (掖門) attached to the Imperial Workshop (*Shangfang* 尚方). Rather, Xun wrote that Chen had "entered into a hall gate in the female quarters of Weiyang Palace" (入未央宮掖庭殿門). By placing the point of entry in the female quarters of Weiyang Palace, Xun symbolically emphasized the danger that consort clans such as the Wang family posed to the throne.

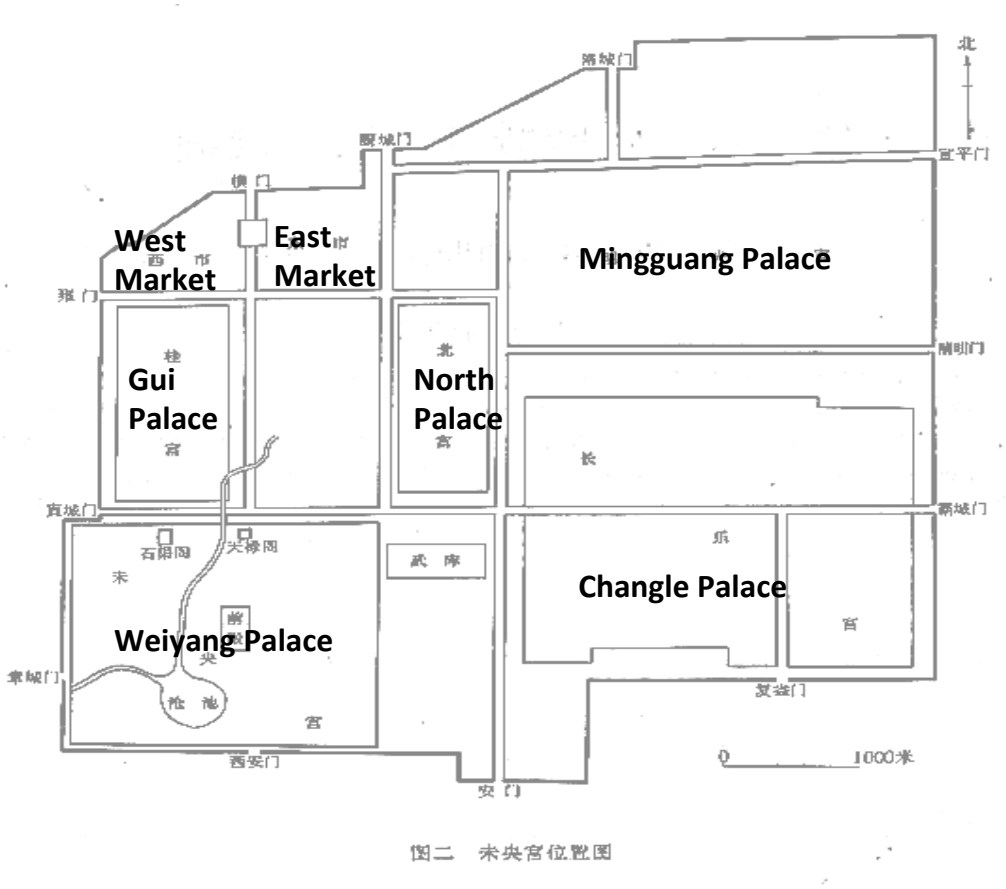
[6] The connotation of Chen's name is clear enough without reference to other sources. The "Treatise on the *Wuxing*" provided a more specific explanation, however, writing:

> 名曰持弓，有似周家檿弧之祥。易曰：「弧矢之利，以威天下。」
> "The name 'Carried-the-Bow' resembles the omen of the mountain mulberry bow of the Zhou household. The *Changes* says: 'The points of bow and arrow are enough to overawe all under heaven.' " (*Hanshu* 27d.1475)

The omen of the "mulberry bow" refers to the story of Baosi 褒姒, the favored consort of King You of Zhou 周幽王. As described in Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Lie nü zhuan* 列女傳, Baosi's mother was a young child consort of King Xuan who had been impregnated by a magical serpent. After Baosi was born, King Xuan cast the baby out of the palace, and it was adopted by a couple who sold mulberry bows and woven bamboo quivers. A popular children's ditty at the time warned that the mulberry bow and quiver was a sign of the downfall of the Zhou house. King Xuan tried to kill the couple, but they escaped. Eventually, the infant Baosi grew up to be a beautiful woman who caught the attention of King You (King Xuan's son). Her extravagant and wicked behavior ultimately caused the collapse of the Zhou. See *Lie nü zhuan*, "Nie bi" 孽嬖, *juan* 7 (*LNZ* 7/64/20-65/14). The "Treatise on the *Wuxing*" thus links Chen "Carried-the-Bow" to the ominous omen of the mulberry bow and the dangers posed by Baosi.

[7] Liu Qingzhu 劉慶柱 and Li Yufang 李毓芳 have directed much of the archaeological excavation of Han Chang'an. For an overview, see Liu Qingzhu and Li Yufang 2003. For Weiyang Palace, see Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan 1996. For Gui Palace 桂宮, see Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan and

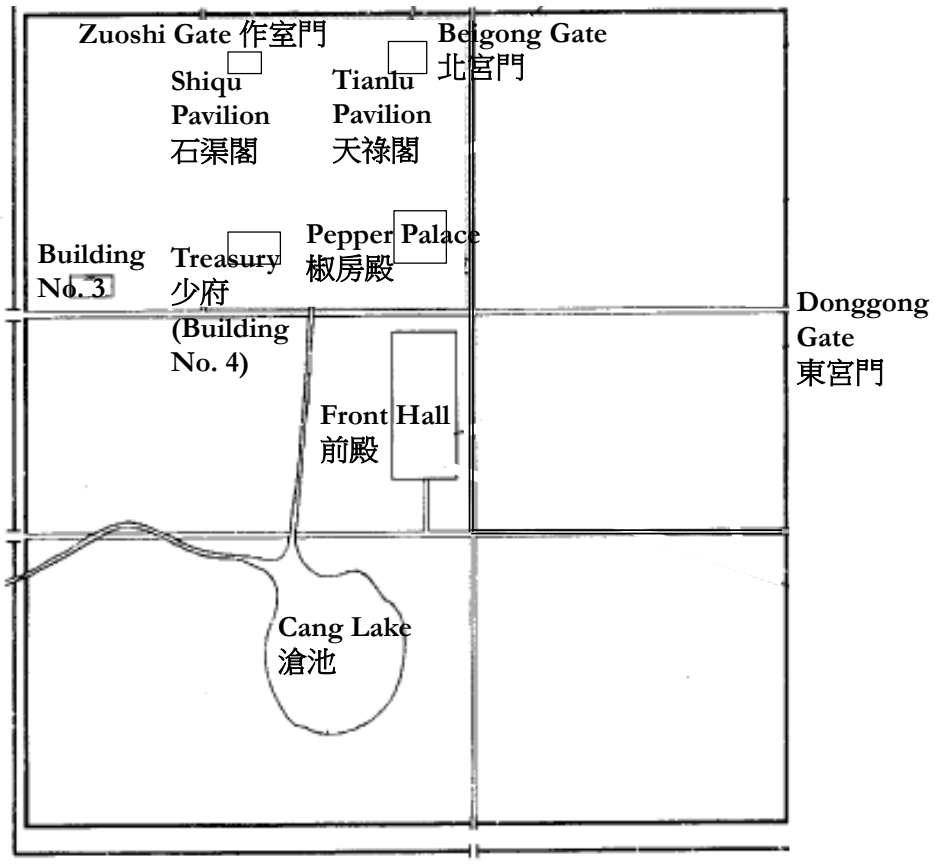
Map 1.1: Western Han Chang'an



圖二　未央宮位置圖

Nihon Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūjo 2007. No comprehensive excavation report of Changle Palace 長樂宮 exists, but see individual articles including Liu Zhendong and Zhang Jianfeng 2006; Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan 2006; and Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan 2011. See also the important discussions in Liu Rui 2007 and Liu Rui 2011, both of which argued that, contrary to the maps provided by excavators, Changle Palace did not extend north of the main avenue in Chang'an that ran between Bacheng Gate 霸城門 and Zhicheng Gate 直城門. Liu Rui argued that foundations unearthed in the area directly north of this avenue were likely part of Mingguang Palace 明光宮, which he argued could not have been located so far in the northwest corner of the city (which is where map 1.1 indicates Mingguang Palace).

Map 1.2: Weiyang Palace



Before moving on to more detailed descriptions of the structures indicated on these maps, modern studies have usually made the following assumptions: 1) Weiyang Palace was the residence of the emperor and the place where he "held court," even though he would occasionally journey to "traveling palaces" (*li gong* 離宮) located outside the walls of Chang'an[8]; 2) Weiyang Palace in particular and all other palaces in general were symbols of Western Han imperial power[9]; 3) the most important periods of palace construction occurred during the reigns of Gaozu 高祖 (r. 106-195 BCE and Wudi 武帝(r. 140-87 BCE). A corollary, then, is that both Gaozu and Wudi were particularly keen to exploit the symbolic power of palaces, their palace construction projects being attempts to solidify and broadcast imperial power.

The understanding of palaces as symbols of power and the perceived important of Gaozu and Wudi in palace construction derives from two passages in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. The first, from Gaozu's "Basic Annals" in the *Shiji*, relates Xiao He's 蕭何 (d. 193 BCE) justification for building Weiyang Palace. As the story goes, in 200 BCE Gaozu arrived in Chang'an after a difficult series of

[8] E.g., Liu Qingzhu 2006 (1995), 483. For "holding court" at Weiyang Palace, see Steinhardt 1999, 55.

[9] Liu Qingzhu 2006 (1995), 483. Steinhardt 1999, 55, did not indicate Xiao He's stated reason for building Weiyang Palace.

military expeditions, one of which nearly cost him his life, that were aimed at suppressing challenges to his newly established rule. Gaozu thus expressed dismay upon finding Xiao He, his Chancellor (Chengxiang 丞相) and most trusted advisor, in the midst of constructing Weiyang Palace, just months after he had completed Changle Palace immediately to the east (see Map 1.1). Gaozu angrily chastised the Chancellor, noting that with control of the empire not yet settled, Xiao He was unwise to build such grand edifices. As Sima Qian related the incident, Xiao He responded with characteristic brilliance:

> 何曰：「天下方未定，故可因遂就宮室。且夫天子以四海為家，非壯麗亡以重威，且無令後世有以加也。」高祖乃說。
> Xiao He said: "Precisely because the empire has not yet been settled, it is right to seize the opportunity to build palaces and chambers. Moreover, the Son of Heaven takes the four seas as his household. Unless you impose grandeur you will have no means to consolidate your authority, nor will you afford later generations the ability to augment it." Gaozu was then delighted.[10]

The passage is usually understood as expressing the underlying motivation for Xiao He's building program and the ideological basis of Han palace architecture: palaces were spectacular in order to command the majesty befitting the emperor, preserve his legacy and the legacy of the Liu ruling house, and allow for later generations to build (literally and figuratively) upon his work.

A second passage, this time from the *Hanshu*, is usually cited to show that Wudi joined Gaozu as the most ambitious palace-builder in the Western Han. The relevant statement comes from Yi Feng 翼奉 (fl. 40s BCE), an expert in the *Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), who during the reign of Yuandi 元帝 (r. 48-33 BCE) submitted a memorial plainly critical of Wudi's building program:

> 竊聞漢德隆盛，在於孝文皇帝躬行節儉，外省繇役。其時未有甘泉、建章及上林中諸離宮館也。未央宮又無高門、武臺、麒麟、（凰）〔鳳〕皇、白虎、玉堂、金華之殿，獨有前殿、曲臺、漸臺、宣室、溫室、承明耳。
> I have heard that the efflorescence of Han's virtuous power rested in Filial Emperor Wen's (r. 179-157 BC) personal enactment of measured and frugal policies, which reduced the use of conscripted labor outside of the capital. During Wendi's reign there was no Ganquan Palace and Jianzhang Palace, nor were there the palaces and outbuildings of Shanglin Park. Moreover, Weiyang Palace did not yet have the halls of Towering Gate, Martial Pavilion, Qilin, Phoenix, White Tiger, Jade Chamber, or Golden Blossom. It had only the Front Hall, Curved Pavilion, Jian Pavilion, Announcing Chamber, Heated Chamber, and Hall of Receiving Brilliance.[11]

Yi Feng portrayed Wudi as a wasteful builder whose indulgences in palace construction contrasted with the measured policies of Wendi. According to Feng, Wudi spared no expense in constructing buildings, including both the "traveling palaces" as well as structures within Weiyang Palace.

These two often-cited passage suggest, respectively, that palaces were known to be symbols of power and that Wudi was an ambitious palace builder, but few scholars have noted the rhetorical relationship between the two. Xiao He emphasized the "authority" (*wei* 威) that palaces provided to

[10] *Shiji* 8.385-6.
[11] *Hanshu* 75.3175.

the newly established dynasty. By contrast, Yi Feng argues the exactly the opposite: that a restrained building program demonstrates the "virtuous power" (*de* 德) of the Han. For Xiao He, then, construction was the best way to demonstrate imperial power, whereas for Yi Feng *not* building palaces most effectively illustrated the ruler's power. Their two theories reflected a debate that emerged in the late Western Han about the true purpose of the palaces, their benefits, and their significant construction costs. Note that Yi Feng put palaces in different categories: Ganquan, Jianzhang, and the palaces of Shanglin are "traveling palaces," whereas Weiyang Palace is the default and proper residence of the emperor and thus the palace of higher status. Xiao He's statement is a blanket claim about the symbolic power and authority of palaces, whereas Yi Feng's statement revealed a hierarchy of palaces and an assumption that certain palaces and structures were necessary while others were superfluous and wasteful. Casting Yi Feng's statement in Xiao He's terms, Feng effectively claimed that certain palaces embodied legitimate power, whereas others proclaimed an overly extravagant, even illegitimate authority.

The significance of Yi Feng's statement runs deeper. By claiming that Weiyang Palace (and even then only certain buildings within the palace) was the only legitimate structure, Feng implicitly advanced a tight connection between the emperor and Weiyang Palace. To stray from Weiyang and travel to other palaces was to deviate from proper forms of imperial authority. The story of Chen "Who-Carried-a-Bow" from the *Hanshu* demonstrates an even tighter and more specific link: not the entirety of Weiyang Palace but rather only the "forbidden zone" within symbolized the emperor. Yi Feng and the "Treatise on the *Wuxing*" from the *Hanshu* thus demonstrated progressively more restrictive understandings of the hierarchy of Western Han palaces and also ever more restrictive models of where the emperor "should" reside.

This chapter charts the emergence over the course of the Western Han of this normative understanding of imperial palaces as highly regulated spaces that confined the emperor to well-defined areas. In the process, we will explore the history of palace construction in order to witness discrepancies between the archaeological record of palace construction and admonitions such as Yi Feng's against Wudi as an overly ambitious palace builder. Such discrepancies can tell us much about the anxieties besetting emperors and courtiers alike in the late Western Han. Shifting understandings of palace space were linked to changes in the relationship between emperors and courtiers as much as to actual changes in the built environment. Palace thus did not simply symbolize imperial authority and power, but provided apt metaphors for visualizing the links between a ruler and his courtiers.

Part One of this chapter starts from the basic fact that almost all of the palaces utilized during the Western Han were either retrofitted Qin palaces or constructed upon Qin foundations, including Ganquan and Jianzhang Palaces, two of the most famous structures built by Wudi. The archaeological evidence shows that *all* early Western Han emperors up to Wudi devoted significant resources to building palaces. Neither the act of construction alone nor even the size of building projects can thus account for criticisms levied against Wudi in the late Western Han. Part Two argues via a close comparison of different accounts in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, along with archaeological evidence, that the activities undertaken in the buildings caused some courtiers to assert hierarchies of spatial status between and within imperial palaces. As others have noted, and this chapter confirms, critiques against imperial movement and sacrificial activity went along with claims that Weiyang Palace should be the primary imperial residence. At the same time, evidence from the *Hanshu* demonstrates increasing anxiety about what was going on in secret behind the Weiyang Palace walls. I will argue that articulations of the "forbidden zone" behind the storied Yellow Gates (*Huangmen* 黃門), rather than describe actual physical space, manifested a growing concern about the ever-narrowing and ever more regulated channels of access to the emperor and imperial power.

The Palaces of Chang'an: Establishing or Rebuilding a Capital?

In his rejoinder to Gaozu, Chancellor Xiao He convincingly argued that constructing palaces would "consolidate authority" (*zhong wei* 重威). Note that Xiao He did not claim his palaces would "establish authority" (*jian wei* 建威 or *li wei* 立威), a much more common phrase in early texts.[12] Without making too much of his lexical choice, Xiao He's wording on the one hand suggests an acute sensitivity that Gaozu would not welcome bald claims that his authority could only be truly "established" through Xiao He's assistance in constructing palaces. On the other hand, the statements perhaps also betray Xiao He's understanding that Gaozu was not strong enough to establish an entirely new type or source of authority independent of his Qin predecessors. This was particularly true for Western Han palace architecture. As we will see, almost all Chang'an palaces were constructed on the ruins of the grand palaces of Xianyang 咸陽, the Qin capital. In some cases, the Han might have done little more than reoccupy and repair structures that had stood empty after the fall of the Qin in the twelfth month of 207 BCE.[13] Xiao He could hardly have proceeded differently, since the palaces and pounded earth foundations of the Qin were ripe opportunities to quickly construct large and impressive structures for Gaozu's use.

Xiao He's statement thus shows that his palace-building enterprise was ambiguous: construction in the Guanzhong 關中 region could have been interpreted equally as an emulation of Qin practice as an assertion of Western Han power. These two moves were not necessarily contradictory, since in the early Western Han to assert imperial power was to do so in the Qin style, since the Qin mode of imperial rule had clearly prevailed when Gaozu defeated Xiang Yu 項羽 and his "hegemon" (*ba* 霸) style of confederation government.[14] Xiao He knew perfectly well that he literally built the Western Han court upon the ruins of the fallen Qin. In this light, the particular palaces constructed were of less concern to Xiao He than the fact that the Han commanded the necessary resources to re-inhabit Qin palaces. Archaeological and textual evidence shows that later emperors were just as dedicated to ambitious and wide-ranging construction and use of palaces as Gaozu. Wudi's construction program did not necessarily differ significantly from those of earlier emperors, nor did they prove that Wudi used architecture to broadcast his "authority" (*wei*) in any distinctive manner. The construction program of Wudi continued the patterns established by his predecessors. That being the case, we must search elsewhere to understand why Wudi came to be criticized as an especially ambitious palace builder.

Converting Qin Palaces

Though the passage cited above emphasizes Xioa He's brilliance in projecting imperial power through palaces, the archaeological evidence suggests another perspective: Xiao He's efforts were logical conversions of pre-existing Qin structures. The rammed earth foundations that

---

[12] For example, the *Guanzi* 管子 describes how rulers can "establish authority and enact their moral power" (*li wei xing de* 立威行德) or "establish authority and enact their orders" (*li wei xing ling* 立威行令). See, respectively, *Guanzi,* "You guan" 幼官 (*juan* 3) and "Ban fa jie" 辦法解 (*juan* 21).

[13] For this date, see *Hanshu* 1.24. For Xiang Yu's murder of Ziying 子嬰, the titular and final Qin emperor, see *Hanshu* 1.27. See below for a discussion of the fate of Qin palaces in the aftermath of the dynasty's collapse. Note that *COHC*, vol. 1, 115 stated that Ziying was killed in the twelfth month of 206 BCE.

[14] On these issues, see Loewe 1999b and Nylan (forthcoming).

supported all major structures in the pre-imperial and early imperial eras required formidable amounts of labor, time, and materials. Given that the Guanzhong region had suffered extensive damage and population loss during the civil war (206-202 BCE), and Han forces were stretched thin fighting wars against Gaozu's former allies, Xiao He simply did not have the resources required to build entirely new foundations. The completion times of both Changle Palace and Weiyang Palace show how well the Chancellor took advantage of Qin palace structures in his building program.[15]

Xiao He had many possible Qin palace foundations to choose from when he started repair work. According to the *Shiji*, pre-imperial and imperial Qin rulers alike had thrown up hundreds of palaces in the Chang'an region since 350 BCE, when Lord Xiao of Qin 秦孝公 (r. 361-338 BCE) established the new Qin capital of Xianyang 咸陽 on the north bank of the Wei River 渭河, just west of its confluence with the Jing River 涇河.[16] Lord Xiao's famous advisor, Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 BCE), constructed a "palace" (*gong ting* 宮廷) with "flanking guard towers" (*yi que* 翼闕).[17] By the reign of King Zhaoxiang 昭襄王 (r. 306-251), several more palaces had been erected on the plain south of the Wei River, including Xingle Palace 興樂宮, Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮, and Zhangtai 章臺.[18] King Zhaoxiang even built a large bridge across the Wei River, connecting Xiangyang Palace in the north to Xingle Palace in the south.[19] Most of these structures were erected on a series of hills that had been heightened and enlarged by rammed earth construction, creating the towering platforms favored by the Qin (see below).[20] The ambitious First Emperor (Qin Shihuang) initiated a comparably extensive palace construction effort only at the very end of his reign. He died, however, before Epang Palace 阿旁宮, south of the Wei River, was completed, and

---

[15] Xiao He began repair of Changle Palace in the ninth month of 202 BCE (*Hanshu* 1.58). Less than one and one half year later, in the second month of 200 BCE, he had moved on to construct Weiyang Palace. Unfortunately, we have no effective means to compare this speed with other construction projects from the early imperial period, since records are insufficient and we have no idea how many or which buildings Xiao He actually retrofitted within the Changle and Weiyang complexes. Conceivably, work on Changle Palace could have continued even after repairs of Weiyang Palace commenced. We can only note that Xiao He completed both palaces during periods of continued unrest and military conflict between Gaozu and his rivals. We thus should not assume that he had access to large amounts of conscripted labor in a manner similar to Gaozu's heir, Huidi (r. 195-188 BCE), who if our sources can be believed called upon as many as 146,000 conscripted laborers for thirty-day periods to build the city walls of Chang'an (*Hanshu* 2.89; 2.90). The *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖 (comp. ca. 3rd century CE) stated that in addition to these conscripted laborers a constant team of 20,000 convict laborers worked on the city walls. In total, the entire project took five years to complete. The fact that Xiao He was able to finish major work on Changle Palace within seventeen months, in the immediate aftermath of a devastating civil war and thus probably without access to a large body of laborers, strongly suggests that use of remnant Qin foundations and other structures allowed for relatively speedy construction.

[16] Wang Xueli 1999, 39-43 and Li Lingfu 2009, 8-9, outlined the reasons for the move to Xianyang.

[17] *Shiji* 5.202.

[18] Only a few laconic entries in commentaries provide us information for the construction dates of these palaces. The limited information that we have suggests that these structures were used during King Zhaoxiang's reign. For the relevant sources and analysis, see Wang Xueli 1999, 138-42.

[19] The *Shiji suoyin* cites the *Sanfu gu shi* 三輔故事 saying that King Zhao built this bridge. See *Shiji* 12.415.

[20] Li Lingfu 2009, 13. See also Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 285-87.

his son hardly had enough time to building anything before his death and the Qin collapse. Nevertheless, Xianyang by 208 had already been transformed from a cluster of buildings north of the Wei River to a group of palaces that straddled its northern and southern banks.

Map 1.3: Location of Major Qin Palaces around Xianyang, North and South of Wei River

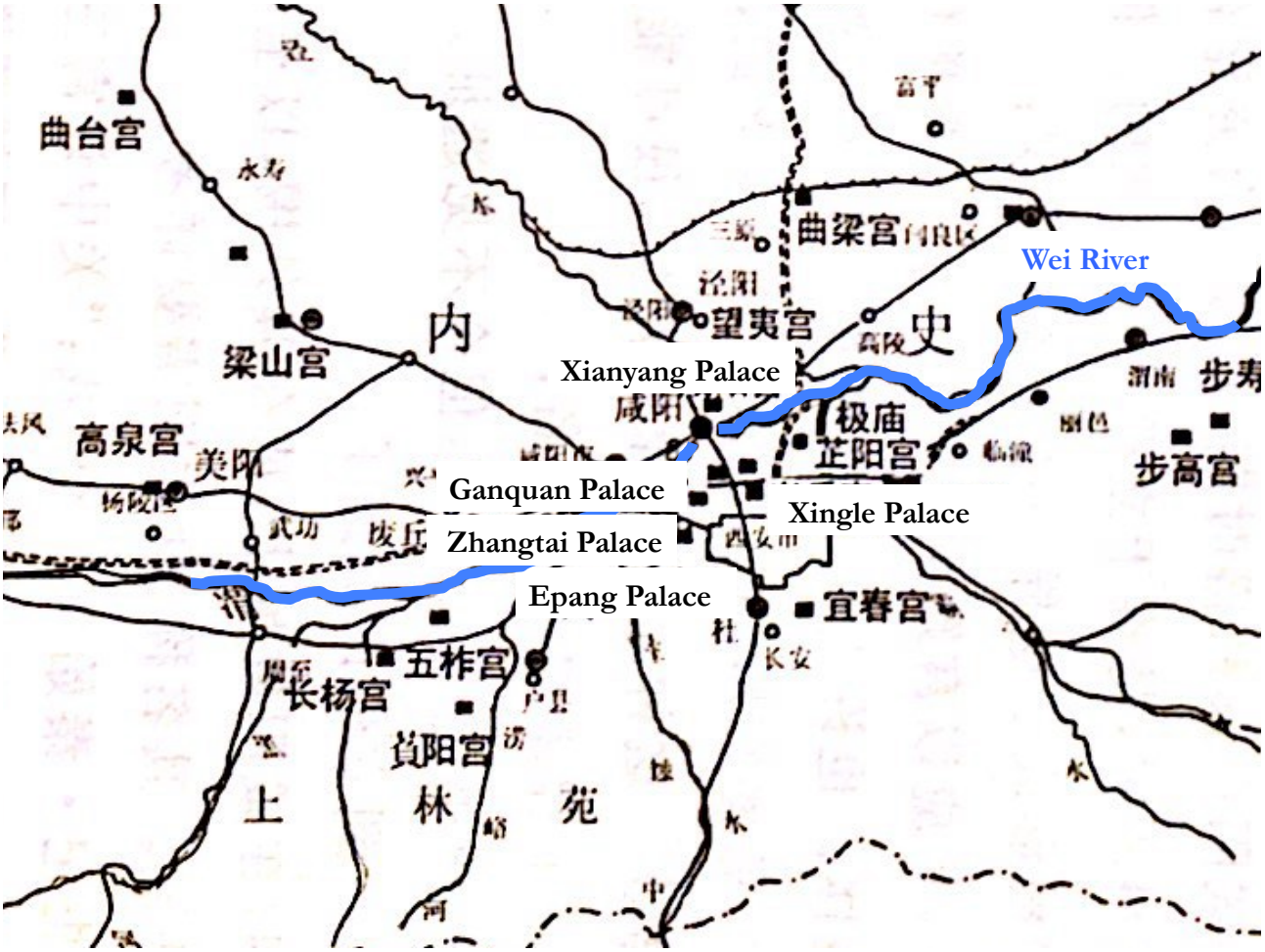


Image after Wang Xueli 1999, 132, with English added. Note that in the Han Ganquan Palace was far north of Chang'an. The Ganquan Palace shown here was eventually converted into Gui Palace during the Western Han.

Archaeologists have conducted extensive work on Xianyang palaces located north of the Wei River. Perhaps the most famous of these is Building No. 1 (一號建築), an immense, multi-level rammed earth platform that has yielded evidence of long corridors, tiled rooms, stones supporting wooden pillars, and even a stove set into a wall. Archaeologists have identified Building No. 1 as one of the earliest built in Xianyang, perhaps a portion of the palace that Lord Xiao erected when he first established his capital on the site. The building has become quite famous due to the work of Tao Fu 陶復, whose drawings and diagrams of the re-imagined building, based on the archaeological evidence, have been reproduced in many books on Qin history (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: Re-creation of Building No. 1, Xianyang

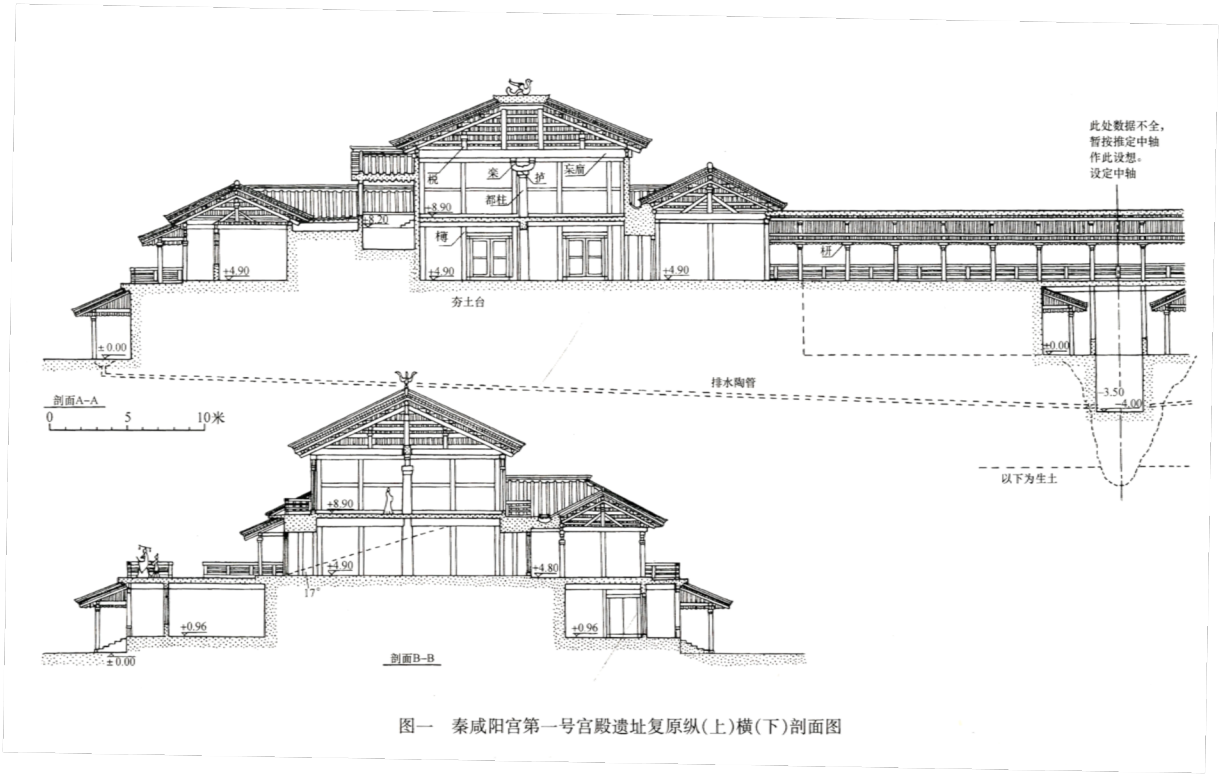


Image after Tao Fu 2004, 764

Figure 1.1 helps illustrate Qin construction methods, showing how Qin architects used rammed earth as earthen cores, walls, and platforms. In Building No. 1 the rammed earth foundation was mostly likely built up from a natural hill or other piece of elevated land. As Figure 1.1 shows, this rammed core provided both surfaces that supported the building and inner walls of the lower rooms that ringed the base of the structure. Visitors approaching the building would thus have been confronted by a towering collection of rooms and chambers layered on top of each other. The illusion would have been of a tall multi-story building, when in reality the levels did not extend through the entirety of the structure, since the rammed earthen core lay at the center.

When the Qin collapsed in 207 BCE, Building No. 1 and many other structures burned to the ground. It is impossible to say how many. The *Shiji* gives an impression of total devastation, though it strains credibility to imagine that every single one of the hundreds of Qin palaces in Guanzhong burned to the ground.[21] Regardless, the fires would not have rendered even the most damaged Qin structures useless to Xiao He. Most of the rammed earth platforms would have survived the fires intact. The same is true of the stone drainage ditches and terracotta water pipes, aside from a few that may have exploded in the heat. For Xiao He, then, the towering mounds of Xianyang south of the Wei River must have appeared as golden opportunities to reconstruct a capital city of spectacular size and splendor at relatively little expense. Descriptions in the *Shiji* suggest that Xiao He not only used Qin platforms, postholes, and foundation stones when he

[21] The *Shiji* states that after Xiang Yu 項羽 executed the heir to the Qin throne he "burned the Qin palaces, and three months later the fires were [still] not extinguished" (燒秦宮室，火三月不滅) (*Shiji* 7.315).

constructed Changle Palace and Weiyang Palace, but also followed a repertoire of imperial palace design rooted in Qin practices. We know little about Xiao He's construction of Changle Palace, but the *Shiji* describes his efforts at Weiyang Palace as replicating the models of his Qin predecessors, in terms of both the designs he employed and the actual structures that he converted. Xiao He built guard towers at the eastern and northern gates of Weiyang Palace, as well as at the Front Hall (*Qian dian* 前殿) in the center of the complex. As we saw above, the *Shiji* states that 150 years before Shang Yang had erected similar structures at Xianyang Palace.[22] Moreover, the archaeological evidence suggests that the Front Hall of Weiyang Palace was none other than the Zhangtai, which had been one of the main audience halls used by Qin rulers for official ceremonies.[23]

New Palace Construction After Gaozu

After describing the completion of Changle and Weiyang Palaces, the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* are virtually silent regarding palace construction during the reigns of Huidi 惠帝 (r. 195-188 BCE), Empress Dowager Lü 呂太后 (r. 188-180 BCE), Wendi 文帝 (r. 180-157), and Jingdi 景帝 (r. 157-141) Yi Feng's memorial (quoted above in the introduction to the chapter) emphasizes that Wudi was the most active palace builder, listing some of his palaces, while other sources describe other palaces constructed by Wudi. The most important of these are Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮 and Jianzhang Palace 建章宮, outside of Chang'an, and Gui Palace 桂宮 and Mingguang Palace 明光宮 within the city walls of Chang'an. As we discussed above, scholars have traditionally understood Wudi's building program to mark a radical change from the more measured construction efforts of his predecessors. By this narrative, Wudi's palaces symbolized the confidence and power of the ascendant Western Han empire, which was dramatically expanding its territory under Wudi. The archaeological evidence, however, tells a different story: Wudi's palaces, like those that existed when he came to the throne, were also built on the ruins of Qin structures. Indeed, earlier emperors were already using the structures that Yi Feng claimed Wudi had "built."

Take Ganquan Palace, for example. This structure was located about 100 km north of Chang'an, though still within the Guanzhong region. During Qin times, Ganquan was the name of a geographical area[24] and Qin rulers had built Yunyang Palace 雲陽宮 and Linguang Palace 林光宮 there.[25] According to the *Sanfu huang tu* 三輔黃圖 (comp. ca. 3rd century CE) Linguang Palace was quite large, occupying some 5 square *li*.[26] Some commentaries state that sacrificial rites to heaven

---

[22] Shang Yang himself, of course, no doubt followed long-established precedents for the construction of Qin royal palaces. Guard towers, for example, were standard to royal and imperial structures. See Liu Rui 2011.

[23] See Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo 1996, 265.

[24] Note that the Qin had built a Ganquan Palace, but that was located within what would become Han Chang'an, and provided the basic structures that came to comprise Gui Palace, located just to the north of Weiyang Palace (see below).

[25] Yao Shengmin 2002 clearly distilled the different theories regarding the location and purpose of Yunyang Palace, Linguang Palace, and Ganquan Palace. As he demonstrated, textual accounts indicate that Yunyang Palace was built as early as 350 BCE during the time of Lord Xiao of Qin, while construction on Linguang Palace was likely started by the First Emperor and continued during the reign of his son, Qin Ershi 秦二世 (r. 210-207 BCE). During the Qin, Ganquan was a place name only.

[26] *Sanfu huang tu*, *juan* 1 (He Qinggu 2006 (1993), 71). One Han *li* is equivalent to .415 km.

occurred regularly at an altar located near these palaces, and Wendi traveled on at least two occasions to the Ganquan.[27] The Ganquan area and Yunyang and Linguang Palaces were thus known and used by emperors in the early Western Han.[28] It is true, however, that Wudi constructed many structures in the area over the course of his reign that came to comprise the sprawling Ganquan Palace complex. Construction started as early as 139 BCE, when Wudi built an altar at Ganquan on the advice of the magician Shao Weng 少翁.[29] Later in his reign, the pace of construction quickened, with the erection, for example, of several more temples and altars in 112 BCE[30] and villas for the kings in 104 BCE.[31] Wudi's structures at Ganquan Palace, which began on a small scale, were thus most likely dwarfed by the Qin-era Linguang Palace before Wudi expanded the structure into a sprawling complex that some later commentators claimed contained dozens of palaces, towers, halls, pavilions, and temples.[32]

It was not until 104 BCE that Wudi shifted his focus away from Ganquan to the north and back towards Chang'an and the immediately surrounding environs, ordering construction of Gui Palace and Jianzhang Palace. These too, however, were based on Qin structures, portions of which might have been used prior to the reign of Wudi. Gui Palace was located immediately to the north of Weiyang Palace (see Map 1.1) in Chang'an, and sources indicate that the structure was built on the ruins of a Qin palace called Ganquan.[33] Jianzhang Palace, meanwhile, being built in Shanglin Park 上林苑 to the immediate west of Chang'an, could have taken advantage of the numerous Qin platforms and structures in that area, which were already in use, for we know that previous Western Han emperors visited structures within Shanglin Park.[34] Excavations at Gui Palace suggest that Wudi's construction efforts there added on to previously existing structures. For example, when they unearthed the wall surrounding Gui Palace, archaeologists discovered that the southern gate was comprised of two different layers of pounded earth, one layer being earlier than the other. The later layer extended inward from either side of the gate, narrowing the width of the gate opening (see Figure 1.2).[35]

---

[27] The first trip was in response to Xiongnu 匈奴 incursions on the northern border (*Hanshu* 4.119). Even if the journey initially had martial motivations, however, Wendi followed up that journey with a more leisurely trip to his former (and nearby) kingdom of Dai 代. The second trip, we read, occurred in the winter (*Hanshu* 4.123); could this have been a precursor to the hunting and leisure trips that we read occurred in later reigns (see Chapter 2)?

[28] In his *Yonglu* 雍錄 (*juan* 2), Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123-1195) mentioned trips to the Ganquan area taken by Wendi and Jingdi and stated that the Qin-era Linguang Palace would have been available for their use. See Cheng Dachang 2002, 43.

[29] *Hanshu* 25.1219.

[30] These included the famous Taizhi 泰畤, or altar to Taiyi 太一. See *Hanshu* 6.185.

[31] *Shiji* 28.1402; *Hanshu* 25b.1244.

[32] Sources give different figures for the number of structures at Ganquan. The section on Ganquan Palace in *juan* 3 of the *Sanfu huang tu* describes thirty-two separate buildings: twenty-eight *gong* 宮, two *dian* 殿, one *tai* 臺, and one *guan* 觀. See He Qinggu 2006 (1993), 222-68.

[33] This is a completely different Ganquan than the Ganquan Palace of the Han. See Map 1.3 above.

[34] Gaozu was reticent to give up control of Shanglin Park (*Hanshu* 39.2011), while we have descriptions of both Wendi (*Hanshu* 49.3030) and Jingdi (*Hanshu* 46.2201) visiting the park.

[35] Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 2007, 11.

Figure 1.2: Overhead Diagram of Excavations of South Gate of Gui Palace

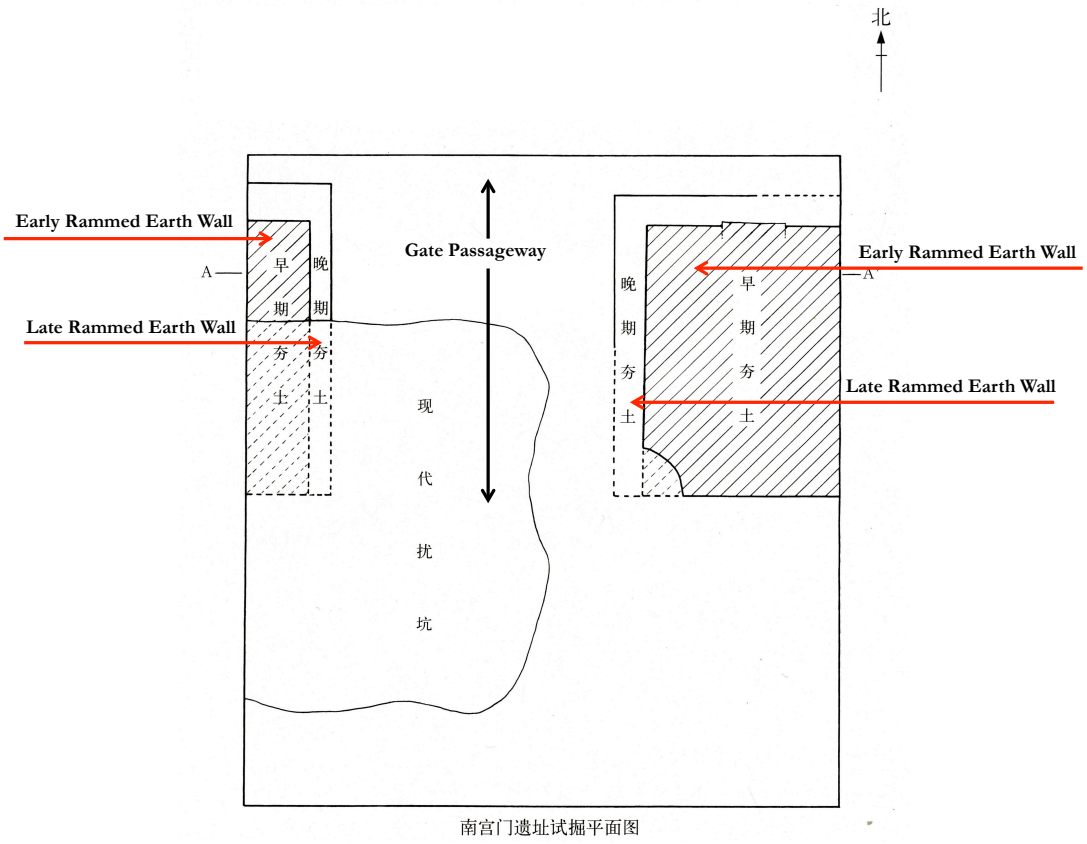
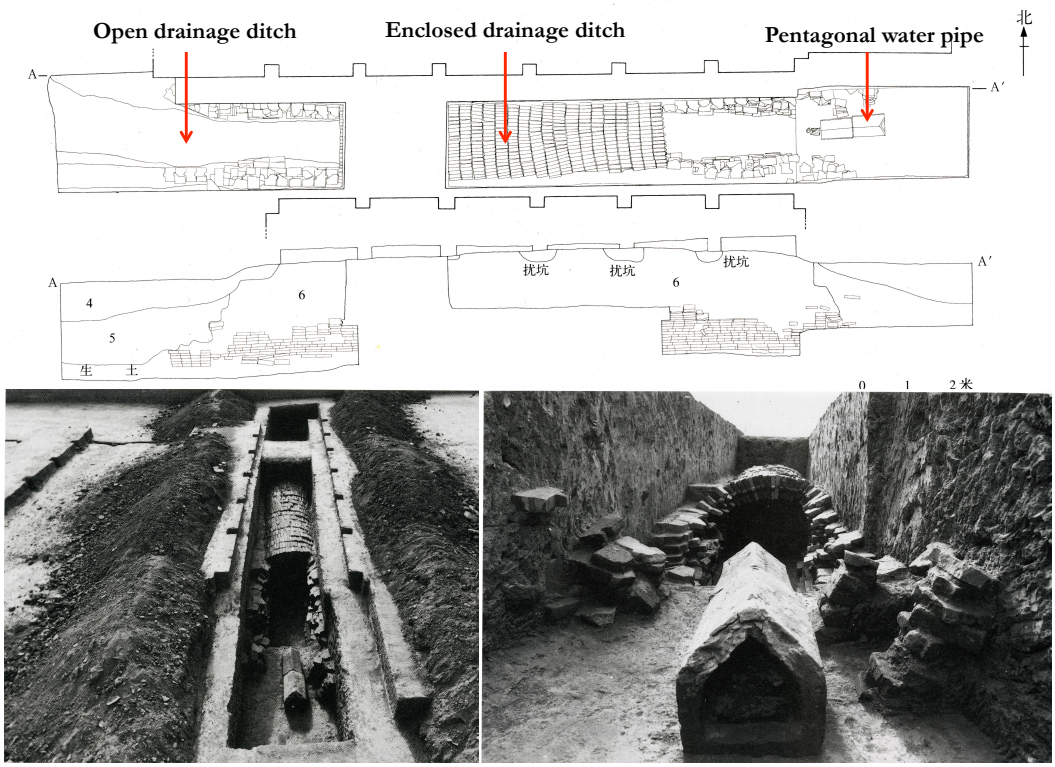


Image after Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 2007, with English added

Work on the walls of Gui Palace, then, occurred on at least two occasions. It is impossible to know if Wudi's construction work at Gui Palace included wall repairs, but the archaeological evidence at least supports the idea that Gui Palace was not "built" on one single occasion.

Similar support comes from excavation of a portion of the water drainage system within Gui Palace. In the northwest corner of the palace complex, underneath Structure No. 3, archaeologists unearthed part of a water drainage ditch with three distinct portions: an open ditch, a large tunnel enclosed with interlocking bricks, and a much smaller pentagonal pipe running through the tunnel (see Figure 1.3).

Image 1.3: Water Drainage Ditches and Pipe Underneath Structure No. 3, Gui Palace



Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo and Nihon Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūjo 2007, 156 (above) and image plate 126 (below), with English added

Archaeologists concluded that the open ditch predated Structure No. 3 itself. They argued that before construction on the building commenced, workers covered the open tunnel with the bricks, and then the building was constructed on top. Later, perhaps in response to blockages or leaks in the tunnel, workers added the pentagonal pipe.[36] This accretion of elements above previously constructed buildings and infrastructure suggests a building program that unfolded over the long-term, and not just during the reign of Wudi. Gui Palace had a much longer history of use than that allowed by an Wudi-centered narrative of construction.[37]

Internal Construction at Weiyang Palace: The Articulation of Administrative and Residential Space

In his memorial, Yi Feng listed a series of buildings within Weiyang Palace, some of which existed prior to Wudi's reign and some that Feng says were constructed by Wudi. The former included the following:

[36] Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 2007, 160.
[37] Note that archaeologists dated the building with the drainage system in the northwest corner of Gui Palace to the early Western Han. All Western Han emperors continuously employed a Court Architect (*Jiangzuo da jiang* 將作大匠) in charge of construction projects around the capital. On the Court Architect, see Bielenstein 1980, 80-82.

- Front Hall
- Curved Pavilion
- Jian Pavilion
- Announcing Chamber
- Heated Chamber
- Hall of Receiving Brilliance

Wudi's buildings included the following:

- Towering Gate Hall
- Martial Hall
- Unicorn Hall
- Phoenix Hall
- White Tiger Hall

From the first group of pre-Wudi buildings, we know only that Xiao He and Gaozu built the Front Hall; it follows that Huidi, Empress Lü, Wendi, and Jingdi could have built the rest.[38] Despite his emphasis on Wendi's frugality, then, Yi Feng left open the possibility that Wendi participated in building efforts within Weiyang Palace.[39] Yi Feng's statement moreover betrays the fact that building efforts *within* the walls of palace complexes continued even after a palace was sufficiently "completed" to allow for imperial residence and the performance of audiences and rituals. We cannot assume that just because an emperor is said to have constructed a given palace, later emperors could not have added new buildings or elaborated upon existing structures within the palace.[40] Unfortunately, our sources hardly ever indicate when individual halls and chambers were constructed. Even when they do, contradictory or vague descriptions make it next to impossible to pin down a date of construction with any level of confidence.

Archaeological evidence, however, can provide some help in understanding how palaces evolved and grew, particularly Weiyang Palace, since more published information on its structures exists compared to other palaces. The evidence available for Weiyang suggest that construction there must have continued in a more or less unbroken fashion through most of the first century of the Western Han. For example, archaeologists have unearthed the foundations of a building in the northwest quadrant of Weiyang Palace, called Building No. 4, that they have identified as offices belonging to the Treasury (*Shaofu* 少府), a bureau in charge of provisioning the imperial household

[38] Some of these buildings (e.g. the Announcing Chamber), might have been part of the entire Front Hall complex. The *Hanshu* states that Huidi amassed significant labor to erect the perimeter wall of Chang'an (*Hanshu* 2.89; 2.90) as well as the markets in the northwest corner of the city (*Hanshu* 2.91). We can only speculate as to whether his construction of these two massive projects would have made him more or less likely to complete buildings within Weiyang Palace.

[39] In his *Fengsu tong yi* 風俗通義 (*juan* 2, "Zheng shi" 正失) Ying Shao 應邵 (d. 196 CE) noted that even if Wendi had a reputation for being "frugal" (*jian yue* 儉約), he also luxuriously decorated the Front Hall of Weiyang Palace.

[40] It is worth emphasizing that the massive size of Chang'an's palace complexes would have accommodated and required sustained construction for many years. The entire Weiyang Palace complex alone occupied some five square kilometers.

and providing security within the palace.[41] The Treasury existed from the start of the Western Han, but more convincing evidence for the pre-Wudi use of the structure than its tentative identification by archaeologists are the items that Building No. 4 yielded. The most important evidence were a few *ban liang* 半兩 coins, which were in circulation from the early years of Western Han until 120 BCE.[42] The coins cannot prove that the building was constructed before Wudi came to the throne, since all of the coins could theoretically have dated to the first decades of his rule until 120 BCE (or, they could have been moved to the structure after it was completed).[43] Nonetheless, the fact that possibly pre-Wudi early Western Han coins were within Weiyang Palace demonstrates that some sort of administrative structures, even if not the particular place where the coins were found, could have been built within Weiyang Palace before the reign of Wudi.

The building in question is important not merely because of the items that it has yielded. The location of Structure No. 4 in the northwest quadrant of the palace is equally significant (see Map 1.2). The sealing clays (*feng ni* 封泥) and coins found in Structure No. 4 suggest that palace workers and officials (of unknown title or status) carried out administrative duties in the area. This arrangement conforms to descriptions in the early texts that place various workshops in the northwest quadrant of the Weiyang Palace complex. That area was most conveniently reached by the so-called "Workshop Gate" (*Zuoshi men* 作室門), which archaeologists identified as a gap in the northwest corner of the foundation of the Weiyang Palace wall. If true, the Workshop Gate would have been located just to the east of the Zhicheng Gate in the city walls (see Map 1.2).[44] A building, Structure No. 3, was unearthed to the south of this Workshop Gate. Unlike Structure No. 4, none of its rooms were paved with stones, while its postholes and foundation stones were comparatively small and not set as deeply into the ground. The rooms arrayed around the courtyards of Structure No. 3 yielded some 60,000 bone labels, most inscribed with serial numbers, terms indicating the item associated with the label (typically bows, such as "crossbow" [*nu* 弩] and "fowling bow" [*yi* 弋]), or the names of the factories and artisans that produced the original item. Scholars have advanced several theories regarding the purpose of the labels and the significance of Structure No. 3, though the most convincing casts the structure as a storage facility for the bows used by imperial archers.[45] Regardless of its specific purpose, the evidence from Structure No. 3 and the rest of the structures

---

[41] *Hanshu* 19a.731-2; Bielenstein 1980, 47-69. For palace security, see Liao Boyuan 1998 (1986).

[42] See Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo 1996, 174. On the various iterations of *ban liang* coins and their circulation dates, see Nishijima Sadao 1986, 586-87. Archaeologists also found a large cache of sealing clays (*feng ni* 封泥) in Structure No. 4, one of them marked "Seal of Sima Xi" 司馬喜章. Archaeologists argued that this clay was stamped by Sima Xi, the grandfather of Sima Qian, who was alive during the reigns of Wendi and Jingdi (Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo, 1996, 17). The claim is hard to verify, however. Moreover, during the reign of Aidi (r. 6-1 BCE), Fu Xi 傅喜 (d. 10 CE) served as Da Sima 大司馬. The "Seal of Sima Xi" thus might refer to Fu Xi from the late Western Han.

[43] Even if this were true, the coins could have just been moved from one structure within Weiyang Palace to another.

[44] Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo 2007. On the location of the workshop gate, see also the description in *juan* 9 of *Yonglu* by Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1128-1195) (Cheng Dachang 2002, 185).

[45] This is the theory of Sahara Yasuo 佐原康夫. For a summary of this find and the different interpretations of the bones and building three, see Barbieri-Low 2000, 3-5.

excavated in the northwest quadrant of Weiyang Palace indicates that the area was home to offices and storehouses, many of which appear to have been in operation long before Wudi's reign.[46]

The contrast between these structures and the more grandiose architecture at the core of the Weiyang Palace complex is clear. Buildings in the northwest quadrant of the palace are smaller in scale and structure than those clustered around the Front Hall, whose towering foundation even today is still clearly visible in the center of the palace complex. Meanwhile, a series of buildings located to the north of the Front Hall are also much larger and more complicated in structure than anything found in the northwest quadrant. These buildings, tentatively identified by archaeologists as the "rear palaces" (*hou gong* 後宮) were by Wudi's time perhaps divided into eight different areas. Based on its location, archaeologists have identified one excavated building as the Pepper Hall (*Jiaofang dian* 椒房殿), which housed the empress (see Figure 1.4).[47]

Figure 1.4: The Pepper Hall and Rear Palaces

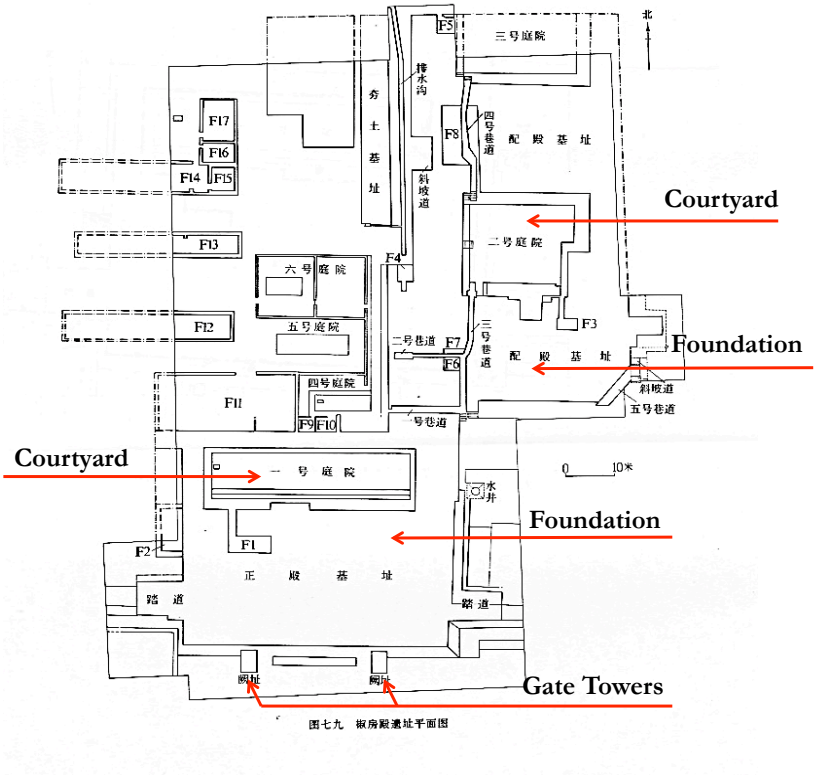


Image after Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiu suo 1996, 189, *with English added*

Excavation work indicates that the main entry to the Pepper Hall was probably at the southern end of the site, since the southern face contains two large pounded earth foundations that archaeologists have interpreted as platforms for gate towers (*que* 闕). This southern area was dominated by a large foundation, with a low courtyard just to the north. Smaller foundations and courtyards were located

[46] Note that the officers in charge of the Treasury and archery existed from the early Western Han.
[47] See the annotations by He Qinggu to *juan* 3 of the *Sanfu huang tu* (He Qinggu 2006, 194, n.1).

further to the north. This division between a large entryway with gate towers and a large platform in the south and smaller platforms to the north differs from the jumble of buildings that comprise Building No. 4 and the rectangle of small rooms making up Building No. 3, where all of the bone labels were found.[48]

The archaeological evidence thus shows continuous use and construction of different sectors of Weiyang Palace for administrative and residential purposes prior to the reign of Wudi. The growth and spatial differentiation of the palace, then, was a process that started from the early Western Han. Nothing in the archaeological record thus far shows Wudi to have been an especially novel palace builder, though his comparatively lengthy tenure on the imperial throne gave him more time to build quite a few more buildings than his predecessors. Even if Wudi eventually completed large palaces such as Ganquan Palace and Jianzhang Palace, he did so in the same way as early emperors: on top of Qin foundations or outward from existing buildings.[49] Wudi was thus not so much an architectural innovator as he was a ruler who continued building upon construction precedents established by emperors from Gaozu to Jingdi, not to mention Qin rulers.

Traveling Palaces and the Forbidden Zone: Physical and Social Delineations of the Imperial Court

The previous section emphasized the continuous nature of Western Han palace construction and cast into doubt claims by people such as Yi Feng that Wudi was a particularly extravagant builder compared to previous emperors. Why, then, did Yi Feng criticize Wudi so forcefully? It is important to note that Yi Feng's criticism opened a larger memorial that found fault with the fact that, in his words, "most of the myriad ritual offerings that the Han household performs at the ancestral temple do not accord with ancient practice (漢家郊兆寢廟祭祀之禮多不應古).[50] Yi Feng, complaining that it would be extremely difficult to change these practices in Chang'an, proposed a quite radical solution: move the capital to the old Eastern Zhou capital of Chengzhou 成周 (Luoyi 洛邑)! Needless to say, Yuandi did not heed Yi Feng's advice. Nonetheless, Yi Feng's memorial is a good example of the calls to "restore antiquity" (*fu gu* 復古) and reform imperial sacrifices that picked up pace during the reigns of Yuandi and Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33-7 BCE). The culmination of this classicist movement came when Wang Mang eliminated the altars outside of the immediate Chang'an area and relocated all sacrificial rites to altars that he built in the area immediately south of the capital.[51]

Scholars have thoroughly examined the changes in the imperial sacrifices, but they have generally paid less attention to how they were linked to a parallel reconceptualization of imperial space as centered in Chang'an and Weiyang Palace. It is important to note here, for example, that Yi

[48] The excavation report did not hazard a construction date for the Pepper Hall, noting only that the site yielded primarily Western Han materials, including a few eaves tiles of a sort that were widely used during the Qin and early Western Han. See Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo 1996, 219.

[49] Archaeologists have yet to publish significantly on their work on Jianzhang Palace.

[50] *Hanshu* 75.3176.

[51] The secondary literature on the imperial sacrifices and their reform in the late Western Han is vast. See Loewe 1974; Lewis 1999; Gan Huaizhen 2003; Washio Yukio 2004; Bujard 1997, 2000, and 2009; Tian Tian (forthcoming). Tian Tian emphasized political contingencies along the way to Wang Mang's ritual reforms and noted that even if advocates of reform shared certain ideas, "sharp divisions" between classicists remained and there is little evidence of a unified reform plan.

Feng characterized all other palaces other than Weiyang as "traveling palaces" (*li gong* 離宮). Classicist critiques and calls for reform of the imperial sacrifices, then, invoked a palace hierarchy in which Weiyang Palace emerged as the most privileged space in the empire. As we will see below, this rhetorical move required that Weiyang Palace be described as the imperial residence to the exclusion of all other palaces, and that the emperor only be shown to move outside of Weiyang Palace for discrete ritual duties. At the same time, we can identify a parallel consensus that emerged amongst the Chang'an elite in the late Western Han that Weiyang Palace and especially the "forbidden zones" accommodated the most privileged groups of people in the empire. As we noted above, Yuandi did not act on Yi Feng's advice to move the capital, and myriad logistical problems no doubt made such a move unfeasible. One of the most important problems, however, would have been the hugely complicated task of uprooting a court society that had come to imagine Chang'an in general and Weiyang Palace in particular as the privileged center of their social world. The late Western Han thus saw the convergence of ritual and social practices that resulted in the elevation of Weiyang Palace as the most esteemed physical space in the empire.

Traveling Palaces and the Primary Palace: Writing Weiyang Palace as the Imperial Residence

According to the *Hanshu* "Treatise on the *Wuxing*," Weiyang Palace was "where the emperor resided" (*di suo ju* 帝所居).[52] This statement, however, does not describe accurately imperial residence patterns for all of Western Han. Gaozu lived in Changle Palace and remained there even after Weiyang Palace was completed. Huidi (r. 195-188 BCE) moved into Weiyang Palace, even while he built a bridge connecting the two structures, the better to visit his mother, Empress Dowager Lü (r. 188-180 BCE).[53] The Empress Dowager, who arguably held the most political power even during her son's reign, remained in Changle after his death. Weiyang Palace, then, did not begin to emerge as both the imperial residence and a center of political power until the reigns of Wendi (r. 180-157 BCE) and Jingdi (r. 157-141 BCE).[54]

The growing importance of Weiyang Palace, however, did not prevent emperors from traveling to other locations and other palaces located outside of Chang'an, and the *Shiji* does not seem to evince a particular concern with privileging Weiyang Palace at the expense of these "traveling palaces" (*li gong* 離宮) outside the capital.[55] As a result, tracing patterns of imperial movement, rather than imposing a defined hierarchy that assumes the centrality of Weiyang Palace, is a more illuminating way to outline the status of different palaces during the Western Han. Information about travel outside of Weiyang to other palaces, however, is scarce, however, being limited almost entirely to brief references in the "Basic Annals" of the emperors in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. Almost all of the recorded trips taken by emperors were to altars and temples. The most

[52] *Hanshu* 27a.1337.
[53] *Shiji* 99.2725; *Hanshu* 43.2130.
[54] The southern Song scholar Cheng Dachang emphasized this fact in *juan* 2 of his *Yong lu* (Cheng Dachang 2002, 24).
[55] The *Shiji* mentions "traveling palaces" but thrice with reference to the Western Han. These references include a description of Huidi traveling to his traveling palaces in the spring (*Shiji* 99.2726) and discussion of Wudi obtaining grapes from western regions and planting them around the traveling palaces for the enjoyment of foreign emissaries (*Shiji* 123.3174). The "Fu on Shanglin Park" by Sima Xiangru also mentions the traveling palaces of the park (though note Kern 2003 argued that the *Hanshu* version of that poem predates the version found in the *Shiji*). The *Hanshu* uses the term much more frequently.

common destinations were within the Guanzhong region, which contained two of the most important temples in the empire, those at Yong 雍 (the temple to the Five Lords 五帝, in use from Gaozu's reign) and Ganquan's altar to Taiyi, in use from 112 BCE. The third common destination was Fenyin 汾陰 in Hedong 河東, a site just to the south of the Fen River, near its confluence with the Yellow River, that contained altars to Houtu 后土 from 113 BCE.

Table 1.1: Records of Imperial Travel from the Basic Annals of the Hanshu[56]

Emperor	*# of trips*	*# of trips in Guan-zhong*	*# of trips to Yong*	*# of visits to Ganquan*	*# of visits to Fenyin/ Houtu*	*# of trips to east*	*# of trips w/ many stops*	*% of years in reign w/ trip*
Gaozu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wendi	10	6	4	2	2	0	1	43%
Jingdi	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	16%
Wudi	39	30	10	16	5	13	21	63%
Zhaodi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Xuandi	9	7	1	5	2	0	0	34%
Yuandi	12	9	3	5	3	0	0	68%
Chengdi	15	11	4	4	4	0	0	43%

As Table 1.1 shows, the *Hanshu* casts Wudi as a very active traveler. Most importantly, in addition to the Guanzhong altars listed above, he visited a range of sites much further afield, including points in the eastern regions of the empire such as the sacred mountain Taishan 泰山 and other sites in the east near the ocean. Meguro Kyōko 目黒杏子 has argued that Wudi's travels to sites in the east and west, particularly his performance of sacrificial rites at Taishan and Ganquan, were done to establish the emperor's control over the entire empire.[57] By Meguro's reckoning, Wudi established a multi-capital system of governance, with Taishan, Ganquan, and Chang'an serving as political and religious centers.[58]

Though the point receives no emphasis from Meguro, her analysis lays bare the fact that by the end of his reign Wudi was simply not often present in Weiyang Palace or any other palace within the city walls of Chang'an.[59] As Table 1.1 shows, Wudi traveled most years that he was on the

[56] The "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* do not record any trips for the last two emperors of the Western Han, Aidi 哀帝 (r. 7-1 BCE) and Pingdi 平帝 (r. 1 BCE-6 CE), so these emperors are not listed here.

[57] Geertz 1977 long ago explained the important role of royal "progresses" in establishing control over territory. For a study of the topic in the Qing Dynasty context, see Chang 2007.

[58] Meguro Kyōko 2011. As Meguro emphasized, Wudi on several occasions held the annual court audience at Ganquan and Taishan. He also "received accounts" (*shou ji* 受記) from the commanderies and kingdoms at Ganquan and even built villas (*di* 邸) there for the kings to use during their visits.

[59] Michael Loewe has long emphasized this point. For example, Loewe 1974, 38-43 noted that during the "witchcraft" conflict between Wudi and his heir apparent in 91 BCE, Wudi had lost control of the city of Chang'an and spent much of the year outside the city walls. Meguro barely touched upon Chang'an, focusing instead on changes at Taishan and Ganquan. She seems to have

throne, and more than half of those trips were multi-destination sojourns that likely lasted for months. The trips only became more frequent as he aged: records from the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" show that in the final 25 years of his reign Wudi embarked on 33 trips outside of the capital (see Appendix 1). In several cases we read that Wudi returned not to Chang'an but to Jianzhang Palace, constructed in 104 BCE and located to the west of Chang'an outside the city walls. He also "received accounts" (*shou ji* 受計) from provincial and kingdom administrators at Taishan and at Ganquan Palace,[60] ordering in 110 BCE and 104 BCE, respectively, villas and other outbuildings for use by visiting dignitaries and Liu household kings.[61] By the end of Wudi's reign, Weiyang Palace was certainly not the "primary" residence of the emperor: Wudi's successor, Zhaodi 昭帝 (r. 87-74 BCE), initially resided in Jianzhang Palace and did not move to Weiyang Palace until 79 BCE.[62] At the same time, our sources give no indication that Weiyang Palace was abandoned or that the number of personnel station in the palace decreased during the reign of Wudi. Emperors after Wudi could thus in theory avail themselves of an array of possible residences always in readiness.

As Table 1.1 shows, however, the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" do not give the impression that later emperors frequently took advantage of all of the palaces at their disposal. They do not record any multi-stop trips for Xuandi, Yuandi, and Chengdi: other than trips to Fenyin, these emperors traveled exclusively within the Guanzhong region. As a survey of the table in Appendix 1 shows, their travels to Yong, Ganquan, and Hedong occurred according to a relatively consistent schedule: ceremonies at Taiyi at Ganquan took place in the first month of the year, while ceremonies at Yong and Hedong were in the third month.[63] The impression, then, is one of limited and circumscribed travel by the emperor to designated cult sites at relatively fixed periods of time.

We cannot assume, however, that the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* are objective records of imperial travels.[64] Rather, the "Basic Annals" subtly but unmistakably underscored Chang'an and Weiyang Palace as the center and ideally a location from which emperors but rarely strayed. In doing so, the "Basic Annals" elevated the status of Weiyang Palace vis-à-vis all other imperial residences. We can discern this perspective of the *Hanshu* by reading its "Basic Annals" in

---

implicitly assumed that Chang'an and Jianzhang Palace were one and the same thing. For example, Meguro did not emphasize that Jianzhang Palace was located outside of Chang'an's city walls, nor did she explore the possibility that Wudi's construction of Jianzhang Palace in 104 BCE, the same year of his famous reform of the calendar, was part of a larger effort to establish entirely new systems of governance. If anything, these facts suggest that Chang'an and Weiyang Palace lost significant status as a result of Wudi's policies.

In addition to the emperor's desire to institute new systems of governance, Michael Loewe's work has illustrated several possible other reasons for Wudi's absence from Chang'an in the latter part of his reign: a) lack of trust between Wudi and his high officials, especially his Chancellors, many of whom in the latter part of Wudi's reign were either executed or committed suicide (Loewe 1974, 66); b) the declining fortunes of Wudi's military ventures, with mounting losses starting from 99 BCE (Loewe 1974, 63); c) growing tensions within Wudi's family, and especially the rising status of the heir, Liu Ju 劉據 (128-91 BCE), who was gaining more supporters (Loewe 1974, 65-6).

[60] E.g., *Hanshu* 6.199.

[61] For the construction of villas at Taishan in 110 BCE, see *Shiji* 28.1398 and *Hanshu* 25a.1236; for Ganquan in 104 BCE, see *Shiji* 28.1402 and *Hanshu* 25b.1245.

[62] *Hanshu* 7.228.

[63] There is one exception: in 17 BCE, Chengdi performed rites to the Five Lords at Yong in the eleventh month. See *Hanshu* 10.322.

[64] This point received no emphasis in Meguro Kyōko 2011.

comparison with both other descriptions of imperial travel from the *Hanshu* "Accounts" (*zhuan* 傳) and from the *Shiji*. First, we know from other parts of the *Hanshu* that the "Basic Annals" provide at best a partial picture of imperial travel. Shanglin Park, the imperial pleasure park to the west of Chang'an, was a regular destination for most Han emperors, though the "Basic Annals" almost never mention it.[65] We know also that emperors even after Wudi continued to travel to Ganquan Palace for purposes other than performing sacrifices to Taiyi. For example, we read in one *Hanshu* "Account" that Chengdi traveled to Ganquan during the reign era Heping 河平 (28-25 BCE),[66] even though the first mention in Chengdi's "Basic Annals" of travel to Ganquan to perform the rites for Taiyi does not come until 13 BCE.[67] Significantly, many of Chengdi's officials traveled with him to Ganquan on this trip; a dispute along the way even had to be resolved at Ganquan Palace after the officials involved submitted accusations to the emperor.[68] In other words, travel to Ganquan or other "traveling palaces" did not mean that the emperor was entirely removed from the decision-making processes of his government, since his officials and clerks appear to have traveled with him.

When we compare the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* with those of the *Shiji*, however, it becomes clear that the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" gave pride of place to the imperial capital and cast Weiyang Palace as the default residence of the emperor. Note, for example, that the "Basic Annals" of Wendi in the *Shiji* records but one trip taken by that emperor to Yong. That passage notes only that Wendi "for the first time visited Yong" (始幸雍) in the fifteenth year of his reign to perform sacrifices to the Five Lords (五帝).[69] For the same visit, meanwhile, the *Hanshu* changes the wording, writing that Wendi "visited Yong and first performed sacrifices to the five lords" (上幸雍，始郊見五帝).[70] The wording change is slight, seemingly negligible, but the difference in emphasis is nonetheless undeniable: for the *Shiji* the visit and the performance of the sacrifices were one and the same event, whereas the *Hanshu* separated the description of travel to Yong from the actual performance of sacrifices there.

The pattern appears even clearer when we compare the "Basic Annals" of Wudi from the *Hanshu* with the descriptions corresponding to the same trips found in the "Treatise on the *Feng* and *Shan*" (*Feng Shan shu* 封禪書) in the *Shiji*.[71] Whereas the latter text focused on the sacrifices that the emperor performed, the former separated out the travel from the sacrifice:

---

[65] Shanglin Park palaces receive mention but thrice in the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals," in each case as a destination for imperial travel. Two of these three exceptions prove the rule that the annals privilege Weiyang Palace, for they describe discrete activities performed by Yuandi (*Hanshu* 9.293) and Chengdi (*Hanshu* 10.327). In both cases, the emperors to Changyang Palace 長楊宮, located in Shanglin Park, to participate in large-scale hunts (see also Chapter 2).

[66] *Hanshu* 84.3412.

[67] *Hanshu* 10.324. Importantly, in the second year of his reign (32 BCE), Chengdi had ordered that the altar to Taizhi be moved to the area south of Chang'an's city walls. His mother ordered the altar moved back to Taizhi in 14 BCE (*Hanshu* 10.323). So, despite the fact that between 32 BCE and 14 BCE no major state sacrifices were performed at Ganquan, Chengdi still visited Ganquan Palace.

[68] The details and significance of this particular episode are explored more fully in Chapter 5.

[69] *Shiji* 10.430.

[70] *Hanshu* 4.127.

[71] The "Treatise on the *Feng* and *Shan*" provided the basis for the *Shiji* "Basic Annals" of Wudi. Most commentators understood these "Basic Annals" to be the work not of Sima Qian but a later author.

From the *Shiji*, "Treatise on the *Feng* and *Shan*"
其明年冬，天子郊雍…於是天子遂東，始立后土祠汾陰脽上…禮畢，天子遂至滎陽而還。過雒陽，下詔曰…
During the winter of the next year, the Son of Heaven offered sacrifices at Yong…then the Son of Heaven traveled east and for the first time erected the shrine to Houtu atop a hill south of the Fen River…When the ritual was completed, the Son of Heaven then went to Xingyang before returning. When he passed by Luoyang, he issued an edict that said…[72]

From the *Hanshu* annals of Wudi:
四年冬十月，行幸雍，祠五畤…行自夏陽，東幸汾陰。十一月甲子，立后土祠於汾陰脽上。禮畢，行幸滎陽。還至洛陽，詔曰…
In the tenth month during the winter of the fourth year, the emperor went on progress to Yong, making offerings at the altar to the Five Lords…His progress continued from Xiayang and went east, traveling to Fenyin. On the day Jiazi in the eleventh month, he set up the shrine at Houtu atop a hill to the south of the Fen River. When the ritual was complete, he went on progress to Xingyang. Returning, he arrived at Luoyang and issued an edict that said…[73]

Significantly, the *Shiji* does not use the binomial "went on progress" (*xing xing* 行幸). The *Hanshu*, however, uses the term frequently, noting with much more precision all of Wudi's movements. The result is a destination-by-destination pairing of imperial movement with ritual action: the emperor goes somewhere, conducts a sacrifice or offering, and then goes elsewhere.

As the *Hanshu* would have it, travel outside of Chang'an is limited and enjoined only for discrete purposes, especially religious purposes. Wudi is of course the major exception. As noted above, the *Hanshu* clearly indicated that Wudi did not even live in Chang'an for most of his reign and performed major government functions, such as court audiences and the "receiving of accounts" (*shou ji*), at other palaces outside of the capital.[74] Here too, however, the evidence suggests that the *Hanshu* exaggerated differences between Wudi and later emperors in order to underscore that Weiyang Palace was the rightful home of the emperor and Wudi's travels were an unwelcome aberration. For example, the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" downplayed the fact that emperors after Wudi could also treat palaces other than Weiyang as centers not just for sacrificial rites but also for political and administrative purposes. For example, in 51 BCE, we know from other descriptions in the *Hanshu* that Xuandi held the annual court audience at Ganquan. The occasion was a spectacular event featuring the participation of a Xiongnu 匈奴 ruler and allies, as well as the set group of kings and nobles (for a much more detailed discussion, see Chapter 4). The *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" of Xuandi, however, say only that the emperor "traveled to Ganquan and offered sacrifices at the altar to Taiyi" (行幸甘泉，郊泰畤), before listing the gifts that the Xiongnu ruler received.[75] Contrast this discrepancy with the *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" of Wudi, which takes care to specifically note instances when Wudi "held court" (*chao* 朝) at Ganquan and Taishan and "received accounts" at both places. Xuandi most certainly did the same when he traveled to Ganquan in 51 BCE, and we

[72] *Shiji* 28.1389.
[73] *Hanshu* 6.183.
[74] For possible reasons for Wudi's absence from Chang'an, see above n.59.
[75] *Hanshu* 8.271.

might logically suppose that Yuandi and Chengdi did as well when they traveled to Ganquan in the first month (the stipulated month for the annual New Year's court audience) to offer sacrifices to Taiyi. The *Hanshu* "Basic Annals" of these later emperors make no note of such political activities at Ganquan, however, leaving the impression that in contrast to Wudi, later emperors not only went to Ganquan rarely, but also went there only for religious purposes.

Our discussion here has shown that the position of Weiyang Palace as the residence of the emperor emerged only over the course of Western Han rule.[76] Certainly Weiyang Palace was one of the most important palaces from the very beginning, and most "traveling palaces" served much less frequently as the emperor's home base. Nonetheless, the evidence assembled above shows that the *Hanshu* went out of its way to distinguish between travel and sacrificial activity (in contrast to the *Shiji*), and to exaggerate the differences in travel and use of palaces between Wudi and other emperors. In the *Hanshu*, then, the emperor is properly linked to the capital and Weiyang Palace: that is where he "should" be. The hierarchy of palaces that privileged Weiyang as the most important palace and residence of the emperor was not just or even necessarily a "fact" on the ground. Rather, the articulation of this hierarchy was bound up with critiques of Wudi and advocacy for reform of a classicist imperial sacrificial program, exemplified by Yi Feng's memorial but also supported by a growing number of advisors and officials at court in the late Western Han.[77] As we have seen here, such reform not only called for changes to imperial ritual practice, but also entailed a newly defined hierarchy of palace space and limitation on imperial movement.

"Forbidden Zones": The Social Articulation of a Privileged Space

Our discussion of archaeological evidence showed internal divisions of palace sectors into administrative and residential areas, as well as highly visible spaces for ceremonies and official government business. It also showed that the growth of these functional divisions started well before Wudi's reign. Perhaps not surprisingly, Yi Feng's memorial does not mention any of the administrative buildings from the northwest quadrant of Weiyang Palace. Rather, he mentions only structures that the emperor himself would have more likely visited: residential structures and buildings used for audiences and other official purposes, these being the most visible "display" architectural sites within and around the towering Front Hall in the center of Weiyang Palace. A few scholars have recently tried to combine archaeological evidence with textual records in order to understand how these residential and official buildings functioned together as political spaces within Weiyang Palace, focusing in particular on the "forbidden zone" (*jin zhong*), usually understood as the area within the "Yellow Gates" (*Huang men* 黃門). This was the area reserved for the emperor and his consorts. Only people with special permission or a specially endowed supernumerary title could gain entry into the zone, which was guarded by a corps of officers that reported to the Director of

[76] We should note that Changle Palace continued to serve as the residence for the emperor's mother throughout the Western Han, serving as an important power center in its own right. The fact that Changle Palace receives less attention than Weiyang Palace in received sources should not be understood as an accurate reflection of Weiyang Palace's comparative prominence. Indeed, it might be profitably explored as an active effort on the part of Western Han courtiers to suppress or argue against the political power of *waiqi* (imperial consort) clans. On the dual centers of power in Chang'an exemplified by these two palaces, see Liu Qingzhu 2004.

[77] See n.50 above for the relevant secondary scholarship on late Western Han reform of the imperial sacrifices and cults.

the Treasury.[78] For example, Aoki Shunsuke 青木俊介 has combed all textual references that identify specific buildings within the forbidden zone and on that basis charted its spatial parameters.[79] Watanabe Masatomo has gone one step further, using Aoki's analysis to produce a map displaying the location of the forbidden zone within Weiyang Palace (see Map 1.4).[80]

Map 1.4: The Forbidden Zone of Weiyang Palace (Following Aoki and Watanabe)

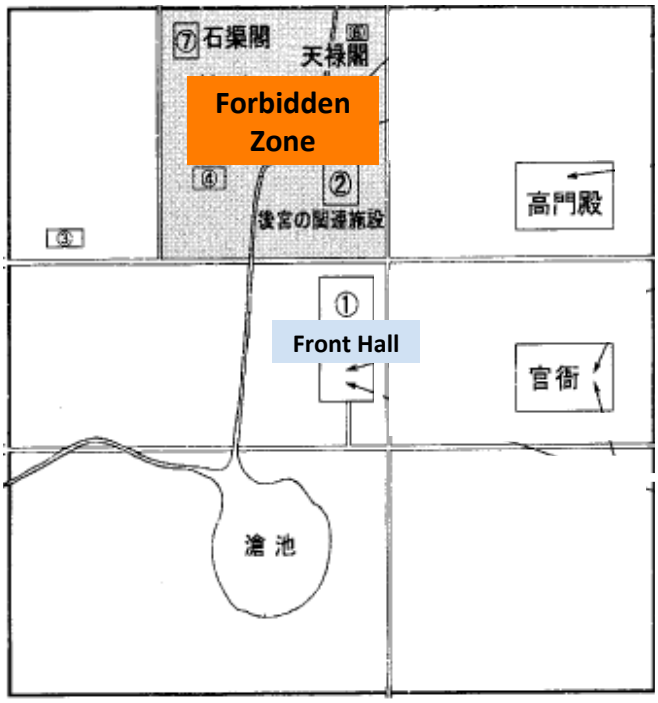


Image after Watanabe Masatomo 2010, 25, with English added

As interesting as their studies are, both Aoki and Watanabe take descriptions of "forbidden" areas as relatively fixed,[81] ignoring the fact that sources mention other "forbidden zones" outside of

[78] The most detailed study of this system based on received texts (without reference to archaeology) is Liu Pak-yuen 1998 (1986). Liu outlined palace security in the Western Han: The walls and grounds of Weiyang Palace were secured by guards under the the Commandant of the Guards (*Weiwei* 衛尉); buildings within the palace were guarded by the Guangluxun 光祿勳; the inner areas of the palace within the Yellow Gates were patrolled by guards under the Treasury.

[79] Aoki Shunsuke 2007.

[80] Watanabe Masatomo 2010.

[81] Aoki tends to take references to "barred" (*jin* 禁) doors as reflecting the spatial boundaries of the "forbidden zone." In fact, we might equally interpret such statements as describing temporary states, when access to a given structure had to be limited for a short time period and for a specific purpose.

Weiyang Palace[82] and to neglect changes in descriptions of "forbidden zones" over the course of the Western Han. Certainly there were always areas of privileged and limited access within all palaces (in China and elsewhere), but some scholars of the ancient world have recently emphasized that such spaces are perhaps best imagined as social groupings of the highest status and not just discrete physical areas.[83] Statements in the *Hanshu* indicate that during the late Western Han the forbidden areas of imperial palaces assumed a social and legal meaning that was not present in early and mid-Western Han. A collective understanding of "forbidden zones" emerged that was not exclusively spatial. Rather, entering "forbidden zones" come to mean gaining access to confidential information and privileged networks of people, as well as privileged spaces within the imperial palaces.

Both the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* contain references to "forbidden zones" (*jin zhong*). Throughout the Western Han only people with supernumerary titles were allowed access to the immediate vicinity of the emperor.[84] The *Hanshu*, however, also uses the term *xing zhong* 省中 (inspection zone).[85] One late Eastern Han commentator stated that the term *xing zhong* only came into use after a taboo was enacted on the term *jin* 禁 in the late Western Han.[86] When we look at instances of *xing zhong* in the *Hanshu*, however, it appears that it was mostly a term that held legal implications. Of the sixteen instances of the term *xing zhong* in the *Hanshu*, seven of them are included in the longer phrase, "leaking speech from the *xing zhong*" (漏泄省中語). Usually, a given person is accused of this action, with harsh penalties if convicted. The following example from the biography of Chen Xian 陳咸 (d. ca. 10 BCE), who served as Assistant to the Imperial Counselor (*Yushi zhongcheng* 御史中承) during the reign of Yuandi, suggests what we might expect: officials with access to sensitive information had to be particularly careful of such charges:

> 時槐里令朱雲殘酷殺不辜，有司舉奏，未下。咸素善雲，雲從刺候，教令上書自訟。於是石顯微伺知之，白奏咸漏泄省中語，下獄掠治，減死，髡為城旦，因廢。

---

[82] For a reference to the *jin zhong* in Shanglin Park, see *Shiji* 101.2740 and *Hanshu* 49.2271.

[83] See, for example, Llewellyn-Jones 2002, esp. 25-30, which presented a fascinating discussion of the imperial harem in Achaemenid Persia. According to Llewellyn-Jones, the root meaning of the word *ha'arem* in Arabic is "taboo" or "forbidden." In Persia, the word referred to a personal area that only people with privileged access could enter: it was "not necessarily a defined space" (30). Llewellyn-Jones suggested that the "harem" of Achaemenid rulers was in reality a space whose perimeters could change but nonetheless served as a private and restricted refuge for the ruler, away from the official business of government. Women of the harem were not necessarily confined to secluded and secure spaces within the palace, with many able to move about the empire and wield substantial political power at court. Llewellyn-Jones's analysis reminds us of the importance of investigating means of access and privileged social groups within the palaces, and not focusing solely on defining the physical spaces of the palace.

[84] See Liu Pak-yuen 1983.

[85] Yan Shigu stated that the term describes areas in which inspection and permission were required in order to gain entry.

[86] The taboo was supposedly in deference to Wang Jin 王禁, the father of Wang Zhengjun 王政君, Yuandi's empress, mother of Chengdi, and aunt of Wang Mang 王莽. The *Hanshu,* however, still includes some references to a *jin zhong* in stories about figures after Empress Yuan, and taboos were not systematically observed in the Han (though the continued use of the term *jin zhong* does not necessarily mean that no taboo existed).

> During this period Zhu Yun, the magistrate of Huaili, cruelly murdered an innocent person. Officials had reported the incident in a memorial, but a decision had not yet been issued. Chen Xian held Zhu Yun in high regard. Zhu Yun made quiet inquiries through Chen regarding his case and was told to submit a statement accepting personal responsibility for the incident. At this point, Shi Xian was able to figure out what was going on through his spies, and he reported in a memorial that Chen Xian had leaked matters from the *xing zhong*. Chen was imprisoned and beaten. His punishment was commuted from death, but he was tattooed, sent to pound earth on the city walls, and stripped of his position.[87]

Shi Xian, an advisor to Yuandi, is described as famously vindictive in accounts from the *Hanshu*; it is hard to judge whether or not Chen Xian suffered a "standard" punishment for leaking the information to Zhu Yun. Nonetheless, the story seems plausible enough: surely an official with access to sensitive legal information such as Chen Xian was supposed to keep such knowledge confidential, and there were likely regulations stipulating punishments for violations of this rule.

The evidence from the *Hanshu*, however, indicates that the information "leaks" from the *xing zhong* were not limited to divulging information about legal cases or official affairs. An accusation against Zhao Ang 趙卬 (fl. ca. 60 BCE), son of the famous and influential general Zhao Chongguo 趙充國 (ca. 137-51 BCE), is a case in point:

> 初，破羌將軍武賢在軍中時與中郎將卬宴語，卬道：「車騎將軍張安世始嘗不快上，上欲誅之，卬家將軍以為安世本持橐簪筆事孝武帝數十年，見謂忠謹，宜全度之。安世用是得免。」
>
> 及充國還言兵事，武賢罷歸故官，深恨，上書告卬泄省中語。卬坐禁止而入至充國莫府司馬中亂屯兵，下吏，自殺。
>
> Early on, Xin Wuxian, the General Who Destroys the Qiang, and Zhao Ang, General of the Palace Gentlemen, had engaged in a casual conversation. Ang said: "Once, Zhang Anshi, the General of Cavalry, displeased the emperor and the emperor wanted to execute him. The general from my household [i.e. Zhao Chongguo, Zhao Ang's father] believed that Anshi, having served Wudi for many years with his writing bag and brush at the ready, should be seen as loyal and circumspect and meriting the fullest consideration. Zhang Anshi as a result of this opinion managed to avoid punishment."
>
> When Zhao Chongguo returned to the capital to advise on military affairs, Xin Wuxian was sent to his old office [as commandery governor], and was thus filled with a deep hatred. He submitted a letter to the throne accusing Zhao Ang of leaking matters pertaining to the *xing zhong*. Zhao Ang was convicted of entering into the inner areas of one of Chongguo's bureaus,[88] wreaking havoc amongst the garrisoned troops. The matter was sent down to officers for investigation. Ang committed suicide.[89]

---

[87] *HS* 66.2900.

[88] Commentators have provided different explanations for *sima zhong* 司馬中. Ying Shao and Yan Shigu both argued that it referred to a gate, entry through which was highly restricted (see *Hanshu* 9.286). Ru Chun 如淳 wrote in rather unclear terms that it referred to a zone within a military encampment (see *Hanshu* 69.2994).

[89] *Hanshu* 69.2994.

As we see here, the crime for which Ang was ultimately convicted was an entirely different crime than the accusation of leaking information from the *xing zhong* submitted by Xin Wuxian. Nonetheless, this story at least suggests that such a charge could be made about those who divulged legal matters *and* those who spread stories about the goings-on in the palace. We hardly need mention that Zhang Anshi and Zhao Chongguo were two of the most influential military men and palace insiders during the reign of Xuandi. Neither man, so far as we know, held one of the supernumerary titles required to gain access to areas of the palace in which the emperor resided or in which sensitive and confidential business was carried out. The fates of Chen Xian and Zhao Ang together indicate that "matters of the *xing zhong*" (省中語) comprised a broad spectrum of information, covering everything from legal affairs to rumors about palace denizens. In other words, the *xing zhong* was not just a spatial area, but a loosely defined social category comprised of the highest status people in the empire.

Indeed, this interaction between privileged space and social status expressed in the term *xing zhong* proved a tantalizing mix for late Western Han residents of Chang'an who were hungry for news of palace doings. At least, this is the conclusion that can be drawn from a famous story about the circumspect Kong Guang 孔光, who during the reign of Chengdi served in various capacities within the palace, including director of the Secretariat (*Shangshu* 尚書). In that capacity, Kong was responsible for handling official documents and edicts from the emperor (many of them no doubt secret):

> 沐日歸休，兄弟妻子燕語，終不及朝省政事。或問光：「溫室省中樹皆何木也？」光嘿不應，更答以它語，其不泄如是。
>
> When Kong Guang went home to rest on his leave days and engage in casual banter with his brothers, wife, and children, he never strayed into topics such as the court or government affairs. Somebody once asked Kong Guang: "What sort of trees are growing within the Heated Chamber of the forbidden zone?" Kong Guang kept quiet and did not respond, answering instead with some other story. His refusal to leak information (*bu xie* 不泄) was of this sort.[90]

The story surely tells us more about the sensibilities of the Chang'an elite in the late Western Han than it relates a "true" story of Kong Guang's respect for confidentiality. By this time, the *xing zhong* had come to symbolize the most privileged spaces and people. Regulations had sprouted up to regulate both, with stories about the *xing zhong* circulating amongst the larger populace, which was eager to understand what the most powerful people at court were doing.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the increasing articulation of Western Han palaces in physical, hierarchical, and metaphorical terms. Xiao He was no doubt correct to emphasize that grand palaces displayed the "authority" (*wei* 威) of the Liu ruling household and the Western Han dynasty. This chapter, however, has advanced two points in order to explore how this authority was created and understood by Western Han subjects. First, architectural authority was created neither whole cloth nor in discrete spurts during the reigns of Gaozu and Wudi. Rather, Western Han emperors constructed their palaces on the pounded earth foundations of Qin-era structures, saving time and

[90] *Hanshu* 81.3354.

money, to be sure, but also capitalizing on the remnant authority embodied in these massive structures. Moreover, material evidence from Weiyang Palace and other Chang'an palaces shows that expansion and differentiation of palace space continued apace as court institutions and the empire as a whole expanded. Projects completed under Gaozu and especially Wudi, so often lionized as a monumental palace builder, were in reality part of a continuous process of palace construction that occurred over the course of the early Western Han.

Second, Western Han subjects came to understand the authority of palaces in metaphorical terms that linked imperial palace space to normative notions of the emperor's proper position and to social groups who enjoyed the highest status and access to power. The record somewhat indicates that emperors in the late Western Han retreated from Wudi's peripatetic ways, so that they usually "resided" (*ju* 居) in Weiyang Palace. However, the *Hanshu* exaggerated the differences between Wudi and his successors, even while casting all imperial progresses as discrete journeys from Chang'an and Weiyang to external "traveling palaces" and especially to altars for the performance of sacrifices. In doing so, the *Hanshu* wrote in normative terms of both Chang'an and Weiyang as the center of the empire and the emperor's rightful location above all other physical spaces. This normative notion attached to Chang'an and Weiyang occurred naturally with a collective understanding of the "forbidden zones" that emerged in the late Western Han. Demonstrated by our discussion of stories from *Hanshu* biographies, the "forbidden zones" maybe have been less a physical space than a social grouping of the highest status that conferred access to privileged information, people, *and* areas of the palace. Even as the emperor came to be understood as stationed within the confines of Weiyang Palace, the inner circle around him and the information that it possessed came to be equated with the most privileged areas of the palace.

In other words, the late Western Han saw a complimentary dynamic: the confinement of the emperor (in theoretical, if not necessarily actual terms) to Weiyang Palace created a tighter link between that structure and the status of the emperor, status that came to be enjoyed by those who had access to the innermost areas of the palace. This brings us back to our opening story of the flood. When Chen Who-Carried-A-Bow breached the walls of Weiyang Palace, she infiltrated not just the physical space of the emperor but also his social surroundings. Physical and social access to high status areas of the palace were tightly interlinked. Indeed, they had become so interchangeable that most people probably did not reflect on the connections they drew between the inner sanctum of the emperor and the inner circle that surrounded him. The end result was that the authority of the palace accrued to a much larger group, not just the emperor alone. Thus palaces symbolized not only imperial power but also the privileges enjoyed by powerful groups of people.

Chapter 2

Park Places:
Imperial Preserves, Hunting, and the Boundaries of the Court

With multiple palaces, temples, and imperial parks at their disposal, Western Han emperors could travel far beyond the walls of Chang'an in imperial splendor. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Weiyang Palace eventually emerged as the most privileged imperial palace. Moreover, late Western Han writings became increasingly concerned with the boundaries of the "forbidden zones," reflecting a growing consciousness of the palace as both a physical and social space of the highest status. However, sources such as the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* clearly ignored some spaces that were the favored destinations of emperors. Even if a collective understanding emerged that cast Weiyang Palace and the "forbidden zones" as the most privileged spaces in the empire, they hardly comprised the limits of imperial court space. What were those limits?

As we will see below, some of the most common destinations for emperors on trips outside the capital were the imperial parks that surrounded Chang'an, particularly Shanglin Park 上林苑 ("The Park of the Imperial Forest"). Despite the frequency of these journeys, there is a curious dearth of Western language scholarship on Shanglin Park and the other imperial parks of Western Han.[1] Those studies that do exist emphasize above all the role that imperial parks played generally both as pleasure grounds for the imperial household and as preserves for the imperial hunt. We have commonly viewed the park, in other words, as an arena for the most rarified and sophisticated forms of imperial consumption and display. As Edward Schafer recognized long ago, this understanding is rooted in Han and post-Han literature written to criticize the park:

> Above all, the moralizing writers of Han liked to use the idea of the imperial park and the activities characteristic of it as symbols of folly and frivolity, metaphors of extravagance and waste.[2]

The writers that Schafer cited who criticized the park did so primarily in the form of the famous "prose poems" or "rhapsodies" (*fu* 賦), which was the most important genre of poetry during the Western and Eastern Han. The "*Fu* on Shanglin Park" (*Shanglin fu* 上林賦) by Sima Xiangru 司馬

---

[1] To my knowledge, there are no detailed studies of Shanglin Park in English. Schafer 1968 provided an overview of "hunting parks and animal enclosures" that focused equally on Shanglin and imperial parks of the Tang 唐 (618-907). The best discussions of Shanglin can be found in David Knechtges's translations and studies of Han and post-Han *fu* (see, e.g. Knechtges 1987). Studies of early imperial parks in Chinese and Japanese are relatively common. Amongst 20th-century scholars, Oka Ōji 岡大路 wrote some of earliest studies, though his focus on royal and imperial parks from pre-imperial to late imperial times necessarily left little space for detailed consideration of parks in early imperial times (see, e.g., Oka Ōji 1988 [1938]). Recent works focusing on institutional and architectural aspects of Shanglin Park, some of them including study of other early imperial parks, include Luo Qingkang 1988; Xu Weimin 1991; Qin Jianming 2004; Xu Weimin 2011, 161-79. For a detailed discussion of Shanglin Park during the Qin, see Li Lingfu 2009. The best discussion of the borders of Shanglin Park is Wang Shejiao 1995.

[2] Schafer 1968, 336.

相如 (179-117 BCE) is the most prominent poem within a whole sub-genre of *fu* on imperial parks and the imperial hunt that were written over the course of the Han and post-Han periods.[3] Though Han authors composed a wide range of *fu* for many different occasions and on many different topics, theorists argued that in ideal terms *fu* should be persuasive poems designed to convince the ruler to act in a morally proper manner and to enact just policies.[4] This moralizing stance is certainly evident in extant *fu* on the parks and hunts, which almost universally condemn the imperial park as an overly luxurious venue for consumption.[5]

Contemporary scholars such as Schafer have shed this moral dimension, but nonetheless replicated the bias towards consumption that is present in so many extant *fu* from the Han. Studies of the parks have dwelled on the role imperial parks played as homes for imperial exotica and as arenas for leisurely activities and spectacles. This focus, however, ignores the fact that the imperial parks in general, and Shanglin Park in particular, became dedicated just as much to production as to consumption and display. As this chapter will argue, the emergence of Shanglin Park as a complex production center, almost industrial in its size and capacity, during the reign of Wudi (r. 141-87 BCE) significantly increased the wealth of the court and marked a significant departure from Qin and early Western Han practices. This wealth, founded as it was on the seizure of land and controversial economic policies, created a growing dilemma for Western Han courtiers, since they more and more came to benefit from and participate in park luxuries. The changing reactions to the park over the course of the Western Han help us to understand an evolving discourse about the proper limits of the court's reach and the identity of courtiers who would criticize the park's expansion.

This chapter charts the transformation of Shanglin Park from a consumptive to productive center. Though scholars have spent considerable energy trying to identify the boundaries of Shanglin Park during the Western Han, fewer have emphasized that the problem of boundaries was not particularly important until the reign of Wudi. Our sources indicate that the First Emperor of Qin held the area south of the Wei River as his own private preserve, a practice that early Western Han rulers appear to have continued. Wudi, however, surveyed the park and established more definitive boundaries, even building a peripheral wall and increasing the number of security personnel. From an ill-defined expanse of farms, orchards, palaces, and temples, Wudi transformed the park into a complex production center. Rather than a pleasure preserve, by mid- and late-Western Han the park is best characterized as a garrisoned compound, filled with treasury storehouses and an imperial mint operated by thousands of convict and slave laborers. In addition, the park became the site of increasingly elaborate forms of entertainment, a center for diplomatic exchanges, and the source for ever-richer arrays of imperial treasures that were doled out as gifts to dignitaries and officials alike. Paradoxically, then, Wudi's walled, secured, and productive park may have allowed a greater number of people to benefit from the park's largesse.

The chapter then charts the evolving reactions of courtiers to these changes from the mid- to late-Western Han. By the reign of Wudi, there had long been a well-developed discourse on royal parks and preserves, since Zhanguo political texts criticized parks as a) excessively luxurious temptations that tended to sway rulers from morally proper governance, and b) oppressive

---

[3] These poems were included in the *Wenxuan* 文選 (compiled ca. 520-530 CE) and translated in Knechtges 1987. As Knechtges's work has illustrated, the *fu* remained one of the most prized forms of poetry until the 5th century CE.

[4] The "Treatise on the Arts and Literature" (*Yiwen zhi* 藝文志) from the *Hanshu* shows the huge number of *fu* written by a range of authors, outlining the theory of *fu* as poetry for moral suasion (*Hanshu* 30.1747-56).

[5] For an exploration of this theme, see Ho 1976.

institutions that appropriated and misused land from the larger populace, forcing them into penury. Whereas criticism in the *Shiji* of Shanglin Park emphasized the first point, late Western Han critiques of the park focused on the latter. As Shanglin's largesse increased and its productive capacities became ever more ingrained in the political and material life of the Western Han court, it became potentially hypocritical for courtiers to criticize the park as a center of consumption. Increasingly strident characterizations of park resources as part of the collective good show courtiers wrestling with a dilemma: how were they to understand, even justify, their active participation in and benefit from an institution that was of dubious moral standing? By casting Shanglin Park as a common resource, courtiers helped alleviate their own consciences. In any case, calls to limit travel to and activities within the park reflect a courtier identity developing amidst their own attempts to define the court in morally acceptable terms.

Consumption to Production: The Institutional Transformation of Shanglin Park

In maintaining imperial parks and hunting preserves, Western Han emperors followed a practice common to royal households of pre-imperial times as well as their Qin predecessors. References in pre-imperial texts indicate that the Qin parks predated imperial unification, having been established perhaps as early as the reign of King Zhao 昭王 (r. 306-251 BCE).[6] Still, whereas so many studies of imperial parks in the Western Han have focused on mapping the boundaries of Shanglin Park, this section emphasizes that prior to the early years of Wudi (i.e., before the 130s BCE), we have almost no evidence to help us establish the borders of the park.[7] Before Wudi's reign it is not clear that "Shanglin" should even be understood as a discrete, bounded space. Rather, the evidence suggests that the park was an ill-defined expanse of farms, hunting grounds, and parklands set aside for the emperor's needs and amusements.

The establishment of defined borders around Shanglin during the reign of Wudi, however, was part of a shift that turned the park into something akin to a garrisoned military compound. This change was due most importantly to Wudi's policies of imperial monopolization of coinage, the establishment of the imperial mint within the borders of Shanglin Park, and the reorganization of the park and coinage under the newly created ministry of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks (*Shuiheng duwei* 水衡都尉). This latter office was charged with managing all imperial parks, procuring materials needed to manufacture coins, and providing security to protect park resources and factories. Prior to Wudi's reign, of course, Shanglin Park and other imperial parks had housed vast farms, orchards, and hunting grounds that supplied the imperial table. The establishment of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was nonetheless a significant change because it asserted standardized imperial management over disparate and defined tracts of land. Indeed, Wudi's creation of the office and its control over the parks helped the imperial court assert direct control over resources and land throughout the empire. At the same time, Wudi's actions provided the basis for elaborate forms of entertainment and gift giving that drew ever more people into Shanglin Park's orbit. The assertion of control and tighter security around Shanglin was thus paradoxically part of a larger change that allowed ever more people to benefit from the largesse of the park.

---

[6] The "Wai chu shuo" (外儲說) chapter of the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 speaks of the "five parks" (*wu yuan* 五苑) of the Qin. See *HFZ* 35/108/30; Xu Weimin 2011, 161. These statements do not mention Shanglin specifically. Royal parks, of course, had long been a perquisite of political power. For a discussion of the origins of the terms *yuan* 苑 and *you* 囿, see Schafer 1963.

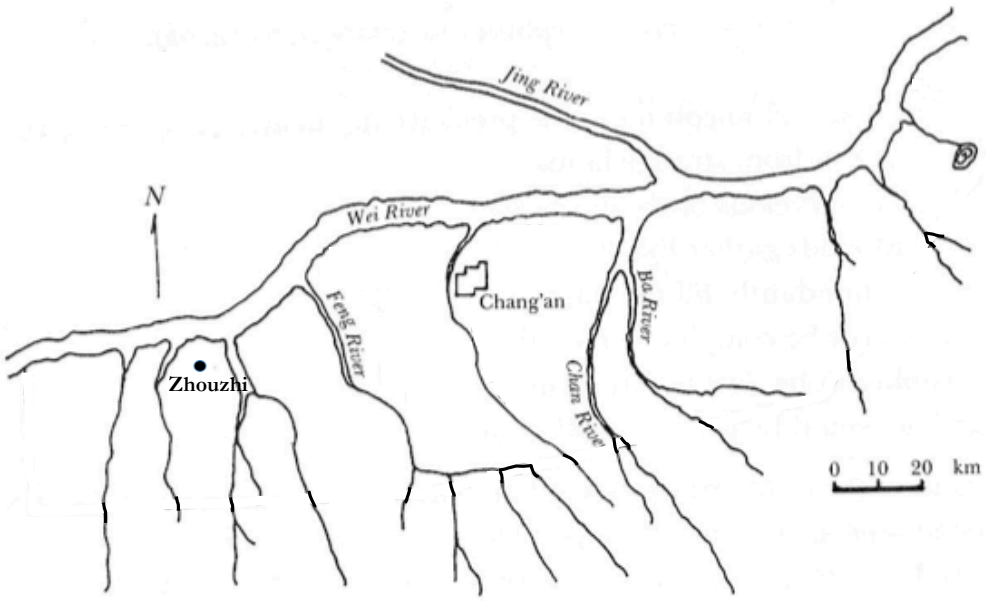
[7] Wang Shejiao 1995 made the same point.

Shanglin Park I: Early Growth and Imperial Consumption

Scholars have advanced several different theories about the boundaries of Shanglin Park (summarized in Table 1). Wang Shejiao 王社教, who outlined all of these theories, has emphasized that the different definitions that we have of the park reflect the fact that our Han and post-Han sources do not agree on its scope.

Table and Map 2.1: Borders of Shanglin Park: Four Main Theories

	Eastern Limit	Southern Limit	Western Limit	Northern Limit	North of Wei River?	Sources and supporters
#1	Ba River 灞水 Chan River 滻水	Southern Mountains 南山	Zhouzhi 盩厔	Huangshan Palace 黃山宮	Yes	Ban Gu 班固 (32-92 CE) *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖 (comp. 3rd cent. CE) Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019-1079) Wu Bolun 武伯綸 (1902-1991) Liu Yunyong 劉運勇
#2	?	?	(East of Zhouzhi)	Wei River 渭水	No	Pan Yue 潘岳 (247-300)
#3	Ba River 灞水 Chan River 滻水	Southern Mountains 南山	Zhouzhi 盩厔 (but not all of Zhouzhi county)	Wei River 渭水	No	Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123-1195)
#4	Ba River 灞水 Chan River 滻水	Southern Mountains 南山	Zhouzhi 盩厔	Ganquan Palace (Chunhua County) 甘泉宮 淳化縣	Yes	Chen Zhi 陳直 (1901-1980) Lin Jianming 林劍鳴 (1935-1997)



Map after Knechtges 1987, 72, with Zhouzhi added by author

As Wang intimated, efforts exerted by scholars to determine the boundaries of the park tend to miss the fact that the first explicit description of the Western Han borders of Shanglin Park comes from the reign of Wudi. The *Hanshu* "Account" of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, an advisor to Wudi (discussed in greater detail below), provides the details.[8] The passage in question describes Wudi's advisors surveying the park's area, setting borders at Acheng 阿城 to the north, Zhouzhi 盩厔 in the west, and Yichun 宜春 in the east. Projecting these borders back prior to the reign of Wudi, as most scholars have done, is thus probably an anachronistic enterprise. And yet, something called Shanglin Park undeniably existed prior to the reign of Wudi. Even if Wang rightfully emphasized discrepancies in the secondary literature, as the table above demonstrates there has been general consensus that Shanglin existed north of the Southern Mountains, a mountain range that hemmed in

[8] Wang Shejiao 1995, 225-6 went so far as to argue that the "Account" of Dongfang Shuo provides the only truly reliable descriptions of the park's boundaries, since descriptions in *fu* by Sima Xiangru and Yang Xiong were necessarily corrupted by their moralistic aims. Ban Gu and descriptions in the *Hanshu* are hardly free of moral judgments, however, and this is certainly true in the particular case of the "Account" of Dongfang Shuo (see below). We probably cannot assume that the boundaries described in the "Account" are reliable, even if it is true that they are less obviously exaggerated compared to descriptions in Western Han *fu*.

the Guanzhong region to the south. Similar agreement is seen on the western and eastern boundaries. Even if these geographic limits remain defined in only the most general terms, the main point of contention amongst students of the park seems to be only whether or not Shanglin extended north of the Wei River.

The question of the Wei River's status as a boundary for the park points us towards the historical evolution of Shanglin and its changing relationship to imperial capital space and the rest of the Guanzhong region. From this perspective, we must begin by emphasizing that the name "Shanglin" can be understood broadly as referring to multiple parks. Possible translations of *Shanglin yuan* 上林苑, after all, include "Parks of the Emperor's Forest" or "Imperial Forests and Parks."[9] "Shanglin" can thus refer to a general space or collection of spaces as much as to a specific, bounded preserve. Indeed, during Qin times it is not at all clear from written sources that Shanglin referred to a specific park with clear boundaries and we have no archaeological evidence that can prove decisively otherwise.[10]

The only received descriptions of Shanglin during the Qin come from the *Shiji*, which emphasized that the park or parks were south of the Wei River, an area with special status and meaning for the First Emperor. The *Shiji* descriptions say nothing about specific park boundaries, but give weight instead to this special status:

> 天下豪富於咸陽十二萬戶。諸廟及章臺，上林皆在渭南
> [The First Emperor] moved powerful and wealthy families to Xianyang, some 120,000 households in all. Numerous temples as well as Zhangtai and the imperial forests (*Shanglin*) were all south of the Wei River. [11]

This passage, from the *Shiji*'s "Basic Annals of the First Emperor" (秦始皇本紀), indicates an important spatial distinction within the capital city of Xianyang. As we learned in Chapter 1, Xianyang lacked a peripheral wall that physically separated it from the surrounding land. The city itself straddled the northern and southern banks of the Wei River. Despite the sprawling layout of the city, the passage indicates that the Wei River marked an important boundary. High status imperial structures such as temples and the Zhang Pavilion, where the First Emperor held court audiences, along with imperial forest and park land, were all located south of the Wei River.

---

[9] Wang Shejiao 1995, 228 is the only scholar I have found who has emphasized this point, though he did so with reference to the Western Han and the office of Superintendent of Waterways and Parks (*Shuiheng duwei* 水衡都尉) (see below). See also the map in Tan Qixiang 1982, 15, which depicts Shanglin encompassing all of the smaller parks south of the Wei River.

[10] Li Lingfu 2009, 46-47, compiled evidence from received texts and excavated seals to argue that the Qin had at least seven, and possibly as many as 12 imperial parks near Xianyang. The relationship between these parks is unknown; they possibly adjoined each other, which might have rendered them spatially indistinguishable. In any case, none of the Qin seals that Li compiled contain the word "Shanglin." All of the seals contain other names that were possibly parks, including Du 杜 and ?原 (can't find ? in Unihan database). And, as Li allowed, Shanglin might have become a "generalized designation" (*tong cheng* 統稱) for all imperial parks south of the Wei River. Note that the *Sanfu huangtu* says that "the Han Shanglin Park was an old park of the Qin" (漢上林苑即秦之舊苑也) (*Sanfu huangtu*, *juan* 4, 270). We cannot conclude from this statement, however, that the Han Shanglin Park was the *Qin* Shanglin Park.

[11] *Shiji* 6.239.

Meanwhile, the *Shiji*'s description suggests that there might have been a division between residential areas and the temples, palaces, and parks south of the Wei River. Indeed, as a later passage from the "Basic Annals of the First Emperor" described it, expansion south of the Wei River was driven by the First Emperor's desire to take advantage of and preserve for himself the historic legacy of the Wei River plain:

> 三十五年，除道，道九原抵雲陽，塹山堙谷，直通之。於是始皇以為咸陽人多，先王之宮廷小，吾聞周文王都豐，武王都鎬，豐鎬之閒，帝王之都也。乃營作朝宮渭南上林苑中。
>
> In his 35th year (212 BCE), the emperor built roads, connecting Jiuyuan to Yunyang. Over gullies and mountains, barriers and valleys, he connected them in a straight line. Thereupon, the First Emperor concluded that the people of Xianyang were too numerous and the palaces and courtyards built by previous kings were two small: "I have heard that King Wen of Zhou established his capital in Feng and King Wu in Hao. The area between Feng and Hao is the capital of august kings."[12] He thereupon constructed courtyards and palaces south of the Wei River in the parks of the imperial forests.[13]

Supposedly, then, the First Emperor held that the area south of the Wei River possessed two advantages that made the region particularly attraction: remnant majesty inherited from its association with the ancient Zhou capitals and comparatively open and undeveloped space that could accommodate the First Emperor's expansionist program. This description from the "Basic Annals of the First Emperor" suggests that the entire region across the Wei River, south of Xianyang, became a vast collection of parks and forests, interspersed with palaces and temples, that was the preserve of the ruler.

Early Western Han emperors continued to operate the parks in this same manner, a fact reflected no less by management of Shanglin Park to provide items for imperial consumption as by continued imperial use of palaces and temples in the area that would become the city of Chang'an (see Chapter 1).[14] This is because Shanglin Park was under the management of the Director of the Treasury (*Shaofu* 少府), an office created during the Qin and continued during the Western Han. It was in charge of imperial finances and procuring food and materials for the imperial household. The responsibilities of several bureaus indicate that they would have been located within the imperial parks themselves. For example, officers such as the Prefect Grand Provisioner (*Taiguan ling* 太官令), the Prefect of the Office for the Selection of Grain (*Daoguan ling* 道官令), and the Prefect of the Bird Shooting Aides (*Zuoyi ling* 左弋令) must have at least stationed subordinate officers within the park in order to secure delicacies for the imperial table.[15] The duties of the Inspector of the Ten

---

[12] My translation renders this line as a statement spoken by the First Emperor, even though the text does not explicitly mark it as such. I see no other way, however, to make the first person "I" (*wu* 吾) coherent.

[13] *Shiji* 6.256.

[14] From this perspective, construction and growth of Western Han Chang'an was essentially a process of converting Qin imperial parks reserved for the emperor into an urban center.

[15] For descriptions of these offices, see *Hanshu* 19a.731-2; Bielenstein 1980, 47. Bielenstein effectively argued that with the establishment of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks (*Shuiheng duwei*) in 115 BCE, which took over administration of the park (see below), all of the agencies that were transferred from the Treasury to the Superintendent "were located in…the Park

Ponds in the Imperial Forests (*Shanglin zhong shi chi jian* 上林中十池監), an officer under the Treasury, are a mystery, but the title is evidence enough that he had duties within the parks. The Treasury also operated workshops and minted coins during the early Western Han, but it is unclear how much of this production occurred within the imperial parks themselves.

The important point is that early Western Han emperors appear to have treated Shanglin in much the same way as their Qin predecessors: as an imperial preserve whose products and pleasures were reserved for the imperial household alone. That is how the park was set up during the reign of the First Emperor, since he specially populated the area with palaces that provided him a refuge from Xianyang, north of the Wei River. The farmland, orchards, lakes, rivers, forests, and other natural riches in Shanglin had tremendous productive capacity, but that capacity appears to have been reserved for the imperial household. This situation changed during the reign of Wudi.

Shanglin Park II: An Institutional Transformation and Productive Explosion

All evidence suggests that the status and purpose of Shanglin Park transformed dramatically during the time of Wudi, as his reign saw a change in the administration of the imperial parks and parallel increase in their productive capacities. The changes went far beyond his survey and delineation of more definite boundaries around the park. Central to this change was the 115 BCE establishment of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks (*Shuiheng duwei* 水衡都尉), which eventually took over control of both Shanglin Park and all imperial parks from the Treasury. Our sources indicate, however, that control over the parks by the Superintendent was a perhaps unintended consequence of major changes in economic and monetary policies.

The *Shiji*'s "Treatise on Balanced Standards" (*Ping zhun shu* 平準書) drew connections between Shanglin and Wudi's economic policies:

> 初，大農筦鹽鐵官布，多，置水衡，欲以主鹽鐵；及楊可告緡錢，上林財物眾，及令水衡主上林。
>
> At first, the Superintendent of Agriculture managed the money accumulated by the salt and iron offices.[16] When the amount of money increased, the emperor established the Superintendent of Waters and Parks, wanting him to supervise the salt and iron offices. When Yang Ke issued accusations regarding [accumulated and undeclared] strings of cash, the money and property belonging to the imperial parks had increased, so the emperor ordered the Superintendent to administer Shanglin Park.[17]

According to Sima Qian, then, at least initially the Superintendent had nothing to do with the park and everything do with managing the new streams of wealth flowing into the imperial coffers. Why did this wealth go to Shanglin and what were the implications for the imperial court? A more

---

of the Supreme Forest." In fact, the Treasury and the Commandant shared but one common officer: the Director of Waters (*Dushui* 都水). Based on office title alone it is thus difficult to establish with any level of certainly which of the Treasury officers were located within Shanglin Park. Moreover, as we will see, since the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks appears to have administered *all* imperial parks, not just Shanglin, we cannot conclude that any one office was necessarily located within the borders of Shanglin Park established during the reign of Wudi.

[16] *Bu* 布 here understood as "currency" or "money." See *HSBZ*, vol. 1, 523b; Swann, 297 n.569.

[17] *Shiji* 30.1436.

detailed look at both of these financial measures allows us to understand how Wudi's establishment of the Superintendent forged institutional links between the imperial parks and the far-flung reaches of the empire.

We must first look at these two new streams of revenue. As the passage notes, the salt and iron offices were initially under the management of the Superintendent of Agriculture after they were established in 119 BCE. The monopolies on salt and iron are the most famous policies of the Western and Eastern Han, and classicists continued to debate them well after the collapse of the Eastern Han.[18] These debates must remain outside of our discussion here, but the details of how the monopolies were administered are important to understanding the institutional transformation of Shanglin Park. After Dongguo Xianyang 東郭咸陽 and Kong Jin 孔僅, themselves private iron manufacturers, convinced Wudi to implement the policy, they traveled around establishing salt and iron offices run by the central government.[19] The former lent out tools and implements to private salt producers, and then purchased the finished product, while the latter appear to have assumed more direct responsibility for iron production.[20]

As Sima Qian noted, the offices accumulated so much money (*bu* 布) that the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was appointed. In "directing" (*zhu* 主) the salt and iron offices, then, the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was probably less concerned with day-to-day management of the offices, which were still under the control of the Superintendent of Agriculture, and more responsible for managing the funds that they generated. It is still unclear, however, precisely what the Superintendent did in this capacity. Yamada Katsuyoshi 山田勝芳 has argued that as the revenue from the monopolies grew, space in the Superintendent of Agriculture's storehouses was quickly used up.[21] The Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was established to manage this flow of money and provide for its safekeeping, managing several storehouses and treasuries built within Shanglin Park.[22] Though Yamada's speculation is difficult to verify, the fact that the Superintendent was put in charge of the imperial parks just a few years after the creation of the office does suggest that he initially had responsibilities within the park itself.

According to Sima Qian, this change in duties for the Superintendent was also related to money, specifically the sudden influx of funds gained after accusations by Yang Ke 楊可 against tax evaders. Since early Western Han, a tax had been levied against merchants to prevent the accumulation of large amounts of property. In 119 BCE, Wudi further refined the tax, specifying amounts to be levied. He also implemented a new policy in which people who exposed merchants hiding property would receive half of the tax amount due in the form of cash, land, or slaves, with

---

[18] In the Western Han, the monopolies were in effect from 119-44 BCE and then from 41 BCE through the Xin Dynasty, when Wang Mang actually expanded the monopoly system to other commodities and services. In the Eastern Han, the monopolies were reinstated twice, from 76-78 CE and from 89-105 CE. Later dynasties revived only the monopoly on salt, leaving iron production in private hands. See Nishijima Sadao 1986, 602-7.

[19] *Shiji* 30.1429/*Hanshu* 24b.1165-6.

[20] See Nishijima Sadao 1986, 602-3.

[21] The Superintendent of Agriculture managed an array of granaries, storehouses, and treasuries. The Prefect of the Imperial Treasury (*Duna ling* 都內令) managed a treasury within the capital "where money, silk, and other valuables were stored" (Bielenstein 1980, 43). See also *Hanshu* 19.731. For a description of cash being collected and stored at the imperial treasury, see *Hanshu* 24b.1158.

[22] Yamada Katsuyoshi 1984, 49. Unfortunately, Yamada did not provide any citations to back up this promising explanation of the duties of the Superintendent.

the other half going to the government.[23] Immediately prior to our passage here we read that Yang Ke, of whom we know next to nothing, went on an accusatory spree that touched many of the wealthy families in the empire. According to Sima Qian, the accusations and subsequent seizure of property destroyed many families and enriched the central government. Under Sima Qian's brush, the actions are hardly more than heavy-handed seizures of property that corrupted the people and enriched the coffers of the government.[24] Moreover, Sima Qian cast the accusations as efforts directed by members of the emperor's inner circle. Even if we must allow for his negative assessment of the tax, however, the details Sima Qian provides about how the tax was procured are helpful in sketching out the role of the Superintendent:

> 楊可告緡徧天下，中家以上大氐皆遇告。杜周治之，獄少反者。乃分遣御史廷尉正監分曹往，（往）即治郡國緡錢，得民財物以億計，奴婢以千萬數，田大縣數百頃，小縣百餘頃，宅亦如之。
>
> Yang Ke's accusations regarding the strings of cash spread throughout all under heaven, so that practically all middle-class families on up suffered accusations. Du Zhou administered these cases. He found very few of those brought to trial innocent. The emperor then separately dispatched imperial clerks and inspectors under the Superintendent of Justice, and they set out in divided teams.[25] They immediately gave judgment on the wealth within the commanderies and kingdoms, obtaining money and property from the people in the amount of hundreds of thousands of cash; slaves counted by the thousands or ten-thousands; and fields in amounts of up to several hundred acres in large counties and over one hundred acres in small counties. Residences likewise were also obtained in this manner.[26]

If this passage can be believed, the accusations submitted by Yang Ke resulted in a windfall for the central government. The important point for us to note here is that the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was not involved in seizing these funds. Rather, just as with the salt and iron monopolies, the Superintendent emerged as the recipient of the funds, the officer who was in charge of managing the new wealth.

The Superintendent of Waterways and Parks, then, was initially in charge of taking in a huge amount of money and number of slaves. Shanglin Park and other imperial preserves appear to have been convenient storage grounds. This influx of wealth transformed the parks from a collection of farms, orchards, palaces, and hunting grounds into guarded garrisons. The treasures of the park, after all, could not be left unsecured, and the Superintendent's office was well-equipped to provide that security. The title alone illustrates his martial responsibilities. Remember that the Superintendent was called the *Shuiheng duwei*, with *duwei* 都尉 (often translated as "Commandant") a

---

[23] *Shiji* 30.1430; Swann 1950, 278-83; Yamada Katsuyoshi 1993, 220-34.

[24] *Shiji* 30.1435.

[25] Commentators have puzzled over this phrase. Yan Shigu 顏師古 rendered *cao* 曹 as *bei* 輩 ("categories" or "teams"). See *HSBZ* 523b. As Swann 295 n.565 pointed out, surely the *Yu shi* 御史 was not the Imperial Counselor (*Yushi dafu* 御史大夫) but rather an inspector appointed on a temporary basis, for which there was ample precedent. Swann's translation held that the Superintendent of Trials (*Ting wei* 廷尉) was actually sent out to the kingdoms and commanderies along with the inspectors, which is possible. Regardless, the main point of the passage is that the emperor organized special groups of men to travel out to the commanderies and provinces.

[26] *Shiji* 30.1435.

military title, and many of the Superintendent's subordinates were in charge of park security. As the "Table of Officers and Ministers" (*Baiguan gongqing biao* 百官公卿表) from the *Hanshu* details, the Prefect of Shanglin Park (*Shanglin ling* 上林令) was in charge of 12 commandants (*wei* 尉) who patrolled the park. The Superintendent also directed two other commandants who guarded the "Forbidden Gardens" (*Jin pu* 禁圃), which presumably produced delicacies for the imperial table. Moreover, we read in several sources that Wudi constructed walls in Shanglin Park.[27] By the end of Wudi's reign, then, at least portions of Shanglin, and perhaps other parks, had become heavily secured compounds.

Instituting an imperial monopoly on coinage in 112 BCE under the management of the Superintendent of Waterways and Park thus served to increase both the economic importance of Shanglin Park and its concomitant security needs. While we do not understand in specific terms why the Superintendent was charged with responsibilities over coinage, the duties entailed in absorbing and securing the material wealth flowing into the imperial parks would have overlapped with his new role as director of the imperial mint. Specific management of the mint, however, was entrusted to three offices subordinate to the Superintendent, the so-called "Three Offices of Shanglin" (*Shanglin san guan* 上林三官). We possess no details about the "Three Offices" beyond a statement from the *Hanshu* "Treatise on Food and Money" (*Shihuo zhi* 食貨志). The description of subordinate officers of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks in the "Treatise on Officials and Ministers" does not include the term. As a result, commentators and contemporary scholars have differed over which of the offices described in the "Treatise on Officials and Ministers" should be understood as the "Three Offices." Certainly the Prefect of Coinage (*Zhongguan ling* 鐘官令) must have been one of these officers; possible candidates for the others include the Prefect for Assorting Copper (*Biantong ling* 辯銅令), the Prefect of Craftsmen (*Jiqiao ling* 技巧令), the Prefect of the Six Stables (*Liujiu ling* 六廐令), and the Prefect of Price Adjustment and Transportation (*Junshu ling* 均輸令).[28] At the same time, it is possible that the "Three Offices" might have had more than just three officials, and some of the offices could have been grouped into one bureau.

The details of which of these officers comprised the "Three Offices" is less important than their significance as institutional links with the rest of the empire. The *Shiji* and *Hanshu* record that responsibility for coinage in particular transformed Shanglin Park into a receiving depot for hard metals that first had to be transported to the park for coin manufacture:

---

[27] Dongfang Shuo noted the walling of Shanglin in his memorial (*Hanshu* 65.2850), and Ban Gu makes a similar statement in his "*Fu* on the Western Capital" (*Xijing fu* 西京賦). It is worth noting here that Dongfang Shuo's biography is absent from the *Shiji*, being a later composition, perhaps by Ban Gu himself (see below). In any case, it is unlikely that a continuous perimeter wall surrounded the entirety of the mammoth Shanglin Park. If it did, the wall could not have been as large or tall as the walls of the imperial palace or the city of Chang'an. More likely, a series of walls protecting discrete structures and areas probably divided up the internal space of the park.

[28] For an overview, see Jiang Baolian and Qin Jianming 2004, 238. Based on Zhang Yan's 張晏 commentary, most scholars have understood the "Three Offices" to be the *Zhongguan*, *Biantong*, and *Junshu*. The scholar Chen Zhi 陳直 has pointed towards a fragment of imprinted clay (*feng ni* 封泥) with the characters *Jiqiao qian cheng* 技巧錢丞 (Currency Assistant to the Prefect of Craftsmen) to argue that the Prefect of Craftsmen was one of the "Three Offices" (Chen Zhi 1979, 117). There is probably no way to resolve this debate, and in any case "three" does not need to necessarily refer to a discrete number, since it can also just meet "several."

> 於是悉禁郡國毋鑄錢，專令上林三官鑄。錢既多，而令天下非三官錢不得行，諸郡國前所鑄錢皆廢銷之，輸入其銅三官。
>
> Thereupon the emperor entirely forbade the commanderies and kingdoms from minting coins and solely endowed the Three Offices of Shanglin Park with the right to mint. Once many coins had been minted, the emperor ordered that all coins not made by the Three Offices were forbidden to circulate, and he ordered coins previously made by the commanderies and kingdoms to be melted down. Their copper was to be transported to the Three Offices.[29]

Shanglin Park was thus the final destination for all of the copper that had previously been used to manufacture coins in other regions of the empire. If transporting this copper to Shanglin Park was perhaps one of the initial responsibilities of the Prefect of Price Adjustment and Transportation,[30] after all the copper from the melted down coins was used up the officer or some other Shanglin official employed at the imperial mint had to search for other sources of copper and transport that metal to the park.[31]

What did this mean for life in Shanglin Park? Certainly we can imagine that the park housed a great many more people working for the government than it did during the early decades of the Western Han. After all, minting all of the coins would have required a huge workforce, probably provided by convict laborers and people fulfilling their *corvée* duties.[32] The archaeological record has started to fill in some of the details about this mass of people. In the mid-1990s, archaeologists began to find a large number of coin molds in a large area surrounding Zhaolun Village 兆倫村 in Hu county, about 30 km to the west of Xi'an. The vast majority of these were molds for *wuzhu* 五株 coins, which textual records indicate began to be cast after Wudi monopolized coinage. Unfortunately, archaeologists have been unable to conduct full-scale excavations of building foundations, nor have they accumulated sufficient evidence to outline the spatial layout and organization of the imperial coinage operation. Magnetic imaging and the large number of tiles,

---

[29] *Shiji* 30.1434-5/*Hanshu* 24b.1169.

[30] It is important to note that the Prefect of Price Adjustment and Transportation (*Jun shu ling*) performed duties different than the officer of the same name under the Superintendent of Agriculture. The latter was responsible for transporting commodities collected as tax from one area of the empire to another in order to stabilize prices. See Bielenstein 1980, 42. Commentators have understood that the *Jun shu ling* under the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was involved with the production of coins. See Swann 1950, 293, n.562.

[31] We do not know how long copper in the form of coins seized from commanderies and kingdoms would have lasted. With the coinage monopoly established in 112 BCE, the copper could conceivably have been used up by the end of Wudi's reign, some twenty-five years later.

[32] A. F. P. Hulsewé has discussed in detail the system of convict labor in Qin and Han times, and noted that at times "hard labor convicts were employed, together with government slaves, in the state foundries and mining offices" (Hulsewé 1986, 533). We cannot be certain of the numbers or proportions of convict laborers, slaves, and *corvée* laborers who worked the Shanglin Park mints. As Yates 2013, 213-14, mentioned, scholars have vigorously debated the status of slaves versus convicts and government bondservants.

eaves tiles (some of them inscribed with the words *Shanglin*) and bricks distributed throughout indicate that the area was covered with a concentration of buildings.[33]

The factories of Shanglin Park also produced more than coins, though it remains difficult to determine the park's full range of manufacturing activities. In his study of the *Hanshu*, Chen Zhi 陳直 mentioned several seals and inscriptions indicating that bronzes and lacquers were both produced in Shanglin Park.[34] These include inscriptions on bronzes indicating a Shanglin Park "provision officer" (*gong* 共), a common title found on bronzes that were used to prepare offerings at imperial temples.[35] Though material evidence is limited, archaeologists have unearthed one cache of dozens of such bronzes, many of which have long inscriptions that include phrases such as "Provisions Bureau of Shanglin" (*Shanglin gong fu* 上林共府).[36] Unfortunately, we cannot provide much further evidence for non-coinage manufacturing, but it seems likely that Shanglin Park produced a variety of products that would have augmented the production of bronzes, textiles, lacquers, and other items produced by the various imperial manufacturing bureaus located in and around Chang'an.[37]

Further spatial expansion of the park followed the coinage monopoly, most prominently in Wudi's construction of Jianzhang Palace. As Wang Shejiao noted, even if this palace complex was not located within the bounds of Shanglin park proper, its southern reaches bled into the northern borders of the park, and thus possibly created a contiguous park space in the area to the west and south of Chang'an.[38] Regardless, the energy that Wudi devoted to construction in and around the imperial parks reflected the increased amount of time that the emperor was spending in them. As discussed in Chapter One, in the last twenty-five years of his reign Wudi spent most of his days outside of Chang'an, usually in Jianzhang Palace, in Ganquan Palace, or in the palaces of Shanglin Park.

Shanglin Park III: Gifts and Consumption Within the Imperial Preserve

The establishment of Shanglin Park as a robust center of production does not mean that consumption and leisure activities in the park ceased. To the contrary, the increased productive capacities of the park allowed consumption and entertainment to increase dramatically. Apparently, Wudi's changes to Shanglin Park spread the goods that came from and were consumed in the preserve to a much wider circle of people beyond the imperial household and its special guests. The most visible and interesting evidence that we have for this growing importance of Shanglin Park is descriptions in the *Hanshu* of various spectacles and entertainment within the park. Perhaps more

---

[33] Jiang Baolian and Qin Jianming 2004, 28-34. The pictures and analysis do not allow the reader to draw any certain conclusions about the nature of the buildings in the area. See p. 145 for an image of the *Shang lin* eaves tile.

[34] Chen Zhi 1979, 115.

[35] For the organization and "economy" of imperial sacrifices, see Sterckx 2009, which included mention of the kitchens that supplied the imperial altars (855).

[36] See Xi'an shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 1963 (p. 68 for this inscription, p. 66 for image of rubbing). See also Barbieri-Low 2000, 76. For a few inscriptions that include the phrase "Bronze tripod of Shanglin" (*Shanglin tong ding* 上林銅鼎), see Rong Geng 1932, no. 9-12.

[37] For an overview of these manufacturing bureaus within the capital region, see Barbieri-Low 2000, 41-77.

[38] Wang Shejiao 1995. These western parks around Jianzhang Palace are perhaps the "Parks of the Western Suburbs" (*Xi jiao yuan* 西郊苑) described in the *Sanfu huangtu* 三輔黃圖. See *SFHT* (*juan* 4), 288.

critically, however, is that members of the imperial court came to depend more and more upon Shanglin for its material existence. This was not just true in terms of official salaries, which of course would have been paid in part with coins minted in the park. Evidence of gifts from the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* also shows that more and more groups of people attached to the court began to receive gifts that, after Wudi's reforms, would have come from Shanglin Park.

Let us first look at descriptions in the *Hanshu* of ceremonies and spectacles within the park that appear to have been performed for large numbers of people. The most famous of these, no doubt, are the *juedi* 角抵, a sporting competition (perhaps wrestling) the details of which remain quite murky.[39] The particulars of the game are less important than the manner of its performance, at least as it is described in the "Basic Annals" of Wudi in the *Hanshu*:

> 三年春，作角抵戲，三百里內皆（來）觀。
> In the spring of the third year, the *juedi* performances were created. Within an area of 300 *li* all came to watch it.[40]

> 夏，京師民觀角抵于上林平樂館。
> In the summer, people from the capital observed the *juedi* from the Pingle Lodge in Shanglin Park.[41]

The *Hanshu* thus casts the *juedi* as performances staged for large audiences; we know nothing about the Pingle Lodge, but the description here at least shows it to have afforded a view of the performance area. Perhaps more instructive about the nature and purpose of the performances are the remarks against the *juedi* from the *Salt and Iron Debates* (*Yan tie lun* 鹽鐵論; compiled ca. 51 BCE):

> 今萬方絕國之君奉贄獻者，懷天子之盛德，而欲觀中國之禮儀，故設明堂、辟雍以示之，揚干戚、昭《雅》、《頌》以風之。今乃〔以〕玩好不用之器、奇蟲不畜之獸、角抵諸戲、炫燿之物陳夸之，殆與周公之待遠方殊〔也〕。
> Presently, rulers from myriad distant realms who come presenting gifts and tribute have embraced the overflowing virtue of the Son of Heaven and desire to observe the rites and ceremonies of the central states. In the past, the Mingtang and Biyong were established to be shown to foreign dignitaries: with shields and axes held high, the tunes of the Ya and Song were displayed to civilize them. Now, however, we use frivolous and useless items, exotic and undomesticated beasts. The various amusements of the *juedi* and dazzling objects are shown to impress them. These practices are doubtless quite different from the way that the Duke of Zhou treated distant lands.[42]

The *xianliang* 賢良 to whom the *Yantie lun* attributed these comments is unabashed in his opposition to the *juedi* and other spectacles used to impress foreign visitors. His bias against them, however, assumes a performance context for the games that conforms with descriptions in Wudi's "Basic Annals."

---

[39] Commentators have disagreed over the meaning of *juedi*. Ying Shao interpreted it as a type of sparring, while Wen Ying 文穎 saw it as a more varied collection of sports and games.
[40] *Hanshu* 6.194.
[41] *Hanshu* 6.198.
[42] *YTL* 7.1/50/12.

The *Yantie lun* passage is doubly significant for the particular audience that it describes: foreign dignitaries. Even if the *xianliang* did not specifically mention Shanglin Park, several other passages from the *Hanshu* describe foreigners being hosted within the park by the emperor. Indeed, a description from the "Account of the Western Regions" (*Xi yu zhuan*) has Xuandi installing more than one hundred officials in Shanglin to be in service of a princess he had taken in from the Wusun 烏孫; in the event, the officials were made to study the Wusun language in Shanglin. At the same time, Xuandi met with Xiongnu ambassadors for a performance:

> 天子自臨平樂觀，會匈奴使者、外國君長大角抵，設樂而遣之。
> The Son of Heaven personally visited Pingle Lodge and convened ambassadors from the Xiongnu. Rulers from foreign realms were treated to a grand *juedi* performance. Amusements were presented to them as they were sent away.[43]

While Shanglin provided a venue for the emperor to dazzle visitors with impressive displays and performances, its manufacturing facilities combined with the imperial factories and workshops throughout the capital provided him with significant resources for gift-giving. Scholars have started to analyze and theorize gifts from the imperial court in a more systematic manner. Mark Edward Lewis, for example, detailed major types of gifts disbursed by the imperial court.[44] These included: a) orders of merit and honor (*jue* 爵); b) pardons of criminal sentences; c) food and clothing; d) land and residences; e) cash; f) gold and precious metals; g) silk. To these I would add horses and chariots, tax exemptions, coffins and land for tombs, and luxury items from imperial workshops.

One of the most common and arguably most important of these gifts were the orders of merit and honor since they endowed recipients with certain privileges. The very highest orders of Liehou 列侯 ("Noble") conferred a heritable noble title and a "nobility" (*guo* 國) comprised of a set number of households from which they were entitled to draw tax income.[45] The *Hanshu* includes tables describing the conferral of these nobilities, and many scholars have studied them in order to outline changes in the nobilities over the course of the Western Han, with Loewe's in-depth analysis now the definitive account.[46] As Loewe showed, most of the nobilities conferred by Gaozu at the beginning of the Western Han as rewards for meritorious military or civil service were not passed on for many generations. Later emperors had the opportunity to confer additional nobilities, with Wudi being by far the most active emperor in this regard, particularly in his conferral of nobilities for military merit. Again, however, few of those nobilities survived, with only thirteen of the original seventy-five merit nobilities surviving into the reign of Zhaodi. The most important trend the Loewe noted over the course of the Western Han was a general decline in the number of nobilities given, which Loewe attributed to a rise in the number of officials: "as more and more trained officials become available, so did the importance of the nobles decline."[47] An alternative interpretation of this trend might be that the comparative scarcity of nobilities by the late Western

---

[43] *Hanshu* 96.3905.
[44] Nylan 2005 and Lewis 2009 approached gifts and exchange from a quite different perspective.
[45] The next order after Liehou, Guanneihou 關內侯 was often accompanied by a gift of land, though this was not always the case.
[46] See Loewe 2004, 279-324. The *Hanshu* tables of nobilities are divided into three categories: a) those held by the sons of Liu household kings; b) those given directly as rewards for meritorious acts; and c) those given for reasons of favoritism, including those given to members of the families of the emperor's consorts. See Loewe 2004, 289.
[47] Loewe 2004, 284.

Han made them all the more desirable and that their significance changed. Nonetheless, Loewe raises a question: if nobilities were less common as gifts, can we find a parallel increase in other gifts?

It is quite difficult to answer this question, even if we set aside the certainty that our extant records of imperial gifts are incomplete. More importantly, other than the nobilities described in their tables, the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* do not systematically record gifts. Rather, the student of imperial gift-giving is confronted with hundreds of instances of "gifts" (*ci* 賜) and conferrals of titles (*feng* 封) in both the "Basic Annals" and the individual "Accounts" (*zhuan* 傳).[48] Descriptions of these gifts do not follow a consistent format, making it difficult to compare changes in gift-giving over the course of the Western Han. I have attempted, however, to chart changes in two types of gifts as described in the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu*: cash and gold. As we already detailed above, money was minted within Shanglin Park, so gifts of cash would necessarily have implicated recipients in the park's riches. Gold was of course not from Shanglin Park but procured from all over the empire, often as tribute. As discussed above, however, Shanglin housed many treasuries. Even if we cannot know how much of the imperial court's gold was stored in Shanglin, its treasuries were part of a larger network of imperial treasuries in the capital region.[49] The gifts of cash and gold allow us to measure changes in the types of gifts and gift recipients, and how those changes were related to consumption and production within the park.

---

[48] Often, the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* describe one instance of gifts from the emperor or empress dowager, but that single instance includes multiple gifts of different types to different individuals or groups. For example, at the beginning of Huidi's reign, we read of no fewer than sixteen defined groups of officers and court attendants (some of them just children) receiving gifts of orders of merit and honor, cash, and gold at different amounts. If we were to treat each one of these specific conferrals of gifts to a specific group of people as *one* gift, and used that approach to analyze all gifts in the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu*, the total number of discrete instances of gifts conferred in the "Annals" alone could approach one thousand.

[49] In a long memorial submitted to Aidi extolling the benefits of restraint and frugality, Wang Jia 王嘉 (d. 2 BCE) praised Yuandi for having "few desires" (*shao yu* 少欲), such that during his reign:

> 都內錢四十萬萬，水衡錢二十五萬萬，少府錢十八萬萬…是時外戚貲千萬者少耳，故少府水衡見錢多也。
>
> …the money stored in the capital treasury (*du na* 都內) totaled 4 billion; in the Treasury of the Superintendent of Waters and Parks, 2.5 billion; in the Imperial Treasury (*shao fu*), 1.8 billion…during this period hardly any *waiqi* members possessed wealth in the amount of 10 million, so money held by the Director of the Treasury (*shao fu*) and the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks was plentiful" (*Hanshu* 86.3494).

The figures are no doubt exaggerated, but the statement nonetheless shows that the treasuries of Shanglin Park and the capital region as a whole could be conceived as a linked system for storing the imperial court's money and wealth. Note that Wang Jia might have referred to the value of all wealth (silk, gold and precious metals, etc) in the treasuries, and not necessarily coins and currency.

On six occasions of conferrals to large status groups, the "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* indicates that gold and cash (and sometimes silk) were given with rank (see, e.g. *Hanshu* 8.245). It is unclear from these entries if everybody received gold and cash or if only higher ranked people received gold and the lower ranked cash. The information in the tables indicates that gold was more likely to be given to officials ranked at 2,000 *shi*, nobles, and other elites.

Table 2.2: Number of Gifts of Gold by Recipients Mentioned in the Hanshu

Ruler	**Recipients**										Total # of gifts
	Specific Named People	Liu kings 諸侯王 & household	Imperial household members	Princesses	Nobles 列侯	Generals 將軍	Chancellor 丞相	Officers at 2,000 *shi* 石	Officers below 2,000 *shi*	Other	
Gaozu	4										4
Huidi						1		1	2		4
Empress Lü		1			1	1	1	1	1		6
Wendi	6										6
Jingdi	1										1
Wudi		1					1	1			3
Zhaodi	2	2	2		2	1	1	1	1		12
Xuandi	14[1]	4			3	2	4	3	2		32
Yuandi	4	2		2	2			1	1		12
Chengdi	10[2]	2		1	2	1	1	2			19
Aidi	2	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		9
Pingdi		1	1		1						3

[1] One of these gifts was to Nimi 泥靡, the ruler (*kunmo* 昆莫) of the Wusun 烏孫, and three were to advisors of Xingmi 星靡, a later *kunmo*.

[2] One of these gifts is mentioned in general terms by Shi Dan 師丹 in a memorial to Chengdi. Shi says he had been fortunate enough to be appointed imperial tutor by Chengdi's father, Yuandi, and given gifts of gold. It is unclear if Shi Dan refers to one gift or several.

Table 2.3: Number of Gifts of Cash by Recipients Mentioned in the Hanshu

Ruler	Named People	Liu kings 諸侯王 & their house-holds	Imperial house-hold	Prin-cesses	Nobles 列侯	Generals 將軍	Chancellor 丞相	Officers at 2,000 *shi* 石	Officers below 2,000 *shi*	Filial, dutiful, diligent 孝弟力田	House-holds moved to mausoleum towns	Other	Total # of gifts
Gaozu	1												1
Huidi								1	3				4
Lü hou		1			1	1	1	1	1				6
Wendi		1	1	?	1	1	1	1	1	1			8
Jingdi									1		1		2
Wudi	2[1]										1	1[2]	4
Zhaodi	5	1	3[3]		2	1	1	1	1		1		16
Xuandi	2	2			1	1	3	3	2			1[4]	15
Yuandi	2				1			1	1			1[5]	6
Chengdi	3		1[3]						1	1		1[4][6]	7
Aidi		1		1	1	1	1	1	1			1[7]	8
Pingdi												1[7]	1

[1] One of these was a gift to cover burial expenses for Su Jia 蘇嘉, described in Li Ling's 李陵 letter to Jia's younger brother, Su Wu 蘇武.
[2] Cash given by Wudi to households he encountered on his travels.
[3] One of these gifts was to the sons of imperial household members (*zong shi zi* 宗室子) only.
[4] This gift of cash was bestowed upon widowers, widows, orphans, and the childless.
[5] This was a gift of cash bestowed upon those with the rank of *wu daifu*.
[6] This gift included cash to *san lao* 三老.
[7] Refers to gifts of cash given to victims of natural disasters.

Even a brief survey of Tables 2.2 and 2.3[50] demonstrate that records in the *Hanshu* indicate a big increase in the frequency of gold and cash gifts between the reigns of Wudi to Zhaodi. Though our tables include references to gifts from all chapters of the *Hanshu*, it is simply not possible to assume that these gifts comprise all of the gifts given by the imperial court and we must always remember that the "Basic Annals" often serve to advance criticisms against the emperors. Nonetheless, the picture that the *Hanshu* provides of increased gifts of gold and cash tallies with several trends that we have already noted, including the decrease in new nobilities given after the reign of Wudi and the establishment late in his reign of the imperial mint and network of treasuries within Shanglin Park, which would have provided the imperial court with more storage capacity for financing its activities and disbursing wealth. Several other trends can be discerned from the tables. For example, though officials of all ranks received cash and gold, officials at the rank 2,000 *shi* or above, that is, the heads of the ministries in the capital and the governors of the commanderies, were more likely to receive gifts of gold. Gold was clearly the higher status gift. Perhaps as a result, and as the tables indicate, emperors were much more likely to give rewards of gold than of cash to specific, named people. These were usually court officials who had performed a meritorious act, received a promotion, or provided good advice, but we can only imagine that many other unnamed people from elite society received similar gifts in the late Western Han. Gifts to larger collectives of elites in the capital were also possible, and our analysis of gifts shows that emperors at times focused their giving specifically within and around the capital. Take, for example, a gift recorded in the "Basic Annals" of Yuandi:

> 賜諸侯王、公主、列侯黃金，中二千石以下至中都官長吏各有差
> The emperor gave gold to the Liu household kings, imperial princesses, and nobles, and officials from fully 2,000 *shi* on down to senior officers in the capital ministries each received a gift according to rank.[51]

Even if we cannot necessarily say that gifts such as these of gold and cash were a replacement for a decline in the disbursal of nobilities after the reign of Wudi (noted above), we can say with confidence that during the late Western Han they were a regular feature of elite life in the capital region. The wealth stored in the imperial treasuries, both in Shanglin Park and elsewhere in the capital region, was commonly doled out to large segments of the elite in the area.

---

[50] The information for both tables was compiled in the following manner. In the "Basic Annals," I searched for all instances of the verb *ci* 賜 ("bestow"), and then looked to see which instances referred to gifts of gold (*jin* 金 or *huangjin* 黃金) and cash (*qian* 錢). Note that the "Basic Annals" refers to amounts of *jin* and *huangjin* using the unit "catty" (*jin* 斤), the standard unit used to measure gold, so I have assumed that both *jin* and *huangjin* refer to gold. Then, I turned to the "Accounts" (*zhuan* 傳) and searched for all instances of *ci jin* 賜金, *ci huangjin* 賜黃金, and *ci qian* 賜錢. I did not include references to such gifts conferred by non-imperial court rulers (e.g. the King of Wu 吳王) nor did I include references to rewards offered to soldiers for military victories. Even if this method is not foolproof and no doubt missed some gifts, it can still

[51] *Hanshu* 9.288 It is unclear if the officials at 2,000 *shi* down to the clerks in the capital ministries received gold or some other type of gift.

Shanglin Park: Boundaries of the Park and Courtiers

By the foregoing account, from around the middle of Wudi's reign on, Shanglin Park became the most important manufacturing and production center for the imperial court, producing and storing a huge amount of wealth that the emperor distributed to foreign dignitaries, members of his family, his favorites, and officials. As Shanglin Park rose in stature, and people in the capital region came ever more to enjoy its benefits, both emperors and officials faced increasingly unavoidable questions: what were the costs associated with this newfound wealth? Where did it come from? Who should benefit from the resources of the park? These questions were not necessarily new. Indeed, many Zhanguo texts offered differing ideas on whether the imperial parks should be reserved exclusively for the benefit of the ruler and his household or opened up in order to enrich the larger populace. Arguably more important in these pre-imperial discussions, however, was the corrupting threat posed by parks and preserves: overindulgence in the luxurious pleasures of parks could lead to the ruler's personal ruin and cause him to completely neglect duties of governance. Even if we can detect both of these discourses in Western Han writings, by late Western Han the question of who should rightfully benefit from the resources of Shanglin had become a driving question in discussions of the park. This shift in emphasis towards the proper beneficiaries of the park was significant not merely because it provided an opportunity to criticize the largess and wastefulness of the court, but also because it provided a means to outline the proper boundaries of the court itself, as well as the courtiers who inhabited it.

Private Pleasures and Public Benefits: Pre-Imperial Debates About Parks and Preserves

Discussion of imperial parks in pre-imperial philosophical and political tracts focused equally on the dangers that parks posed as luxurious venues for consumption *and* as metastasizing private lands that swallowed up the property and wealth of the ruler's subjects. The former criticism fell into a larger discourse of desire, consumption, and pleasure that occupied many would-be advisors to pre-imperial rulers.[52] The *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (comp. ca. 239 BCE), for example, compiled at the pre-unification Qin court, offered one analysis of the role that material pleasures, including preserves and parks, played in the ruler's self-cultivation and moral perfection:

> 昔先聖王之為苑囿園池也，足以觀望勞形而已矣；其為宮室臺榭也，足以辟燥濕而已矣；其為輿馬衣裘也，足以逸身煖骸而已矣；其為飲食酏醴也，足以適味充虛而已矣；其為聲色音樂也，足以安性自娛而已矣。〔此〕五者，聖王之所以養性也，非好儉而惡費也，節乎性也。
>
> In the past, when the sage kings of old constructed estates, parks, gardens, and pools, they did so only so that they could observe to far distances and exercise their bodies. When they constructed palaces, chambers, terraces, and pavilions, they did so only so they could avoid heat and moisture. By riding horses and wearing fur pelts, they meant only to transport their persons and keep their bones warm. Their food and drink, porridge and wine were sufficed only to bring out the taste and satisfy their appetite. Beautiful entertainers and music sufficed only to calm their dispositions and provide some amusement. These five activities were the means by which the sage kings cultivated their characters. It was not that they

[52] Nylan 2001 explored this issue in greater detail. The early Chinese, of course, were not the only people to emphasize the dangers of unchecked consumption. For a comparative and historical discussion of the dangers of luxury as they were perceived in the ancient world, see Adams 2012.

> delighted in being frugal and hated spending money; rather, they were moderating their characters.[53]

The sage kings recognized that the various comforts afforded to them by virtue of their station were necessary, but only insofar as they provided basic comforts, protection from the elements, and a modicum of relaxation and enjoyment. Such frugality was not morally good per se, but rather provided rulers a means to cultivate and refine their dispositions. Failure to adhere to this program of self-cultivation through measured consumption of pleasure would lead the ruler to completely abandon himself to potentially destructive forms of sensual gratification. Even if the passage does not explicitly state the threat that such behavior posed to the state, it is certainly implied.

The argument from the *Lüshi chunqiu* harkened to discussions of the dnagers of pleasure found in the *Xunzi* (compiled 3rd century BCE), which emphasized the threat that unchecked sensual pleasure could pose to the social and political order. Central to this danger, the *Xunzi* argued, was the fact that parks and preserves were part of a larger array of pleasures that everybody desired:

> 重色而衣之，重味而食之，重財物而制之，合天下而君之，飲食甚厚，聲樂甚大，臺謝甚高，園囿甚廣，臣使諸侯，一天下，是又人情之所同欲也，而天子之禮制如是者也。
>
> Human nature shares the following desires: to wear ever more colors, eat ever more flavors, command ever more wealth and property, and unite and rule all under heaven; to enjoy abundant food and drink, grand songs and music, towering terraces and pavilions, broad preserves and parks; to treat the vassal princes as ministers and envoys and bring all under heaven under unified rule. The ritual order of the Son of Heaven applies to desires such as these.[54]

The *Xunzi* emphasizes two points: a) all people desire rarified pleasures, including preserves and parks, and b) the rituals of the Son of Heaven limit and control enjoyment of these pleasures. Of course, the passage suggests that the ritual order allows the Son of Heaven himself to partake of pleasures in a measured and appropriate manner. In a larger sense, however, the passage implies the graded sumptuary regulations that prevented everybody else from enjoying the same level of pleasures as the Son of Heaven. Not everybody can bring all under heaven under their own personal control; nor would it be impossible for everybody to enjoy the same high level of comfort and pleasure offered by such luxuries as parks, terraces, abundant food and drink, and the like. The rituals of the Son of Heaven are necessary in order to prevent the conflict that the chaotic and unconstrained pursuit of pleasure necessarily engenders. In contrast to the *Lüshi chunqiu* passage, then, which focused solely on the pursuit of pleasure as a means for rulers to "temper their character," the *Xunzi* passage here connects the measured pursuit of pleasure by the ruler to the political and social stability of the entire realm.

While both of these passages point, in different ways, to the threat posed by the ruler's enjoyment of parks, preserves, and other pleasures, elsewhere we find more explicit concern with control over the material resources contained in and represented by the parks. A different passage of the *Lüshi chunqiu* makes this argument explicit:

---

[53] "Zhong ji" 重己 chapter, *LSCQ* 1.3/3/27-4/31.

[54] "Wang ba" 王霸 chapter, *XZ* 11/53/13-15.

三代分善不善，故王。今天下彌衰，聖王之道廢絕。世主多盛其歡樂，大其鍾鼓，侈其臺榭苑囿，以奪人財.

The [rulers of the] Three Dynasties distinguished between the good and the bad, so they ruled as true kings. Now, all under heaven is in increasing decline, and the way of the sage kings has been abandoned and cut off. Rulers now increase and enrich their pleasures, enlarge their bell and drum sets, and make their terraces, pavilions, estates, and parks more luxurious. In doing so, they seize the wealth of the people.[55]

This passage pits ruler against the rest of the populace: the pleasure-seeking impulses of the former threaten the property of the latter. Parks, preserves, music, and palaces all come at the expense of those whose wealth was seized in order to fashion such fantastic forms of entertainment and pleasure. Here, the *Lüshi chunqiu* turned away from the issue of personal self-cultivation and towards the material threat posed by over-indulgence in elite pleasures. Taken to an extreme, the passage implies, overly acquisitive pleasure-seeking on the part of the ruler could result in his monopolization of wealth that rightly belonged to his subjects.

Perhaps the fact that parks and preserves were tracts of land made them particularly ripe metaphors for discussions of private vs public benefit. After all, a park reserved for the pleasure of the ruler could preclude agricultural cultivation. In an agrarian society, establishing parks and preserves thus potentially constituted de facto seizures of the livelihoods of many people. In a famous scene comparing the parks of King Wen of Zhou 周文王 and King Xuan of Qi , the *Mengzi* 孟子 (ca. early 3rd century BCE) makes this connection quite clear:

齊宣王問曰：「文王之囿方七十里，有諸？」

孟子對曰：「於傳有之。」

曰：「若是其大乎？」

曰：「民猶以為小也。」

曰：「寡人之囿方四十里，民猶以為大，何也？」

曰：「文王之囿方七十里，芻蕘者往焉，雉（兔）〔兔〕者往焉，與民同之。民以為小，不亦宜乎？臣始至於境，問國之大禁，然後敢入。臣聞郊關之內有囿方四十里，殺其麋鹿者如殺人之罪。則是方四十里為阱於國中。民以為大，不亦宜乎？」

King Xuan of Qi asked: "Was King Wen's preserve truly 70 *li* square?"

Mengzi responded: "The chronicles say so."

King Xuan said: "Was a park like this not large?"

Mengzi said: "The people nevertheless found it small."

King Xuan said: "But my preserve is forty *li* square and the people still find it big. Why is this the case?

Mengzi said: "King Wen's preserve was 70 *li* square, and grass and firewood gatherers went there, as did grouse and rabbit hunters. The king shared it equally with the people. Is it not right that the people found the park small? When I first arrived at the Qi borders I asked about important proscriptions within the realm and only then dared to enter. I hear that within the suburbs and passes there was a preserve some 40 *li* square. To kill a deer within the borders of the preserve was treated the same as committing homicide. This

[55] "Ting yan" 聽言 chapter, *LSCQ* 13.4/66/3-5.

being the case, the preserve is a trap 40 *li* square in the middle of the realm. Is it not right that the people find it large?[56]

The strict control that King Xuan exercised over his imperial preserve contrasts with the much more open and generous policy of King Wen. The physical size of King Wen's park was inconsequential, since he allowed his subjects to enter and equally partake of the park's resources. The park, in other words, was managed for the public benefit of the entire realm as a kind of commons, rather than the private benefit of King Wen himself.

The *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (comp. late 3rd century BCE), however, cast the problem of public versus private benefit in a much different light. Characteristically, the *Han Feizi* emphasized the importance of parks for the strength of the state. As a result, the ruler should tightly manage parks and preserves:

秦大饑，應侯請曰：「五苑之草著：蔬(菜）、橡果、棗栗，足以活民，請發之。」

昭襄王曰：「吾秦法，使民有功而受賞，有罪而受誅。今發五苑之蔬草者，使民有功與無功俱賞也。夫使民有功與無功俱賞者，此亂之道也。夫發五苑而亂，不如棄棗蔬而治。」

There was a great famine in Qin, and the Marquis of Ying submitted a request: "The produce of the five parks includes vegetables, acorns, and chestnuts. They are sufficient to keep the people alive. I ask that you release them."

King Zhaoxiang said: "Our Qin laws allow people to be rewarded when they achieve merit and to be punished when they commit a crime. If I release the produce of the five parks I will be rewarding both people who have achieved merit and those who have not. Allowing people both with and without merit to receive rewards is the way of disorder. Releasing the produce of the five parks and causing disorder cannot compare to setting aside the dates and greens and maintaining order."[57]

In his attitudes towards the employment of royal parks, King Zhaoxiang is an amalgam of the *Mengzi*'s King Xuan of King Wen: he follows the former in maintaining strict personal control over his parks, but then like the latter allows his subjects to benefit from the parks. The main difference, of course, is that unlike King Wen, Zhaoxiang reserves the park's wealth only for those who have committed meritorious acts including, no doubt, military victories beneficial to the state. In doing so, King Zhaoxiang collapses together public and private: the ruler maintains personal control over the park in order to ensure that its produce and wealth are used to promote the benefit and larger goals of the state.

From Luxury to Oppression: Shanglin Park in the Shiji *and* Hanshu

Any survey of written evidence related to imperial parks in the Western Han is haunted by the starkly different treatments given in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*: whereas the former hardly mentions the park or activities within it, the latter includes many memorials and descriptions directly related to the parks. This section does not try to write around or through this contrast, but rather uses it as a basis for understanding an important shift in rhetoric surrounding the park that occurred in the late Western Han. As we will see particularly via a comparison of the "Accounts" in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*

[56] *MZ* 2.2/8/1-9.
[57] *HFZ* 35/108/29-32.

of the courtier Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, this rhetorical shift constituted a move away from the idea seen in the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Xunzi*: namely, that parks and preserves were pleasures that, if enjoyed excessively, could lead to the destruction of the ruler. The *Hanshu* instead cast the park as a seizure of resources that deprived imperial subjects of their livelihoods. In doing so, the *Hanshu* asserted a division between court and park that has important ramifications for both normative notions of the boundaries of the court and the identity of courtiers, a theme that the following chapters of this dissertation will explore in greater detail.

As we have seen, Sima Qian clearly disapproved of the explosion of cash that poured into and out of Shanglin Park, particularly after 115 BCE, when Wudi established the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks. Sima Qian, however, appears to have not been particularly interested in details about the park itself. The *Shiji* offers only occasional references to the park, usually in passing, and often as an indicator of imperial privilege. A good example comes in the "Hereditary House" (*shi jia* 世家) biography of Liu Wu 劉武 (d. ca. 144), King Xiao of Liang 梁孝王, which describes the king's 150 BCE visit to the imperial court:

> 二十九年十月，梁孝王入朝。景帝使使持節乘輿駟馬，迎梁王於關下。既朝，上疏因留。以太后親故，王入則侍景帝同輦，出則同車游獵，射禽獸上林中。梁之侍中、郎、謁者著籍引出入天子殿門，與漢宦官無異。
>
> In the 10th month of his 29th year, King Xiao of Liang entered the capital for a court visit. Jingdi sent an envoy on a four-horse chariot, carrying a tally, to meet the King of Liang at the foot of the pass. After he had completed his court visit, he submitted an official request to stay longer. Because the king enjoyed the favor of the empress dowager, when he entered the palace he rode in attendance with Jingdi in the same cart. When they went out they would ride in the same chariot to go roaming and hunting, shooting game in the imperial forest (*shang lin*). The king's palace attendants, gentlemen, and runners were allowed free entry into and out of the palace gates of the Son of Heaven. They were treated no different than Han officers.[58]

As a favored brother of Jingdi 景帝 (r. 156-141 BCE), and son of Empress Dowager Dou 竇太后, Liu Wu enjoyed joint hunting trips with the emperor in the imperial parks, among many other special privileges. This and other passages in the *Shiji* emphasize the importance of the parks as markers of imperial status and as venues for tours and hunts. For Sima Qian, imperial parks appear above all as specially-reserved spaces for imperial pleasure and relaxation.

When he describes Wudi's expansion of the park, Sima Qin did not deviate from this picture of Shanglin. Indeed, he emphasized the degree of Wudi's ostentation, which he linked to the emperor's own moral abandonment in park pleasures. We see this most obviously in the following passage, describing construction of Kunming Lake (a portion of this passage was quoted above):

> 初，大農筦鹽鐵官布多，置水衡，欲以主鹽鐵；及楊可告緡錢，上林財物眾，及令水衡主上林。上林既充滿，益廣。
>
> 是時越欲與漢用船戰逐，乃大修昆明池，列觀環之。治樓船，高十餘丈，旗幟加其上，甚壯。於是天子感之，乃作柏梁臺，高數十丈。宮室之修，由此日麗。
>
> At first, the Grand Secretary of Agriculture managed the salt and iron offices. As their revenue increased he established the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks, desiring

[58] *Shiji* 58.2084.

> to control the salt and iron monopolies. After Yang Ke's accusations over [undeclared] strings of cash, the money and property of Shanglin increased tremendously. At that point, he ordered the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks to direct Shanglin. Since Shanglin was already full to bursting, it was progressively broadened in size.
>
> During this period, the Yue people were planning to fight the Han and drive them out by using boats. The emperor thus greatly expanded Kunming Lake and arrayed towers in a ring around it. He built tower boats (*lou chuan*), several tens of *zhang* tall with flags and streamers on top. They were incredibly majestic. The Son of Heaven was moved by the sight and so constructed the Boliang Terrace, some several tens of *zhang* tall. Construction of palaces and chambers became ever more opulent from then on.[59]

As the passage would have it, military preparedness against the Yue people was hardly more than a background factor driving expansion of Kunming Lake in particular and Shanglin Park in general. Sima Qian tells us nothing about the weapons and armor installed upon the boats, but rather zooms in on their impressive flags, fluttering atop the boat towers. The sight of the boats and flags inspired Wudi to construct a terrestrial analogue: the beautiful Boliang Terrace, a structure equal in height to the magnificent boats. The ring of towers around the lake and the tower boats floating upon the water formed a scene of almost ecstatic majesty that could not but have "moved" (*gan* 感) Wudi to engage in ever more splendid construction efforts and forms of material display. Under Sima Qian's brush, then, the expansion of Shanglin Park and construction of Kunming Lake fit into the discourse of consumption and personal self-cultivation. As Sima Qian makes clear, Wudi had abandoned all pretense of proper, cultivated consumption. The emperor was no longer constructing parks to "observe far distances and exercise his body" (觀望勞形), which the *Lüshi chunqiu* passage quoted above stated was the purpose of parks for the ancient sage kings. Rather, Wudi had gone beyond the minimum level of consumption necessary to "temper his character" (節乎性) and embarked on a reckless pursuit of opulence.

In his discussion of changes to Shanglin Park during the reign of Wudi, then, Sima Qian did not necessarily emphasize the threat park expansion posed to the general welfare of imperial subjects. He must have been aware that such a threat existed, or at least that criticism of the park on these grounds found precedent in both pre-imperial texts and discussions about the park from the early Western Han. After all, in the biography of Xiao He, Sima recorded a conflict over the imperial parks between the famous Chancellor and Gaozu. In the event, Gaozu returned to Chang'an after putting down a rebellion, backed by provisions from the Guanzhong region that Chancellor Xiao He supplied. When Gaozu arrived, the Chancellor suggested that rather than "harvesting the grain stalks in order to provide feed for the animals [in the park]," the emperor should open up parts of the "imperial forest" (*Shanglin*) for farmers to cultivate, further pointing out that, "empty land [in the park] is abandoned" (*kong di qi* 空地棄).[60] The emperor rejected the suggestion out of hand, angered that the Chancellor had made a request of his "personal park" (*wu yuan* 吾苑). For Sima Qian, however, this particular passage was probably most important not for what it said about who rightfully controlled the park and its productive capacities, but rather for what it said about the rocky relationship between Xiao He and Gaozu.[61] Nevertheless, Xiao He's suggestion, and Gaozu's anger,

---

[59] *Shiji* 30.1436.

[60] *Shiji* 53.2018.

[61] *Ibid.* The exchange over Shanglin Park is embedded in a larger story about Xiao He and his anxiety about Gaozu's opinion of him. An advisor had warned Xiao He that the emperor was growing suspicious of his Chancellor, since Xiao had become quite popular amongst the people of

hinted at the controversy that would continue to dog the imperial parks: to what extent were parklands meant to benefit the larger populace?

We gain some sense of how courtiers after Wudi's reign began to reassess this issue via an examination of treatments of Dongfang Shuo 東方朔, an advisor who came to Wudi's attention in the early days of his reign. Sima Qian wrote nothing about Dongfang in this regard. Our only accounts come from some of Chu Shaosun's 褚少孫 (?104-?30 BCE) additions to the *Shiji*, as well as a separate biography in the *Hanshu*. As Loewe has noted, the extreme paucity of information about Dongfang makes it almost impossible to differentiate fact from fiction. Indeed, Ban Gu, the compiler of the *Hanshu*, was perhaps using the figure of Dongfang as a means to criticize Wudi.[62] This possibility actually makes the figure of Dongfang even more valuable for our own inquiries, since Ban Gu includes a long memorial supposedly written by Dongfang Shuo that criticizes Wudi's plans to expand the imperial park. Sima Qian had his own criticisms of Wudi's management of the park. The stark difference in treatment given to Dongfang points to the changing principles upon which such criticisms were based starting in the late Western Han.

Chu Shaosun's discussion of Dongfang is undeniably brief. Nonetheless, compared to Ban Gu's biography Chu's comments provide a more complex, contradictory, and human picture of the man. According to Chu, Dongfang was from Qi 齊, and his love for ancient writings and classical techniques (*jingshu* 經術) drove him to accumulate a wide range of theories from specialists of all sorts. When he first went to Chang'an, he submitted a huge body of writings to the prefect at the palace gates. Wudi, we read, spent a full two months reading all of the texts, after which he appointed Dongfang Gentleman (*lang* 郎). The emperor frequently called Dongfang in to his presence to tell stories (*tan yu* 談語), which never failed to delight. The emperor often rewarded Dongfang with silk which, we read, he promptly used to help secure a bride from amongst the finer women of Chang'an. Dongfang, however, was never promoted beyond *lang* and his unorthodox behavior earned him a reputation at court as a "wild man" (*kuang ren* 狂人). According to Chu's narrative, when Wudi heard of this appellation he expressed his own willingness to indulge Dongfang's eccentricities. Indeed, when another Gentleman told Dongfang that everybody thought that he was mad, Dongfang replied:

> 如朔等，所謂避世於朝廷閒者也。古之人，乃避世於深山中。
> A person such as myself is somebody who you might say "retreats from the world [by going] within the court." The ancients, by contrast, retreated from the world [by going] deep within the mountains.[63]

In other words, via his own wit and ability to please the emperor, Dongfang had ingeniously carved out a comfortable and secure life for himself at court, one untroubled by court politics or the

---

Guanzhong for instituting fair policies and making reasonable demands of their crops and labor. The advisor suggested that Xiao He engage in some land profiteering in order to smear his own reputation a bit and thus allay Gaozu's fears that support from the Guanzhong populace had transformed Xiao He and his family into a political threat. Xiao He followed the advice, and in his retort to Xiao He regarding the Shanglin Park request Gaozu did not fail to point out Xiao He's hypocrisy in profiting from the people on the one hand and making demands on their behalf from his "personal park" on the other.

[62] Loewe 2000, 73. See also Knechtges 1970-71.

[63] *Shiji* 126.3205.

concerns of gaining a promotion and enhanced status. Under Chu's brush, Dongfang Shuo appeared as a clever courtier who managed to gain the emperor's favor and thus ensure his own security and that of his family. He was certainly no moral paragon.

We gain quite a different impression of Dongfang Shuo in his "Account" in the *Hanshu*, which foregrounds his criticism of Wudi's plans for Shanglin Park, painting Dongfang as above all concerned for the welfare of the people who were to be displaced from the parklands. Ban Gu tells us nothing about Dongfang's collection of texts, but quotes instead a rather cocky memorial that the would-be courtier supposedly submitted to Wudi in response to a call throughout the empire for righteous "men of service" (*shi* 士). Dongfang receives a lowly post, but was never able to gain an audience with the emperor within his inner sanctum (*xingzhong* 省中). He only managed to gain the emperor's confidence, and a higher position as "Gentleman in constant attendance" (*chang shi lang* 常侍郎) after presenting a series of riddles that confounded other courtiers. At this point, Ban Gu's story takes a radical turn, detailing the emperor's trips in disguise through the Guanzhong region and his plans to expand the imperial park. Dongfang submits a memorial in protest, noting first that Heaven disapproved of overly large imperial parks and preserves:

> 今陛下累郎臺，恐其不高也；弋獵之處，恐其不廣也。如天不為變，則三輔之地盡可以為苑，何必盩厔、鄠、杜乎！奢侈越制，天為之變，上林雖小，臣尚以為大也。
> Now your Majesty has accumulated corridors and pavilions, but fears they are not high enough; places for shooting and hunting, but worries they are not broad enough. If Heaven did not take exception, then the entirety of the capital region could be converted into a park. Why would you need to limit it to Zhouzhi, E, and Du? Opulence and extravagance that go beyond proper limits, however, are the things to which Heaven takes exception, so even if Shanglin were small I would still take it to be too large.[64]

In making this argument Dongfang Shuo employs rhetoric similar to what we saw in the *Mengzi* above: the size of the park itself does not necessarily have anything to do with whether or not it is oppressive. It is the ruler's activities within the park and his ambitions in expanding it that count. The fact that Wudi has created a park only to realize his desire for taller terraces, Dongfang argues, means that the park will meet with disapproval from Heaven, since the emperor has "gone beyond proper limits" (*yue zhi* 越制).

Having established the basic premise that the local population should continue to reap the riches found within Shanglin Park, Dongfang concludes his memorial with three reasons why the park should not be fenced off and transformed into the emperor's personal domain:

> 今規以為苑，絕陂池水澤之利，而取民膏腴之地，上乏國家之用，下奪農桑之業，棄成功，就敗事，損耗五穀，是其不可一也。
> 且盛荊棘之林，而長養麋鹿，廣狐兔之苑，大虎狼之虛，又壞人冢墓，發人室廬，令幼弱懷土而思，耆老泣涕而悲，是其不可二也。
> 斥而營之，垣而囿之，騎馳東西，車騖南北，又有深溝大渠，夫一日之樂不足以危無隄之輿，是其不可三也。故務苑囿之大，不恤農時，非所以彊國富人也。
> Now this plan to turn the land into a park cuts off the resources offered by the ponds and marshes and takes over the people's fertile land. At the highest level, it lays waste

[64] *Hanshu* 65.2849.

to state resources, while at the lowest level it seizes agricultural and sericultural enterprises. It abandons the completion of merit, moves toward failure, and damages and wastes the five grains. This is one reason the plan is unworkable.

Moreover, as we thicken the forests with thorny shrubs and raise deer, expand the park for foxes and rabbits, and enlarge the empty areas for tigers and wolves, we also destroy gravesites and dismantle the residences of the people. This will cause the young to long for the land and the old to weep with sadness. This is the second reason the plan is unworkable.

If we empty out the park and set up your encampments, wall it off and enclose it, you will gallop east and west and speed by carriage north and south, but also encounter deep gullies and big ditches. The pleasures offered by one day should not be enough to risk your boundless majesty. This is the third reason the plan is unworkable. Therefore, dedicating yourself to enlarging parks and preserves without attending to the agricultural seasons is not the way to strengthen the realm and enrich the people.[65]

To be sure, in his third criticism Dongfang mentions the dangers that the pleasures of the park posed to the emperor, but the first and second criticisms of the park emphasize that the establishment of the park will squander precious resources that rightfully belonged to the larger populace. Dongfang emphasizes that the park was productive and important land for the people who lived upon it, who should not be deprived of the benefits that the land provided them. Wudi did not heed Dongfang's protests, since he decided to set up the newly surveyed park anyway. Far from Chu Shaosun's clever courtier who managed to avoid worldly entanglements despite maintaining a position at court, with this memorial Ban Gu's Dongfang Shuo emerges as the righteous remonstrant, risking the emperor's disapproval in order to illustrate the dangers of an overly assertive government that damages the livelihoods of imperial subjects. We thus see in the transformation of Dongfang a rhetorical shift in criticism of the park. The problem was not just that imperial parks were a threat to the emperor's own person, or that they reflected his own degenerate addiction to luxury. Rather, expanding imperial parks oppressed the imperial subjects whose support was so crucial to the health of the body politic.

Shanglin Park: The Boundaries of Court and Courtier

Shanglin Park could thus serve as a powerful metaphor for imperial overextension. The subtleties of this critique are more complicated than they might appear, since the very act of overextension or transgression (i.e., Dongfang Shuo's "going beyond limits" *yuezhi* 越制) necessarily implies that there was a proper scope within which the park should remain. What was that scope? What were the boundaries of the park, and how were they related to the boundaries of the court? What would be the relationship between the court and this new park, which in theory at least was completely under the control of the emperor? These questions must have appeared increasingly pressing as emperors continued to engage in extravagant spectacles within the park and dole out the park riches in both salary and material rewards. Criticism of the imperial parks and activities within them, in other words, provided courtiers with the means to draw boundaries around themselves as a discrete group with a distinct role.

We begin our discussion of this issue with a seldom-cited persuasive piece submitted to Wendi by Jia Shan 賈山, a former cavalry commander during the Chu-Han civil war. As with Dongfang Shuo, Jia Shan is entirely absent from the *Shiji*. Ban Gu gives but the barest notes about

[65] *Hanshu* 65.2849-50.

Jia's background, before quoting a long selection of Jia Shan's writing. In the piece, Jia Shan reflected on the Qin's downfall and drew some discomfiting parallels with Wendi's hunting practices, which no doubt took place in the imperial parks.[66] Jia noted that the First Emperor recklessly indulged in every conceivable pleasure, building up palaces and grounds so spectacularly that his successors could not possibly build or improve upon them.[67] Even more dangerous was that the First Emperor's pleasure-seeking behavior, including his obsessive enjoyment of the imperial hunt, which exhausted the resources of the empire and provided conditions for the anti-Qin uprising.

> 秦皇帝以千八百國之民自養，力罷不能勝其役，財盡不能勝其求。一君之身耳，所以自養者馳騁弋獵之娛，天下弗能供也。勞罷者不得休息，飢寒者不得衣食，亡罪而死刑者無所告訴，人與之為怨，家與之為讎，故天下壞也。秦皇帝身在之時，天下已壞矣，而弗自知也。
>
> The First Emperor used all the people of the myriad kingdoms to provide for himself. Their strength was used up, but they were still unable to satisfy his conscription requirements. Their finances became exhausted but they were still unable to meet his demands. He was just one person, but even all under heaven could not offer means to provide for him, let alone the pleasures of his rides and hunts. Exhausted laborers received no rest. The hungry and cold received neither clothing nor food. Innocent people who had been condemned to death had no recourse. People began to hate him and households felt enmity towards him. As a result, all under heaven was spoiled. Indeed, when the First Emperor was alive all under heaven was already spoiled, but he himself did not understand this.[68]

In his complete lack of restraint, Jia Shan argued, the First Emperor sowed the seeds of his own regime's destruction. And, as Jia went on to claim, the reason the First Emperor did not understand that he was undermining his empire was that "within all under heaven nobody dared tell him." (天

---

[66] See *Hanshu* 51.2327. Before quoting Jia Shan's composition, the *Hanshu* says only that Jia "opined on ways of good governance and disorder. He used the example of Qin to make his argument, which he called *Sublime Sayings*" (言治亂之道，借秦為諭，名曰至言). Whether or not the quoted passages from *Sublime Sayings,* which comprise the majority of Jia Shan's biography, constituted the entirety of the text, is unclear, as is the relationship between the *Sublime Sayings* and a text of eight *pian* 篇 entitled *Jia Shan* 賈山 listed in the "Bibliographic Treatise" (*Yiwen* 藝文志) of the *Hanshu* (see *Hanshu* 30.1726). Jia Shan clearly meant for Wendi to read *Sublime Sayings*, at times directly addressing the emperor with the honorific "Your Majesty" (*bixia* 陛下). The *Hanshu*, however, does not characterize the piece as a formal "memorial" (*zou* 奏); it notes only at the end of the biography that Jia Shan "submitted letters in remonstration" (上書諫) against some of Wendi's policies (see below).

[67] Jia Shan's text reads: "By taking the beauty of his palaces and chambers as far as this, the First Emperor made it so that his successors were unable to assemble even a group of huts as they set up residence within what he had built" (為宮室之麗至於此，使其後世曾不得聚廬而託處焉). *Hanshu* 51.2328. Jia's reasoning thus provides an interesting counterpoint to Xiao He's statement, detailed in Chapter 1, that if Gaozu did not built structures of "majesty and beauty" (*zhuang li* 壯麗) then his successors would have no legacy to build upon. For Jia Shan, the example of the Qin demonstrated that this "majesty and beauty" could be taken too far.

[68] *Hanshu* 51.2332.

下莫敢告也). The First Emperor's destructively indulgent imperial hunts should have been subject to criticism from officials. In other words, for Jia Shan the problem with the Qin imperial hunt was twofold: it went unchecked by the emperor himself and uncriticized by the emperor's officials. The echo chamber that was the First Emperor's court, Jia Shan implied, was powerless to prevent the hunt from veering the realm onto a destructive path.

When Jia Shan turned to Wendi, he noted with approbation that the emperor had surrounded himself with worthy officials (not least of all Jia Shan himself!), but that he had still fallen short of effective rule because of his obsession with hunting:

> 今方正之士皆在朝廷矣，又選其賢者使為常侍諸吏，與之馳驅射獵，一日再三出。臣恐朝廷之解弛，百官之墮於事也，諸侯聞之，又必怠於政矣。
> Now righteous men of service are all present at court. You have selected the most worthy among them to be your attending officials and go out galloping and hunting with them. In one day you might go out two or three times. I fear that the court will slacken and officials will fail in their duties. When the regional kings hear of this, they will also become lazy in their governance.[69]

Instead of properly employing his wise counselors, Jia Shan argued, the emperor took them out on superfluous hunts. Jia goes on to praise Wendi's upright behavior and good deeds. For example, he notes that Wendi has reduced the number of horses in his stables by giving them to county couriers and doled out huge amounts of silk to poor peasants. Jia argues, however, that Wendi's indulgence in hunts threatened to negate this work.

For Jia Shan, however, the issue of *who* hunted with Wendi was more important than the fact of hunting itself:

> 今從豪俊之臣，方正之士，直與之日日獵射，擊兔伐狐，以傷大業，絕天下之望，臣竊悼之…古者大臣不媟，故君子不常見其齊嚴之色，肅敬之容。大臣不得與宴游，方正修潔之士不得從射獵，使皆務其方以高其節，則群臣莫敢不正身修行，盡心以稱大禮。
> Now, your heroic ministers and upright men of service go out hunting and shooting with you every day. You shoot rabbits and chase foxes, and in this harm the grand enterprise and cut off the hopes of the empire. I view this with great sadness…
>
> In ancient times, the grand ministers did not act indecently, so the superior man rarely revealed his stern countenance and his strict expression. The grand ministers did not accompany the ruler on his tours and his worthy men of service did not follow along on hunting trips. This allowed all to devote themselves to their jurisdictions and to improve their comportment. In this manner, amongst the multitude of ministers none dared slacken in righting and cultivating his behavior. They expended full effort in conforming with ritual propriety.[70]

Not surprisingly, the end result of this rule by properly cultivated ministers, undistracted by imperial tours and hunts, was a perfectly ordered state. Jia Shan concluded with a recommendation to Wendi:

---

[69] *Hanshu* 51.2335.
[70] *Hanshu* 51.2336.

> 陛下與眾臣宴游，與大臣方正朝廷論議。夫游不失樂，朝不失禮，議不失計，軌事之大者也。
>
> Your majesty should take his minor officers (*zhong chen*) out on his tours and discuss matters at court with his grand ministers and worthy men of service. Your tours will not lose their pleasurableness, your court will not lose its ritual propriety, and debates will not lose their precision. This [scheme] conforms to the import of official business.[71]

In other words, the gravity of imperial affairs required a sufficiently rarified and morally proper group of officials. More importantly for our purposes, these officials were to remain within the court (*chaoting* 朝廷), while only the "minor officers" (*zhong chen* 眾臣) could follow the emperor on his hunts and tours. Jia Shan's recommendation thus posited a twofold divide in personnel and in space: between the "minor officers" and the proper ministers concerned with matters of state, and between the court and the areas where the emperor traveled on imperial hunts (in the imperial parks above all). Worthy and cultivated ministers of state, of course, were to remain at court. For Jia Shan, then, the boundaries of the imperial court, properly conceived as an arena for the conduct of state business, ended where the hunts and tours of the emperor began. In doing so, he cast hunts and tours in the imperial parks as personal ventures of the emperor, activities unrelated to the state.

Jia Shan, of course, was speaking in persuasive, idealized terms; there is no indication that his recommendations caused Wendi or subsequent emperors to reduce their hunting or touring, or to demarcate "common ministers" as separate from high ministers stationed at court. His comments are important, though, when we look at them in the context of criticism of Shanglin Park in Western Han literature. Sima Qian did not include a word about Jia Shan in his *Shiji*; we only read of him in the *Hanshu*. Moreover, the themes that Jia sounded in his memorial surface in several places in the late Western Han. In particular, the question of boundaries between Shanglin Park and the court, and the proper place of the courtier within these two spaces, comes up again and again in some of the most famodus prose poems or "rhapsodies" (*fu* 賦) of the Western and Eastern Han about imperial parks and the imperial hunt, including those by Ban Gu himself.[72] The remainder of the chapter examines the issues raised by Jia Shan with reference to these poems, including the *Fu* on Shanglin Park" (*Shanglin fu* 上林賦) by Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (c. 179-117 BCE); the "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt" (*Yu lie fu*) by Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), and the "*Fu* on the Western Capital" (*Xi jing fu*) by Ban Gu.

---

[71] *Hanshu* 51.2336.

[72] My discussion of these poems relies heavily on the thorough translations by David Knechtges. In addition to Knechtges, many scholars writing in English, including Kenneth Ho 1976, Paul Rouzer 2001, and Jack Chen 2010 have analyzed the poems that I discuss here. Such is the richness of recent scholarship on Han rhapsodies that further analysis of these poems might seem an unneeded re-examination of already familiar territory. Ho and especially Knechtges have established the various ways that these poems have functioned as pieces of moral didacticism. Rouzer and Chen, meanwhile, have moved away from the more traditional emphasis on the didactic value of the rhapsodies in order to explore the complex ways that they served as "representations of imperial power" (Rouzer 2001, 46). Without contesting the value of these readings, I seek here to explore poems about Shanglin Park and the imperial hunt as historically specific reactions to the moral conundrums that imperial largesse based on park resources presented to courtiers. I fully agree with Rouzer that these poems should be seen as "court poetry," but veer towards an exploration of how these poems helped explain for courtiers certain problems posed by Shanglin Park.

The reason we must speak of these poems together is not just merely that they all address the subject of Shanglin Park; rather, the "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt" and "*Fu* on the Western Capital" follow and clearly respond to Sima Xiangru's "*Fu* on Shanglin Park." In particular, all of these poems present descriptions of the imperial hunt within Shanglin that are remarkably similar in format and narrative flow, but nevertheless manage to convey completely different persuasive messages. Because excellent translations of all of these poems already exist, we need not examine the particular language of each poetic narrative, nor examine in detail how those narratives unfold. The following summary of how the poems depict the imperial hunt within Shanglin Park will serve as sufficient background for understanding the rhetorical shifts between the poems:

1) The emperor mounts his chariot and summons his horsemen and hunters;

2) Together, the chariots and riders travel swiftly through the park, flushing out a veritable fantasia of exotic fowl and game;

3) Hunters and archers shoot down or trap an escalating number of animals, the landscape completely trampled in the process;

4) After a climax of killing, the hunt ends and the emperor retires to a hunting lodge, where a great feast is prepared (in the "*Fu* on Shanglin Park," this step is followed by an imperial cosmic journey, a scene that as we will see below is starkly different in the "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt" and the "*Fu* on the Western Capital");

5) The feast is served and entertainment is provided, often including singing, dancing, and boating or other activities upon a lake;

6) When the celebrations reach a crescendo, the emperor's mood completely changes as he realizes the waste and folly of his exuberant hunt, and thus executes a series of measured actions guided by ritual principles.

The key moment in all of these poems is stage six, when the emperor reaches the height of pleasure afforded by the hunt and Shanglin Park. It is at this point that the emperor realizes the extravagance of his ways and completely transforms himself into a morally excellent sage ruler. Rouzer and Chen have presented related readings of this scene of moral transformation in the "*Fu* on Shanglin Park," and I fully agree with both that the scene in the poem is a celebration of imperial power, regardless of the potential message of moral didacticism contained within the emperor's transformation. As Rouzer notes:

> Sima [Xiangru] gestures toward his own loyalty and his celebration of the ruler by figuring in the text certain generally accepted actions that are expected of virtuous rulers. He covers all the bases of imperial virtue: Emperor Wu can have his hunt, his banquet, and his virtuous renunciation afterward. The imperial prestige can only be enhanced by the magnitude of his unselfish gesture.[73]

[73] Rouzer 2001, 47.

By allowing Wudi to experience the twin climaxes of sensual pleasure and moral perfection, Sima Xiangru creates a perfectly balanced celebration of the emperor's power and authority.

It is important to note, however, that in order to successfully endow the emperor with unadulterated agency in determining his own path between the dangers of pleasure and the promise of virtue, Sima Xiangru simultaneously had to drain all agency and power out of the officials and courtiers who surrounded the emperor. In his "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt," Yang Xiong contradicts quite forcefully this idea in his own depiction of the emperor's moral "turn":

乃使文身之技，	Then, the tattooed men are urged to demonstrate their skill,
水格鱗蟲。	In the water, they wrestle scaly reptiles.
凌堅冰，	They cross solid ice,
犯嚴淵，	Breach the inaccessible pool,
探巖排碕，	Exploring rocky shores and twisting banks,
薄索蛟螭，	Deftly searching for dragons and crocodiles.
蹈獖獺，	They step over otters and muskrats,
據黿鼉，	Grab turtles and lizards,
抶靈蠵。	Seize the magic tortoises.
入洞穴，	They enter the grotto;
出蒼梧，	Come out at Cangwu.
乘巨鱗，	They mount huge sea monsters,
騎京魚。	Ride giant whales,
浮彭蠡，	Float over Lake Pengli,
目有虞。	See You Yu.
方椎夜光之流離，	They beat the glossy gems of the night-shine;
剖明月之珠胎，	Cut open the nestled pearl of the bright moon.
鞭洛水之虙妃，	They flog the Fufei of the Luo River,
餉屈原與彭胥。	Offer food to Qu Yuan, Peng, and Xu.
於茲虙鴻生鉅儒，	Thereupon, great teachers and grand scholars,
俄軒冕，	In high carriages and hats,
雜衣裳，	Colored jackets and skirts,
修唐典，	Men who study the Canon of Tang,
匡雅頌，	Rectify with the *Odes* and *Hymns*,
揖讓於前。	Bow ceremoniously at front,
昭光振燿，	Emit a radiance and glow,
蠪舀如神，	Which scatters with magical speed.
仁聲惠於北狄，	Humane voices tame the Northern Di,
武誼動於南鄰。	Martial justice moves the Southern Lin.[74]

[74] Translation follows Knechtges 1976.

Immediately following, Yang Xiong depicts a chorus of "officials and palace attendants, followers of Yang Zhu and Mo Di" (羣公常伯楊朱、墨翟之徒) offering their praise to the emperor and urging him to conduct the imperial *shan* 禪 sacrifice on Mt. Tai 泰山. The emperor, however, modestly rejects their entreaties, renounces the hunt, and embarks on a virtuous campaign of succoring the people and limiting the construction of extravagant palaces. In short, the emperor has "reformed" and rejected the elaborate forms of pleasure offered by Shanglin Park and the hunt.

David Knechtges has convincingly demonstrated that the "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt" is a reassertion of the didactic power of the rhapsody, in a deliberate response to Sima Xiangru's "*Fu* on Shanglin Park," and that the passage translated above is key to the poem's moral message. The critical moment, according to Knechtges, comes from the flogging of Fufei 虙妃, the "legendary daughter of the [legendary] emperor Fuxi 伏羲," and the ritual feeding in the next line of Qu Yuan 屈原, Peng Xian, and Wu Zixu 伍子胥, all officials from the pre-imperial past who died in loyal service to their ruler.[75] As Knechtges continues:

> [Fufei's] beating seems to represent a rejection of hedonistic pastimes. The three martyrs were scholar-officials who died in an attempt to save their rulers from perdition. They represent in the context of the entire poem either a return to the activity of good government, or at least a warning of the consequences of extravagance and dissipation.[76]

If true, then it is also true that the "tattooed man" (*wen shen* 文身) has similarly submitted to the three scholars. After all, in addition to flogging Fufei, he is the one who has actually risked the dangerous pools and banks to collect the tortoises and other delicacies that he will then feed to the three righteous officials. As the ritual supplicant, the "tattooed man" signals his subservience to the trio of officials. This is significant, because the man in Yang Xiong's poem surely symbolizes the coterie of entertainers and acrobats (*ji* 技) that Sima Xiangru depicts in the emperor's post-hunt bacchanal of song and dance.

The feeding of the officials thus marks the hierarchical re-ordering of the emperor's associates, with his learned officials, the "great teachers and grand scholars" (鴻生鉅儒) of the immediately following passage, assuming their rightful place above the emperor's frivolous entertainers. And, of course, this group of scholars is key to the emperor's moral transformation; they "emit a radiance and glow, which scatters at magical speed" (昭光振燿, 蠷爀如神), upon which the foreigners submit to the righteous rule of the Han. In making this distinction between the emperor's entertainers and his scholar officials, Yang Xiong thus echoes the distinction made by Jia Shan between the emperor's "common officials" (*zhong chen* 眾臣) and his "grand officials" (*da chen* 大臣) at court. The makeup of the groups is perhaps not precisely the same, but the spatial division between the two is strikingly similar. This becomes particularly clear at the end of the "*Fu* on the Plume Hunt," after the emperor has completed a series of virtuous acts that aid his subjects:

未皇苑囿之麗，	He has no time for the beauty of his parks and preserves,
遊獵之靡也，	Or the frivolity of tours and hunts.
因回軫還衡，	Thus, he turns his carriage, reverses the yoke.
背阿房，	With back to Epang,

[75] Knechtges 1976, 76.
[76] *Ibid*, 76-77.

反未央。 He returns to Weiyang.

The persuasive power of the scholar-officials has convinced the emperor to physically leave Shanglin, and all of the decadence that it and its main palace, Epang, symbolized, and return to the court, where the righteous work of moral governance can be performed.

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasized the transformation of Shanglin Park into a productive center starting from the mid-Western Han, and explored its ramification on courtier definitions of the spatial and social boundaries of the court. Early Western Han emperors continued to operate the imperial parks south of the Wei River in a manner scarcely different from their Qin predecessors: the parks were an ill-defined collection of preserves filled with palaces, hunting grounds, and farmland that supplied the imperial table. After Wudi's establishment of the Superintendent of Waterways and Parks, however, Shanglin became a growing storehouse of wealth accumulated from around the empire. Eventually, it came to house the imperial mint and other manufacturing centers, many of them operated by convict laborers. They were also placed under the control of the Superintendent, whose army of military commanders controlled park grounds, parts of which must have come to resemble a garrisoned compound and factory. This increased productive capacity of Shanglin Park allowed emperors to host ever more fabulous displays for visiting dignitaries and imperial elites. Moreover, emperors were able to disburse larger amounts of gifts and wealth to a wider range of people; by the late Western Han, these regularly included nobles and high officials from Chang'an.

This change presented a conundrum for members of the court who would criticize the park: how could it be defensible to benefit from Shanglin Park's largesse when the wealth of the park was rooted in the assertion of coercive and potentially violent imperial power? This concern became increasingly pressing over the course of the Western Han, as we have been able to trace via a detailed look at historical and literary texts. Even if Zhanguo literature criticized royal parks equally as potentially corrupting pleasures for the ruler and as assaults on public resources, the Western Han saw a decisive shift towards the latter criticism of the park. As more and more court members benefited from the park, it became necessary to reflect on the nature and basis of Shanglin Park's wealth, since they themselves were beneficiaries of its largesse. This change was seen most prominently in the rhetorical transformation of the figure of Dongfang Shuo, but also in Sima Qian's unalloyed focus on Wudi's overindulgence in the pleasures of the park compared to Ban Gu's criticism of the park as an abrogation of public wealth. Discussions amongst courtiers of Shanglin Park, then, were not just about the park itself: they were also necessarily discussions about their own role and relationship with the park and, by extension, the imperial court. As we saw in the memorial by Jia Shan and the *fu* by Yang Xiong, attempts to cordon off the imperial court from the park itself can be profitably understood as attempts to consolidate an identity as righteous courtier advisors who were themselves separated from the park. In this way, they could help resolve the moral dilemmas posed by the increasing material importance of the park for members of the court.

Chapter 3

Prestige Networks: The Material Culture of Court Funerary Ritual

Late in the reign of Jingdi 景帝 (r. 156-141 BCE), the son of the retired Chancellor, Zhou Yafu 周亞夫 (d. 143 BCE), was engaged in preparations his father's future burial. He had arranged to purchase 500 pairs of armor and shields from an artisan officer (*gong guan* 工官) working in the Imperial Workshop (*Shangfang* 尚方), a bureau located within Weiyang Palace that manufactured items for use at court.[1] The items were to be buried with Zhou Yafu in his tomb. Unfortunately, Zhou's son was negligent in paying a hired hand, who reported that the son had "illicitly purchased" (盜買) items that belonged to the central government (*xian guan* 縣官).[2] He reported the matter and by the time it reached the ears of the emperor, Zhou Yafu himself had become implicated in his son's alleged offense. Jingdi ordered an investigation and eventually the Superintendent of Trials (*Tingwei* 廷尉) joined with the other officers in questioning the former Chancellor. The *Shiji* recorded a version of their interrogation:

> 廷尉責曰：「君侯欲反邪？」
> 亞夫曰：「臣所買器，乃葬器也，何謂反邪？」
> 吏曰：「君侯縱不反地上，即欲反地下耳。」
> The Superintendent of Trials inquired: "My lord, do you desire to rebel?"
> Zhou Yafu said: "The purchased items were merely funerary goods. How can you speak of rebellion?"
> An officer said: "Even if you have not rebelled on earth, you certainly desired to rebel below the earth."[3]

The officials were not concerned that Zhou would launch a posthumous insurrection from the afterworld. Rather, they implied that by breaking regulations governing burial items Zhou had revealed his sinister intent to rebel. According to the *Shiji* account of Zhou Yafu, the officials were merely doing the bidding of Jingdi, who wanted to eliminate the powerful head of the Zhou clan.[4]

---

[1] *Shiji* 57.2079; *Hanshu* 40.2062. The accounts of Zhou Yafu are almost exactly the same in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. The only significant difference is that in the *Shiji* the story is part of a larger "hereditary house" (*shijia* 世家) chapter on the Zhou family. On the *Shangfang*, see *Hanshu* 19a.731; Barbieri-Low 2001, 65-67.

[2] On the different meanings of the term *xianguan*, including discussion of this specific passage, see Loewe 2008, esp. 519-27. Loewe stated that despite commentarial statements, *xianguan* in this passage probably does not refer to the emperor.

[3] *Shiji* 57.2079; *Hanshu* 40.2062.

[4] We cannot understand the details, but the *Shiji* at least implies that Jingdi was of two minds when it came to Zhou Yafu. On the one hand, Yafu was the son of Zhou Bo 周勃, one of Gaozu's most important generals who had eliminated the Lü 呂 clan and installed Jingdi's father, Wendi, on the throne. Moreover, Yafu had acquitted himself spectacularly in the campaigns to suppress the 154 BCE rebellion of the kingdoms. By almost any account, then, Jingdi owed his throne to the efforts of Yafu and his family. On the other hand, Jingdi's mother, the Empress Dowager, and brother, King Xiao of Liang, hated Zhou, not least because during the 154 BCE campaigns the general maintained his army's position in the face of a plea from Jingdi to rush to Liang and aid King Xiao

The statement about rebellion, even if we could accept it as a faithful rendition of what the officials actually said (which we cannot without further corroboration), was part of a larger smear campaign.

Nonetheless, the story must have somehow resonated with Western Han regulations and practices regarding funerals. Precisely what regulation might Zhou Yafu have broken? When people heard this story, what legal or metaphorical links would they have drawn between "rebellion" and Zhou's purchase of funerary goods? Was the problem that any purchase of funerary goods from an imperial workshop was forbidden? Or had the former Chancellor simply bought too many such goods? Is it significant that Zhou Yafu's son procured military armor? The story does tell us, however, that what people buried in their tombs was a matter of regulation, discussion, and potentially of imperial judgment and condemnation.

What were the aims of the imperial household in regulating funerals and the interment of burial goods such as those of Zhou Yafu? The Zhou story would seem to indicate that regulations over funerals served as a tool for the imperial household to assert its power and authority over potential rivals. Such rivals must have included not only powerful officials and nobles such as Zhou Yafu, but also the Liu household kings, many of whom had staged a serious rebellion against the imperial court in 154 BCE. Funerals were a ripe target for imperial regulation, since they were such frequent events on the ritual calendar of the Western Han court: a conservative estimate totals over 1,100 state funerals performed over the course of the Western Han for emperors, members of the imperial family, kings, and nobles.[5] On average, then, the imperial court participated in at least five major state funerals per year over the 215 years of the dynasty, as it doled out privileges and gifts to all of these funerals.

As we will see in Part One below, several reforms of state funeral practice instituted by Jingdi after 154 BCE were designed to assert the imperial court's supremacy through the implementation of graded sumptuary regulations over funerals. Most studies of funerals have focused on whether or not noble and royal funerals accorded with those regulations. Part Two emphasizes, however, that funerals had always been a central component of elite political culture, forming a rich variety of practices and traditions that were never fully controlled or organized according to a uniform system of regulations. When we look closely at the material evidence for Western Han royal funerals, as well as a painting of a funeral procession from tomb three at Mawangdui 馬王堆 (ca. 168 BCE), we can see that royal funerals involved a series of complex practices that allowed members of the imperial and royal courts to affirm their shared, privileged status at the apex of the ruling elite. This remained true even into the late Western Han, despite the fact that by the late period the kingdoms had lost much of their administrative power and

---

when his kingdom came under siege. Zhou Yafu had also proven to be a prickly Chancellor, strenuously objecting to Jingdi's plan to enfeoff both his uncle (at the request of the Empress Dowager) and recently surrendered leaders of the Xiongnu, arguing that bestowal of these titles to people who had performed no meritorious acts for the ruling household would depart from the practices of the dynastic founder, Gaozu. After Zhou retired in 147, Jingdi was apparently all too happy to pursue his vulnerable former Chancellor when the opportunity arose.

[5] The figure was calculated as follows: 24 funerals for emperors and empresses + 310 funerals for Liu household kings and queens + 788 funerals for nobles = 1,122 funerals. The three different totals are taken from the following sources: Loewe 2010a, 228-29 (emperors and empresses); Liu Rui and Liu Tao 2010, 61 (kings and queens); Loewe 2004, 290 (nobles). The estimate is conservative, because it does not account for the burials of the multiple imperial consorts and honored advisors and officials, who were often buried within the mausolea complexes of Western Han emperors.

experienced a major reconfiguration of their political power[6]. As we will see in greater detail in the next chapter, persistent invocations in Western Han writings of the imperial court's ritual superiority vis-à-vis the kingdoms were increasingly disconnected from the realities of court-kingdom relations, and instead became implicated in a different debate about the proper basis for the court's power.

Royal Rebellion and Funerary Ritual

One of the central dramas in the story of Gaozu's rise to the imperial throne was the basic fact that he was not militarily strong enough to subdue his rivals on his own. Rather, he had to rely on a network of allies in order to prevail in the civil war that occurred after the collapse of the Qin in 207 BCE. Gaozu's relative weakness is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that he became "emperor" (*huangdi* 皇帝) only after his allies explicitly voiced their support that he take the title.[7] Understandably, Gaozu's supporters expected rewards for the assistance that they had rendered. The new emperor was thus obliged to reaffirm the titles of "king" (*wang* 王) that ten of his most powerful confederate allies had assumed during the civil war. Collectively, Gaozu ceded some two-thirds of the entire empire over to these kings.[8] He moreover endowed 137 of his closest generals and military officials with the order of "noble" (*che hou* 徹侯).[9] This title was the highest of the twenty "orders of merit and honor" (*jue* 爵) that were regularly conferred by emperors to large swaths of the population over the course of the Western Han.[10] The orders endowed their holders with a range of benefits, and the nobles at the top of the hierarchy of ranks were the most fortunate, since the title was accompanied with a gift of income derived from a set number of households.[11] Though nobles were at times encouraged to reside in these "nobilities" (*guo* 國), and did have some officials under their command, they did not have direct administrative control over the territory that contained the households entrusted to them.

The situation was quite different for the kings. Though their territories were confusingly also called *guo* 國 ("kingdoms"), the kings, in contrast to the nobles they direct administrative and

---

[6] On this issue, see Vankeerberghen (forthcoming).

[7] *Shiji* 8.379; *Hanshu* 1.53. During his reign, Gaozu endowed 137 men with the rank of "noble" (*che hou*), though six of these were given in the year of Gaozu's death, perhaps after he died (Hulsewé 1989, 44).

[8] Loewe 1986, 126.

[9] The order was later changed to *liehou* 列侯 or *tonghou* 通侯. When Xiao He received his nobility as the highest-ranking member of Gaozu's inner circle, his military supporters complained that Xiao He should not have received such a high rank, since he had not performed any acts of military valor. Though Gaozu famously rebuffed their complaints, their stated logic demonstrates that Xiao He was the exception that proved the rule: most of Gaozu's top supporters became nobles after successful military service. See *Shiji* 53.2015; *Hanshu* 39.2008.

[10] See Loewe 1960 and 2010b; Nishijima Sadao 1961. Typically, orders up to the eighth, *gong cheng* 公乘, could be given to commoners and low-level officials throughout the empire, while only higher officers receive an order of *wu daifu* 五大夫. Bestowals or increases of orders from the emperor could be given to either all commoners and all holders of orders, or to the much smaller population of officials and members of the ruling elite who held the order of *wu daifu* or higher. Many works have treated these problems in detail, including Nishijima Sadao 1961; Fukui Shigemasa 1988; and Yan Buke 2009.

[11] See Loewe 2004, 284-85.

political control over their territory. The kings appointed senior officers, collected all taxes, and mustered their own armies. It appears that the kingdoms even employed laws and a justice system that operated independently of the imperial court.[12] The administrative and political autonomy of the kingdoms persisted even after Gaozu managed to eliminate almost all of the rival kings and replace them with his sons and brothers.[13] Some of these Liu-ruled kingdoms were also spectacularly wealthy, further contributing to their independence. This trend was only strengthened by the increasing attenuation of kinship ties between the emperor and the kings, particularly starting from the reign of Wendi (r. 180-157 BCE).[14] During his reign, Wendi was advised by Jia Yi and Chao Cuo to check the power of the kings, and the emperor took advantage of every opportunity to reduce the size of kingdoms. Moreover, the son and heir of the king of Wu 吳 (Liu Pi 劉濞; r. 195-154 BCE) died in Chang'an at the hands of Wendi's son, the future Jingdi 景帝 (r. 156-141 BCE), which according to the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* created a deep rift between the imperial court and the royal court of Wu. When Jingdi, acting on the advice of Chao Cuo, moved to further reduce the kingdoms, the king of Wu launched a rebellion of seven allied kingdoms against the Han court.

In the decade after he managed to suppress the rebellion, Jingdi eliminated several kings and kingdoms, appointed his sons in their place, and instituted several measures designed to strip the kingdoms of their power. Most scholars have focused on changes to the political and administrative structure of the kingdoms, especially a new rule by which the imperial court would appoint all top kingdom officers, which had previously been appointed by the kings. New rules for royal funerals employed in the wake of the 154 BCE rebellion have received less attention, despite the frequency and centrality of funerals in the political culture of the ruling elite (mentioned above). According to the "Basic Annals" of Jingdi in the *Hanshu*, these rules were first promulgated in 148 BCE and established a new process for disbursing funerary goods and managing funerals. The full description of the changes is translated below:

> 二年春二月，令諸侯王薨、列侯初封及之國，大鴻臚奏謚、誄、策。列侯薨及諸侯太傅初除之官，大行奏謚、誄、策。
>
> 王薨，遣光祿大夫弔襚祠賵，視喪事，因立嗣子。列侯薨，遣大中大夫弔祠，視喪事，因立嗣。其（薨）葬，國得發民輓喪，穿復土，治墳無過三百人畢事。
>
> In the second month of the spring in second year [of Jingdi's middle reign period], an order required that upon the death of a king or the initial enfeoffment of a noble and his establishment in his nobility, the Grand Herald (*Da Honglu*) would present the posthumous names, funerary dirges, and orders of enfeoffment. Upon the death of a noble or the initial appointment of a Grand Tutor of a king, the Taixing[15] would present the posthumous names, funerary dirges, and orders of appointment.

---

[12] Some surveys of Western Han politics have recently begun to emphasize that during the early Western Han the kingdoms used legal statutes that were separate from those used by the Han. See, e.g., Chen Suzhen 2011, 83-94. Some of the statutes included in the cache from Zhangjiashan demonstrate that the central government of the early Western Han was intensely concerned with policing the borders between areas controlled by the Han and the kingdoms to the east.

[13] The one exception was the southern kingdom of Changsha 長沙, ruled by Wu Rui 吳芮. Changsha was not ruled by a Liu household member until the year 157 BCE, when the last of Wu Rui's line died without an heir.

[14] Loewe 1986, 140.

[15] For a more detailed discussion of the Taixing, see Chapter 4.

> Upon the death of a king, [the imperial court] was to dispatch a Grand Counselor of the Palace (*Tai zhong daifu* 大中大夫) to express condolences, donate funerary robes, offerings,[16] and chariots, and oversee the funeral arrangements. During the trip he was also to install the noble's heir. For the burial, the nobility[17] was permitted to send people to conduct the cart carrying the coffin. As for digging out and replacing the earth and constructing the tomb, no more than 300 people could be employed to complete the task.[18]

We explore the Grand Herald mentioned in this passage and the question of appointments in more detail in Chapter 4. For now, we note only that the evidence suggests that the emperor or his highest officers issued the formal appointments of the kings in the ancestral temple. The 148 BCE changes as described in the *Hanshu* thus established a hierarchy of ritual action governing the composition and conferral of appointments, posthumous names, and funerary dirges, as depicted in the following table:[19]

Table 3.?: Post-148 BCE Division of Responsibilities over Appointments, Posthumous Names, Dirges, and Funerary Arrangements

Action / Position	Appoint-ments	Posthumous Names	Funerary Dirges	Funeral Arrangements
Kings	Imperial Counselor or the emperor	Director of Guests	Director of Guests	Counselor of the Palace
Nobles	Director of Guests	*Taixing*	*Taixing*	Grand Counselor of the Palace
Royal Tutors	*Taixing*	N/A ?	N/A?	N/A?

The 148 BCE orders established a hierarchy of funerary privileges on axes of rank and material goods. Kings received posthumous names and dirges from the Director of Guests, while nobles received them from the *Taixing*. Funeral arrangements for kings, meanwhile, were directed by Counselors of the Palace, ranked at equivalent (*bi* 比) to 2,000 bushels, while the lower-ranked

[16] Ying Shao 應邵 glossed *ci* 祠 here as offerings of "food and drink" (飲食).

[17] The same word translated as "nobility," *guo* 國, of course also refers to the "kingdoms" administered by the kings. I think here it probably only refers to the nobilities, since the main thrust of this passage is to establish distinctions between kings and nobles via sumptuary regulations governing funerals.

[18] *Hanshu* 5.145.

[19] Complicated problems and discrepancies between the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* mar our understanding of the relationship between the Grand Herald and the *Taixing*, particularly during Jingdi's reign. At least this *Hanshu* passage, however, clearly places the *Taixing* below the Grand Herald in the official hierarchy. See Chapter 4 for more details.

Grand Counselor of the Palace presided over the noble funerals.[20] In terms of material goods, the nobles were to receive only offerings, while kings had the added privilege of receiving robes and chariots. Meanwhile, explicit rules limited the number of people who could be hired to construct the tomb of the nobles, while the kings had no such limits. It is tempting, of course, to interpret these sumptuary regulations in light of ongoing efforts by Jingdi to reduce the autonomy and power of the kingdoms after the rebellion of 154 BCE. By fixing the status of the kingdoms within a hierarchy of funeral privileges that included the immediately subordinate nobles, the emperor asserted the imperial court's supremacy over his potential rivals.

It is important to note, however, that the 148 BCE orders also divided the ritual duties over funerals in spatial terms: the orders explicitly state that the Counselors of the Palace and the Grand Counselors of the Palace would be "dispatched" (遣) to the kingdoms and nobilities to actually oversee the funeral and donate the goods. No such directions are given for the Director of Guests and the *Taixing*, who presumably could have drawn up the posthumous names and dirges at the imperial court and would not necessarily have traveled to the kingdoms and nobilities themselves for the funeral. This distinction is significant because of the nature of the Counselors (*Daifu* 大夫) who would have served as the emperor's funerary ambassadors. Unlike other officials, no set number of Counselors served at the imperial court, nor did Counselors possess the ribbons and seals of office indicating that they held administrative responsibilities. As Liao Boyuan and Giele have demonstrated, during the Western and Eastern Han dynasties Counselors comprised a group of favored advisors, respected persuaders and experts, and elderly semi-retired officials who desired a reduction in their official responsibilities.[21] The imperial court thus could choose funeral envoys from amongst a favored and distinguished group. If a particularly famous or trusted imperial Counselor was sent to participate in a funeral, this might have been interpreted as an indication of intimate ties between the imperial court and the deceased kingdom and not necessarily the imposition of a hierarchy of rank and power.

In this light, we should note that the 148 BCE orders do not spell out in specific terms what sorts of clothing, offerings, and chariots the imperial court would donate to kings and nobles, nor do they indicate amounts. Surely other documents spelled out these regulations in greater detail,[22] but the imperial court nonetheless probably had some flexibility in this regard. In other words, a close reading of the *Hanshu* passage suggests that regulations governing funeral ceremonies and the donation of funerary goods reflected equally an impulse to assert imperial power and a desire to give the imperial court and the royal courts a flexible range of options when designing funeral ceremonies. Indeed, when we turn to look at the actual material evidence from Western Han royal tombs, significant differences over time and between kingdoms demonstrate that the local practices of the royal courts were just as important, if not more important in structuring royal funerals than the dictates of the imperial court.

---

[20] As is typical, the evidence on this point is not solid, since some descriptions in Han sources (e.g. Xun Yue's *Qian Han ji* 前漢記) rank the Grand Counselor of the Palace also at equivalent to 2,000 bushels. See Bielenstein 1980, 165 n. 101; Liu Pak-yuen 1995, 155 n.3. The rank distinction between the two might have been based on criteria other than their officer rank (*zhi* 秩).

[21] Liao Boyuan 1995; Giele 2006, 86.

[22] The legal texts from Zhangjiashan include one set of statutes entitled *Ci lü* 賜律 (Statutes on Gifts), which record detailed regulations for the disbursal of clothing and food, as well as coffins or cash equivalents to be used for funerals. The statutes, however, probably did not apply to kings and members of the imperial household, since they focus almost entirely on gifts to officers holding the lower orders of merit and honor. For the statutes, see Peng Hao, et. al. 2007, 207-14.

The Material Culture of Royal Funerals

Thirty years ago, scholars would have been hard-pressed to investigate these sorts of local funerary practices, since the only sources available for studying the funerals of elite members of the ruling class were found within the received histories and ritual texts, particularly the *Yili* 儀禮. Starting from the 1960s, however, archaeologists began to unearth elaborate tombs of nobles as well as multi-chambered royal tombs housing the Liu household kings and their family members. The first comprehensive publications of these excavations began to appear in the 1970s and 1980s.[23] The sheer number of excavated Han tombs and corresponding flood of scholarship renders futile any attempt to summarize findings on Han funerary culture.[24] The richness in available evidence and scholarship for Han tombs and funerals is, in fact, part of our story, since both are good reminders that long before the Han funerals had always been a central component of elite political culture. Construction of lavish tombs, for example, was standard practice for pre-imperial and early imperial nobles and rulers. Small wonder, then, that some writers condemned their funerals as wasteful and decadent (to no avail, it seems).[25] Even if the First Emperor of Qin's tomb gets all of the modern attention, Western Han political elites were hardly restrained, pouring huge amounts of money, resources, and labor into tomb construction and furnishings. Moreover, in pre-imperial times, nobles regularly traveled to other realms in order to participate in funerals and donate goods to be used in funeral processions and interred in tombs.[26]

Given the importance of funerals in early imperial political culture, combined with the evidence for funerary regulations by the imperial court in the preceding section, it is no surprise that many scholars have focused on whether or not sumptuary regulations issuing from the imperial court mandated the size, contents, and level of luxury for royal tombs and burial goods. Several problems, however, confront researchers who seek to understand the relationship between sumptuary regulations and evidence from royal tombs. First, our sources do not reveal many details

---

[23] For the first major publication of Mawangdui 馬王堆 tomb no. 1, see Hunan sheng bowuguan and Zhongguo she ke yuan kaogu yanjiu suo 1973. For the Mancheng 滿城 tomb of Liu Sheng 劉勝, King of Zhongshan 中山, see Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo and Hebei sheng wenwu guanli chu 1980.

[24] As Loewe 2012 noted, compared to many of their counterparts from the West, early Chinese sources reveal significantly more details about funerary practices and beliefs about death. For a good summary of pre-Qin and early imperial funerals, see Gao Chongwen 2006. Studies of tombs and funerary culture have covered all manner of topics, though relatively greater attention has been paid to tomb design and burial goods on the one hand (e.g. Rawson 1999 and Wu 2010) and what tombs can tell us about funerary ritual and notions of the afterlife (e.g. Wu 1992; Lai 2002; and essays in Olberding and Ivanhoe 2011). Comparatively fewer studies have focused on funerals and their place in political culture, but see Loewe 1999a, Brown 2007, and Miller 2011.

[25] For the pre-imperial discourse on wasteful funerals, see Riegel 1995.

[26] Textual and material sources alike provide evidence for these practices. The *Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋) record many funeral ceremonies of nobles, as does the *Zuozhuan* 左傳. For lists that include the number of funerals in the *Annals*, see van Auken 2010 (2007). The *Yili* describes a ceremony by which noble attendees at a funeral would donate chariots and horses to the heir apparent of the deceased for use in the funeral process. For a study of the organization and documentation of such a funeral procession and how horses and chariots were donated from different realms, see Habberstad (forthcoming).

of these regulations (the statement from the *Hanshu* analyzed above is a rare exception). Second, over the last two millenia, looting and environmental damage to imperial and royal mausolea alike have made it exceedingly difficult to make valid comparisons between the two in order to trace a hierarchy of sumptuary regulations.[27] Third, the diversity of local environmental and cultural conditions in the kingdoms make it almost impossible to discern whether or not a given feature of a royal tomb accords with an overall burial "system" used by Western Han royals.[28] In most cases, it is probably safest to conclude that currently excavated evidence by no means disproves the existence of sumptuary regulations, but neither does it demonstrate their enforcement in any detail. If anything, it suggests that Western Han kings, like the emperors in the capital, were concerned with building the most impressive structures allowed by a combination of factors, including environmental conditions, material resources, and, yes, statutory limitations.[29]

Allison Miller has recently employed an alternative perspective in analyzing royal tombs, focusing in particular on the emergence of carved cave tombs amongst Liu household kings in the mid-Western Han (Miller called them "rock-cut" tombs). Based on currently excavated evidence, these tombs clustered mostly in the kingdoms of Chu 楚, Liang 梁, and Lu 魯, with a few scattered examples from other realms (including Liu Sheng's 劉勝 spectacular tomb at Mancheng 滿城).[30] Miller argued that the cave tombs were all built after the reign of Wendi, who established a new construction style by carving his own cave tomb into a mountainside at Baling 霸陵, located to the southeast of Chang'an. In adopting the carved cave tomb structure for their own burials, the Liu household kings availed themselves of a new burial style promoted by the emperor that underscored their status as the most privileged members of the imperial family. Miller's analysis is fascinating, though her claim that the carved cave tombs of the kingdoms were a response to Wendi's efforts at Baling remains unproven, because we are still unsure of the dating and identity of some of the tombs that she discusses.[31] Nonetheless, her discussion of the tombs themselves is important, since

---

[27] On this damage as it relates to Western Han imperial mausolea in particular, see Jiao Nanfeng 2012 (b), which notes that many of the burial mounds of Western Han emperors are irregularly shaped and not centered over the actual tombs. Jiao argued that imperial burial mounds have sustained so much damage over the centuries that they no longer completely cover the pits containing the tombs themselves.

[28] More and more archaeological studies of royal tombs are coming to this conclusion. For example, in a comparative analysis of the recently excavated tomb of Liu Fei, Jiao Nanfeng 2013, 79 offered an environmental explanation for the lower height of Liu Fei's burial mound compared to the burial mounds of imperial mausolea in Chang'an. Jiao noted that the topsoil of the lower Yangtze region (the location of Liu Fei's tomb) was much thinner than the loess soil of Chang'an's Wei River Valley. The builders of Liu Fei's tomb thus might not have had enough soil to construct a high mound, so they situated the tomb on the highest possible land.

[29] This is the view articulated in Liu Rui and Liu Tao 2010, 427-38 and *passim*, which emphasized that the archaeological evidence does not reveal very many patterns in royal tomb construction. Rather, kings appear above all to have searched for the most advantageous and dramatic (e.g. hilltops or mountainsides) locations when choosing mausolea sites.

[30] In an appendix, Miller 2011 listed a total of 43 "rock-cut mountain tombs" of kings and members of royal families that archaeologists have excavated or surveyed. See Miller 2011, 302-3. Of these, 38 (almost 90%) interred royals from Liang, Chu, or Lu.

[31] Miller 2011 did discuss the controversy over the tomb at the so-called "king of Chu mountain" (*Chu wang shan* 楚王山), located some 10.5 km west of Xuzhou, Jiangsu province. Though some have argued that it was the tomb of the first king of Chu, Liu Jiao 劉交 (r. 201-179 BCE), Miller

she emphasized that the tombs should not only be understood in terms of their status within a larger system of sumptuary regulations aimed at controlling the kingdoms. As Miller noted, "the archaeological record reveals that…tomb-building itself remained a very personal act of expression both for the kings and for their allies and subordinates…who placed gifts in the tomb, expressing their relationship through the act of burial."[32]

The importance of funerals in Han political culture already mentioned above, and the huge amount of resources required to build tombs, stage funerary ceremonies, and donate burial items, all suggest that Miller is probably incorrect to claim that tombs and the goods buried therein were "personal acts of expression." As we have already discussed above from several vantage points, funerals were elaborate ceremonies and central events in the ritual calendars of the imperial court and royal courts alike. They were probably more "official" than they were "personal" acts of expression. Nonetheless, Miller's point that tombs and burial goods were important for displaying relationships still holds, and all tombs can be interpreted with this idea in mind, including all Western Han royal tombs (and not just those of the "rock carved" variety). Royal and imperial tombs alike thus helped reaffirm the status of the Liu household as the ruling family, and this dynamic remains demonstrable despite gaps and problems with the archaeological evidence.[33] At the same time, members of the royal households in the Liu family kingdoms were able to employ many different schema for the spatial arrangement of their tombs and the organization of burial goods within the tombs. In all cases, however Liu household kings and other members of their families situated burial goods according to their function in the funeral itself or following an organizational scheme that reflected the use and arrangement of the goods within their own courts. The interment and arrangement of collections of goods within the tomb, then, and not just the individual goods themselves, allowed the kings to demonstrate their modes of utilizing luxury goods and to display their status as kings in a manner that made sense within the particular context of practices in their palaces and kingdoms. The remaining discussion of select tombs (from the kingdoms of Qi, Changshan, Jiangdu, and Sishui) will demonstrate in greater detail these different strategies used in royal tombs and funerals.[34] In the final section of this chapter, we will turn to

---

(probably correctly) sides with scholars who have argued that the barrel-vault design of the tomb necessarily requires a date much later than early Western Han (Miller 2011, 192-194). As a result, Miller wrote, "the evidence still points to Baling as the first rock-cut tomb." Liu Rui and Liu Tao, however, have recently argued that the rock-cut tomb at Beidongshan 北洞山 housed the remains of Liu Jiao. If they are correct, the two Lius have significantly weakened Miller's argument that the Chu kings built their rock-cut tombs on the example of Wendi, since Liu Jiao died in 179 BCE, just one year after Wendi came to the throne and over twenty years before he died. See Liu Rui and Liu Tao 2010, 537-549.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

[33] Liu Rui and Liu Tao cited the following problems: 1) archaeologists have excavated only a fraction (no more than 27%; see n.9 above) of the total number of royal tombs constructed during the Western Han; 2) this small sample size makes it impossible to trace changes in tomb design within individual kingdoms; 3) excavations conducted over the last thirty years and the resulting excavation reports have been of uneven quality; 4) many excavations do not have full reports; 5) changes in archaeological practice have rendered older reports unsatisfactory. See Liu Rui and Liu Tao 2010, 2-5. These are longstanding problems in the study of Western Han royal tombs: Pirazzoli t'Serstevens 1990 noted them some twenty years prior to publication of Liu Rui and Liu Tao's work.

[34] We will focus on tombs from these four kingdoms for four reasons. First, the design and construction of these tombs exhibit significant variation, with all different styles of tombs (earthen

pictorial evidence from tomb no. 3 at Mawangdui to emphasize that the experience of attending and participating in a funeral was understood as a collective experience that broke down the social and rank distinctions of participants.

Royal Tomb from Qi

In the fall of 1978, during construction of a train station near the city of Zibo 淄博 in Shandong province, archaeologists unearthed a huge earthen pit tomb with five burial pits. Four were clustered at the southern end of the tomb on either side of the ramp, with a fifth on the northern side of the tomb (see Figure 3.1).[35] The tomb itself has not yet been excavated, but evidence from the burial pits allowed archaeologists to identify the occupant as one of the kings of the Western Han state of Qi 齊, probably either the realm's first ruler or second ruler.[36] This would date the tomb to the early Western Han, perhaps no later than 179 BCE.

Figure 3.1 Diagram of the Tomb of the King of Qi

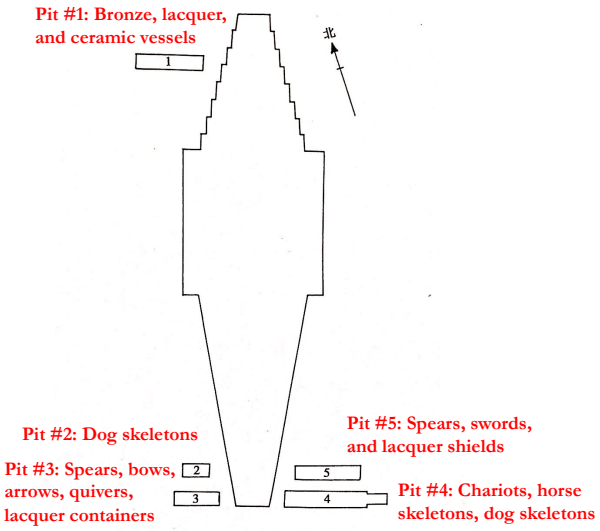


Image after Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 224, with English added. The large lozenge shape is an outline of the tomb pit, while the smaller number rectangles depict the burial pits.

None of the five burial pits had been looted, so they yielded a rich array of burial goods totaling more than 12,200 items. The four tombs clustered around the southern edge of the tomb

---

pit, carved cave, and stone chamber) represented. Second, excavated tombs from these kingdoms provide evidence from all eras of the Western Han. Third, the kingdoms are located in different areas of the empire. Fourth, significant portions of most of these royal tombs, if not their entirety, had not been looted prior to excavation.

[35] See Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 264-5. Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008] argued that the identity of the occupant remained unclear and could only be resolved by excavating the tomb. See also Liu Rui and Liu Tao 2010, 224-25.

[36] The archaeologists assigned the tomb to Liu Xiang 劉襄 (r. 188-179), the second king of Qi

contained 30 dog skeletons (pit 2); a collection of spears, bows, arrows, lacquer arrow quivers, and other lacquer containers (pit 3); four chariots, 14 horse skeletons, and two dog skeletons (pit. 4); and spears, swords, and lacquer shields (pit 5). The concentration of chariots and weaponry in these four pits contrasts with the items found in pit 1, which contained many bronzes, lacquers, and ceramic vessels, more than 200 in total. Items in pit 1 were also divided into two groups, with the western end of pit 1 containing twenty-four ceramic urns and the eastern end over 100 items, mostly bronzes and lacquers as well as a few silver and ceramic vessels.

The archaeology report unfortunately did not include pictures of most of the vessels recovered from pit 1. Rather, it focused almost exclusively on the inscriptions on the bronze vessels, providing dozens of transcriptions and rubbings. A large proportion of the bronzes from pit 1 contained inscriptions. For example, inscriptions were found on all ten *lei* 罍 urns as well as all of the platters (*pan* 盤), twelve of the fourteen tripods, and five of the twelve ladles.[37] Some of the inscriptions provide but short descriptions of the vessels and the types of goods they were designed to contain. For example, the ten *hu* pots 壺 pots all contained inscriptions on the bottom noting the volume and weight of the vessels. Some of them included inscriptions on the sides reading *shang mi* 上米, perhaps a reference to the grade of rice or rice wine that was stored within the vessels.[38] Others refer to offices within the Qi kingdom. For example, many of the fourteen tripods found in pit 1 were inscribed with titles such as "provisions officer" (*shi guan* 食官) or *Taiguan* 大官.[39]

Other vessels, however, contained much more complicated combinations of inscriptions, reflecting the diverse paths that some of the goods followed before they ended up in the burial pits. Perhaps the most dramatic example is a found in an ornate silver platter recovered from the northwest quadrant of pit 1. A copper inlay pattern of interlaced, elongated dragons covers the registers of both the exterior and interior of the platter (see Figure 3.2). As the archaeologists noted, the design recalls bronzes and silver items produced during the Zhanguo period.[40] The only unadorned areas of found on the very bottom of the platter and the underside of its flared lip. Both contain multiple inscriptions testifying to the platter's complex history of ownership.

The very bottom of the vessel contains four inscriptions, though the report only transcribed three of them:[41]

---

[37] Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 234-41; Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008].

[38] Support for this reading comes from other vessels in pit 1, all of them *lei*, inscribed with the words *xia mi* 下米. As Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008], 423, noted, the legal statutes from the Qin tomb at Shuihudi and the early mathematical text *Jiu zhang suan shu* 九章算術 give categories of rice grades.

[39] We have no extant descriptions of titles or offices in the Western Han kingdoms. All attempts to decipher the meaning of the titles of royal offices thus must assume that the kingdoms adopted the same titles employed by the imperial court, which are described in the "Table of Officers and Ministers" (*Bai guan gong qing biao* 百官公卿表) of the *Hanshu*. The "Table" mentions a Prefect and Assistant *Taiguan* under the Treasury (*Shaofu* 少府) (*Hanshu* 19a.731), and a "provisions officer" (*shi guan*) under both the Superintendent of Ceremonial (*Taichang* 太常) (*Hanshu* 19a.726) and the Director of the Household of the Empress Dowager (*Zhanshi* 詹事) (*Hanshu* 19a.734). Both officers were thus involved with procuring and preparing food for royal consumption and perhaps for ritual offerings.

[40] Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 265.

[41] For these transcriptions, see Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 257. Note that the archaeology report combines the inscriptions numbered 1 and 2 here into one single inscription. The larger size and different orientation of the two inscriptions, however, supports their separation.

Inscription 1:	Inscription 2:	Inscription 3:
容二斗	重六斤十三兩	御羞
Volume of two *dou*	Weight of six *jin* and thirteen *liang*	For imperial delicacies[42]

Figure 3.2 Silver platter from pit 1 of the King of Qi tomb, with inscriptions indicated by number

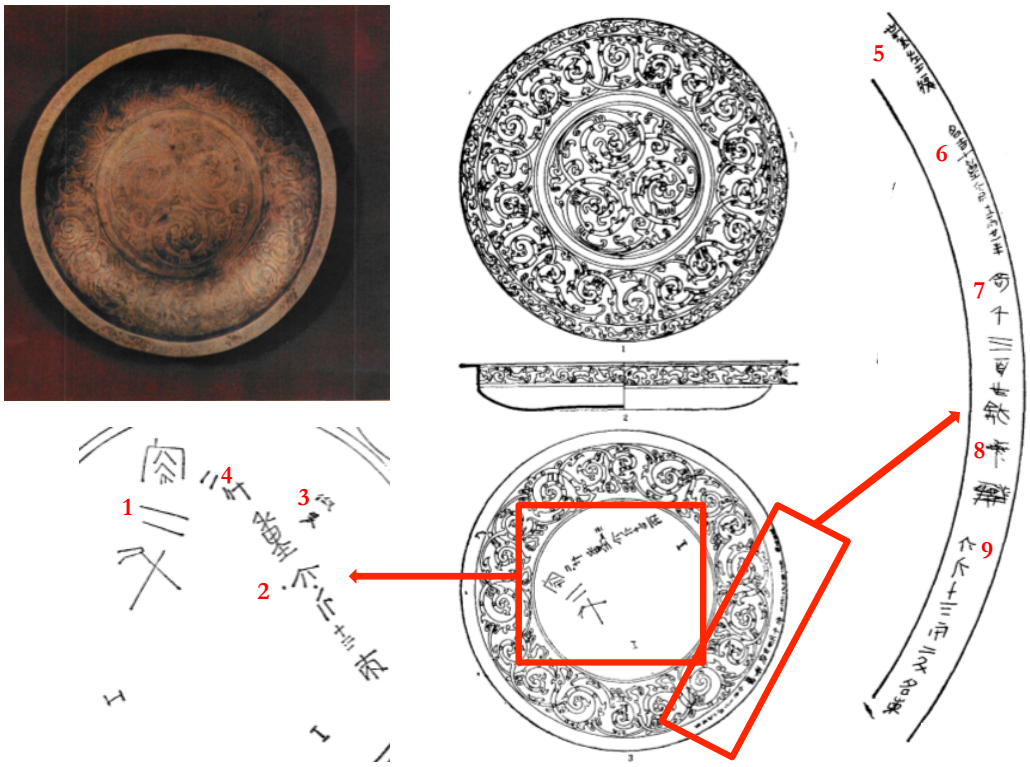


Image after several in Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, with numbers and graphics added.

These three inscriptions, however, were probably added some time after those found on the lip of the platter, since this latter indicates some of the artisans who crafted it.[43]

For unstated reasons, the archaeology report did not transcribe the inscription numbered four in Figure 3.2. It appears to read "two *dou*" 二斗. If so, inscription 4, for some unknown reason, just repeats information found in inscription 1.

[42] The "Table of Officers and Ministers" in the *Hanshu* mentions a Prefect of Imperial Delicacies (*Yuxiu ling* 御羞令), who as the title implies was in charge of procuring and preparing rare foods for the emperor. The officer was supposedly initially under the ministry of the Treasury before being transferred to the Superintendent of Waters and Parks (*Shuiheng duwei*) (*Hanshu* 19a.735). As Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008], 425, noted, there is no reason to assume that this inscription refers to an office. Huang Zhanyue further noted that there was an officer with the title *Yuxiu*, who was in charge of securing delicacies for the imperial table.

[43] There is a problem, though: one of the inscriptions (numbered eight on figure 3.2) is scratched out and thus illegible.

Inscription 5:
卅三年左工□
In the 33rd year, Assistant Artisan ??

Inscription 6:
名吉七重六斤十二兩廿一銖
[Inspected by person of?] First name, Ji. Weight of six *jin*, 12 *liang*, twenty-two *zhu*.

Inscription 7:
奇　千三百廿二釿
Qi　1,322 *yin*

Inscription 9:
六斤十三兩二斗名東
Six *jin,* three *liang*, [volume of] two *dou*. [Inspected by person of?] First name, Dong.

Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳 has completed a detailed study of all of these transcriptions.[44] He argued that the silver platter was made during the Zhanguo period in one of the three states that emerged from the partition of Jin 晉, since the unit of measurement *yin* 釿 (see Inscription 7) was only used by Jin and its successor states. When the Qin conquered these states, it obtained the platter. Afterwards, some time around the 33rd year of the reign of the First Emperor (214 BCE),[45] an Assistant Artisan of the Qin (see Inscription 5) working perhaps with a functionary named Ji 吉 (see Inscription 6) added inscriptions indicating the weight of the platter in Qin units. It was perhaps also during this period that these Qin artisans added the inscription "for imperial delicacies" (*yuxiu* 御羞) (see Inscription 3).[46] Finally, Western Han artisans added further inscriptions when the platter came into Han possession (Inscriptions 1, 2, and 9). In sum, the Jin royal court or one of its successor states probably made the silver platter before it was used at the Qin imperial court and then finally given to the King of Qi by the Western Han court.[47]

While the silver platter is an exceptionally beautiful piece, it is not the only vessel from pit 1 that the King of Qi acquired from elsewhere. A *lei* urn found in the pit is inscribed with the name Chunyu 淳于, perhaps a family name or, as Huang Zhanyue argued, a county within the kingdom of Qi. The vessel was thus a gift from a local family or area to the king. The reproduction in the archaeology report of the rubbing on this vessel is unfortunately extremely unclear, so it is hard to

[44] Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008], esp. 426-7.
[45] Huang allowed that the date "33rd year" in Inscription 5 could also plausibly refer to the reign of the First Emperor's predecessor, King Zhao of Qin 秦昭王 (r. 306-251 BCE). If true, that would mean the Qin obtained the platter some time prior to 274 BCE.
[46] Note that Inscription 3 is quite similar in size to Inscriptions 5 and 6.
[47] It is also possible that the King of Qi obtained the platter himself and not from the Han court. This scenario seems less likely, however, since Inscriptions 1, 2, and 9 repeat information. Why would an artisan at Qi have twice inscribed the vessel with the same measurements? It seems more likely that the Han court artisan Dong added Inscription 9, and then after the vessel came to Qi another artisan added Inscriptions 1 and 2 on the bottom of the vessel.

verify the transcription provided by the report. The organization of the inscription into four separate phrases, however, is clear:

淳于
重一鈞六斤十兩
容十斗
今□□九斗五升
Chunyu
Weight of one *diao*, six *jin* and ten *liang*
Volume of ten *dou*
Now ? ?[48] nine *dou* and five *sheng*[49]

Note the "now" in the last line; the word is commonly seen in Qin and Western Han bronzes with multiple inscriptions, indicating a change of ownership and usually prefacing an inscription giving the weight and volume of the vessel in different units of measurement.[50] As with the silver platter above, the Qi court added an inscription that repeated (and, in this case, perhaps provided a more accurate measure of) information found in the inscription that was on the bronze when it arrived at the Qi court.

The important point is that while the silver vessel came from the imperial court and the *lei* urn appears to have come from within the borders of Qin itself, both vessels were still placed within pit 1. This one pit housed a range of goods that the king of Qi and his officials used at his court and that were deemed important enough to accompany the departed king in his tomb. Pits two through five, on the other hand, were filled with chariots, horses, and weaponry, but hardly any vessels that would have been used within the royal household. Perhaps this division of goods reflected the different times of their interment and their function within the funerary ceremony itself, though on these points we can offer no more than speculation.[51] We can say, however, that this arrangement of goods in Qi is quite a bit different than the arrangements seen in other tombs, which as we will see below saw an arrangement of goods that more closely reflected the organization of royal palaces.

Tomb of the Queen of Jiangdu

In 2009, reports of tomb looting near the hamlet of Yunshan 雲山 in southern Jiangsu province, north of the city of Nanjing 南京, prompted archaeologists to secure the area and perform salvage excavations. Their efforts yielded the remains of a large mausoleum complex surrounded by a peripheral wall, which on the eastern side intersected with a wide avenue (termed the "Sima route" 司馬道 by the archaeologists) (see Figure 3.3) Inscriptions found on items within the largest tomb (M1) allowed archaeologists to identify the interred king as Liu Fei 劉非 (r. 155-127 BCE) the king

[48] Huang Zhanyue 1986 [2008], 425, transcribed the two characters after *jin* 今 as *gao mi* 高密, which he noted was also a territory within the kingdom of Qi. If correct, then the urn was located first in Chunyu before it passed to Gaomi and then finally the court of Qi.
[49] Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 1985, 239.
[50] On this characteristic of Western Han bronzes in particular, see Xu Zhengkao 2007, 195-200.
[51] For example, perhaps the chariot and horse pit was filled during the actual interment ceremony, after the chariots had carted the king's coffin to the tomb.

of Jiangdu 江都.[52] Tombs within the complex thus housed members of the Jiangdu court, including Liu Fei's wife and a consort.

Figure 3.3 Mausoleum Complex of Liu Fei, King of Jiangdu

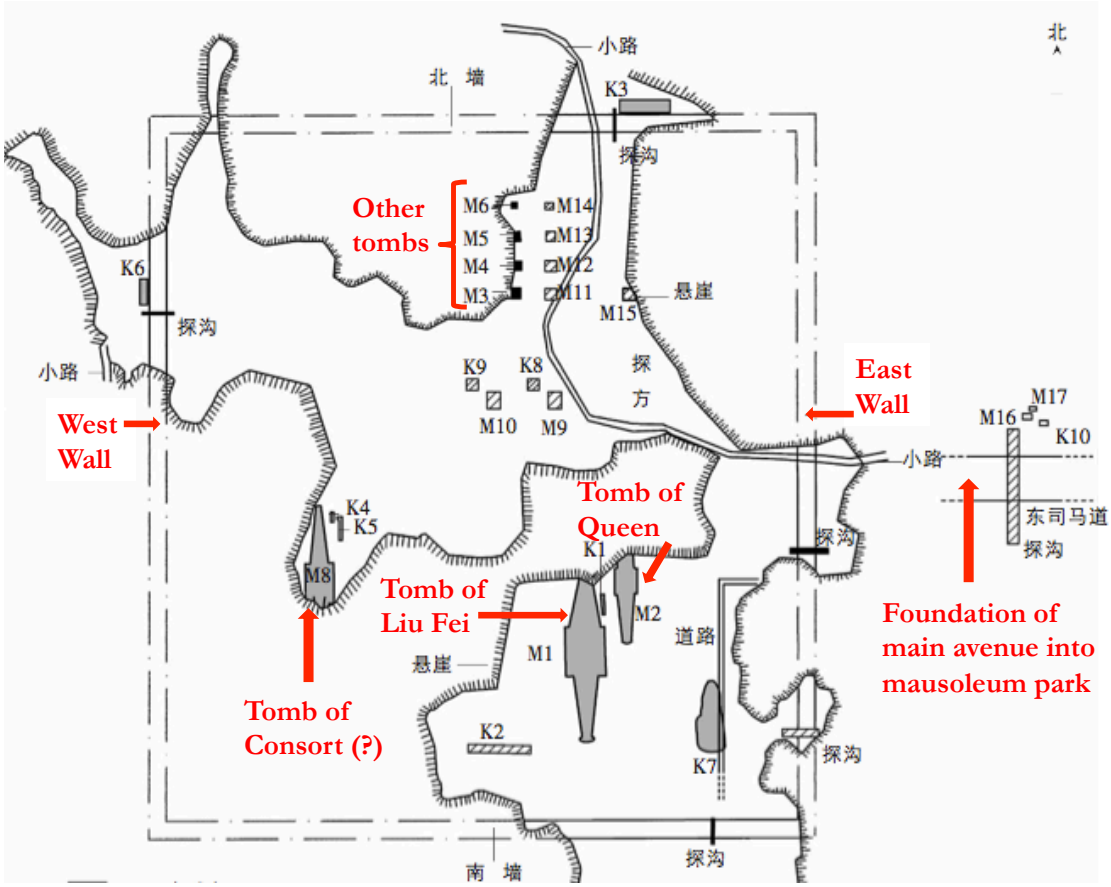


Image after Nanjing bowuguan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2013, 26, with English and graphics added. The curved line meandering through the image indicates elevated topography (e.g. the tombs of Liu Fei (M1) and the queen (M2) are on ground higher than the land to the immediate north of the line).

Thus far archaeologists have excavated fifteen tombs within the peripheral wall, two tombs outside of the wall, and ten pits (seven inside and three outside of the wall), though they have published only an overview article of the entire complex[53] and one more detailed report on tomb 2 (M2), which probably housed Liu Fei's wife and queen.[54] Both of these tombs were covered by the same

[52] Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2012, 59. Note that Liu Fei was first appointed king of Runan 汝南 in 155 BCE before being transferred to Jiangdu after the 154 BCE rebellion.
[53] Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2012. See also the assessments of the tomb by different archaeologists in Li Zebin and Chen Gang 2012 and the comparison between imperial mausolea and the Jiangdu mausoleum in Jiao Nanfeng 2013.
[54] Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2013.

pounded earth mound, but Liu Fei's tomb (M1) was substantially larger and contained a timber "stave wall" (*ticou* 題湊) structure of the sort found in many other royal and elite Western Han tombs.[55] An outer corridor surrounded the *ticou*, which itself surrounded inner corridors, chambers, and the king's inner and outer coffin. The outer corridor was preserved most intact, and according to the archaeologists was separated into upper and lower levels housing many chariots and a large number of burial goods. The lack of a detailed archaeological report renders further analysis impossible, but based on the current amount of available information, the structure and arrangement of the goods seems similar to the pattern found in the king of Changshan's 常山 tomb at Gaozhuang 高莊 (see below).

Liu Fei's wife was not buried in a *ticou* structure, but in a multi-chambered wooden chamber bracketed by northern and southern burial pits (see Figure 3.4). The chamber had collapsed, but the length and width were still discernable: 4.7 m long (north-south) and 3.9 m wide (east-west). The two side chambers were smaller: 3.9 m long (east-west) and 2.5 m wide (north-south). The entire space, some 55 square meters, was thus much smaller than the almost 200 sq. m. tomb of Liu Fei.[56] Despite its relatively small size, and the fact that it had been looted, the tomb still yielded over 200 items.

Figure 3.4 Tomb of the Queen of Jiangdu

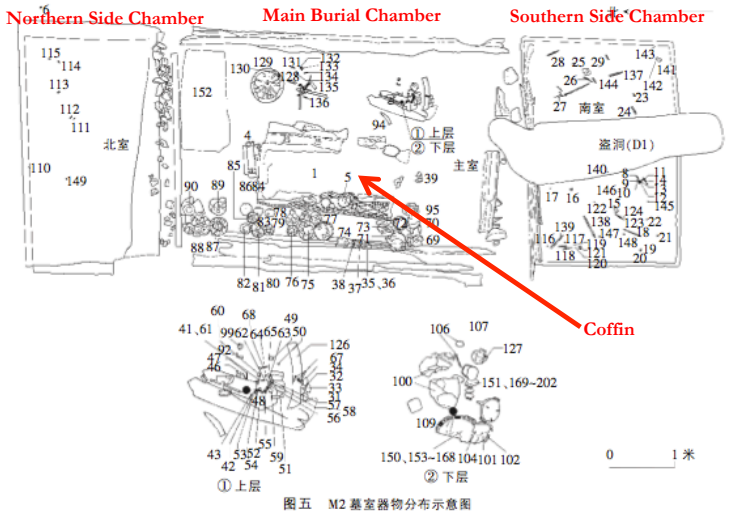


Image after Nanjing bowuguan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2013, 28. The drawings toward the bottom of the image are more detailed renderings of two levels of goods found in a pile in the main burial chamber.

Due to the looting, we cannot discern specific organizational principles that guided the placement of goods within the tomb. Spears and weaponry were found only in the southern chamber, however, while the main central chamber that contained the queen's coffin was the only space to yield bronze and lacquer vessels. Both of these were clustered around her jade inner coffin. It seems unlikely that looters would have gone so far as to remove all weaponry from the central chamber and place it

[55] For an overview of *ticou* tombs, see Campbell 2010.
[56] Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2012, 55.

in the southern chamber. The concentration of weaponry in the southern chamber and bronze and lacquer vessels in the middle chamber, then, probably reflects the general organizational scheme of the goods when the queen was buried.

Many of the 61 lacquer items found in the tomb, especially the plates and cups, were etched with the character *lian* 連.[57] The archaeologists argued that Lian was the queen's surname. They might be correct,[58] but the more interesting fact is that many of the *lian* characters on the bottom of the plates and cups were etched in different calligraphy. The etchings were also found on lacquers of different sizes and patterns (see Figure 3.5).

Image 3.5 Examples of lacquer items from Queen of Jiangdu's tomb

[57] Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2013, 34-41

[58] Western Han tombs regularly yield lacquers etched with individual characters on their bases.

Images after Nanjing bowuguan and Xuyi xian wenguan xinju 2013, 52-53, with graphics added.

This variation in the etching calligraphy and lacquer design provides material evidence for the different artisans and attendants in charge of the queen's lacquer. At the court of Jiangdu, the queen procured different types of lacquers over the course of her reign. Her assistant stored and maintained these lacquers and, no doubt, brought them out to be used and enjoyed by the queen and her guests.

Even if we do not know where the lacquers were produced, other evidence demonstrates that the queen had access to all of the goods produced at the Jiangdu workshops. For example, a bronze, unadorned basin (image 4.?) found at the base of a pile of goods near the coffin is inscribed with the following phrase:

> 私府容一石六升重十八斤
> [Made at our] personal workshop. Capacity of one *shi*, six *sheng*. Weight of 18 *jin*.[59]

No other inscriptions were found on the basin. Whether or not the queen herself commissioned the basin, of course, is unknowable. We can conclude, however, that the queen was able to avail herself of luxury items produced for members of the Jiangdu court. The main chamber containing the

[59] See Nanjing bowuyuan and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 2013, 30 (transcription) and 33 (image).

coffin of the queen, then, was filled with the items that were produced and used by the queen in her palace.

Royal Tomb of Changshan

From 1991-1994, archaeologists excavated a large pit tomb containing a wooden coffin and covered by a pounded earth mound. Located near the small village of Gaozhuang in Hebei province, roughly 300 km southwest of Beijing, the tomb faced another tomb to the north of similar size and was constructed of a stone outer coffin structure containing a large wooden inner coffin.[60] A ramp led down towards the outer coffin, passing by and providing access to corridors that encircled the entire outer coffin structure (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6 Overhead Diagram of Tomb of King of Changshan at Gaozhuang, Hebei=

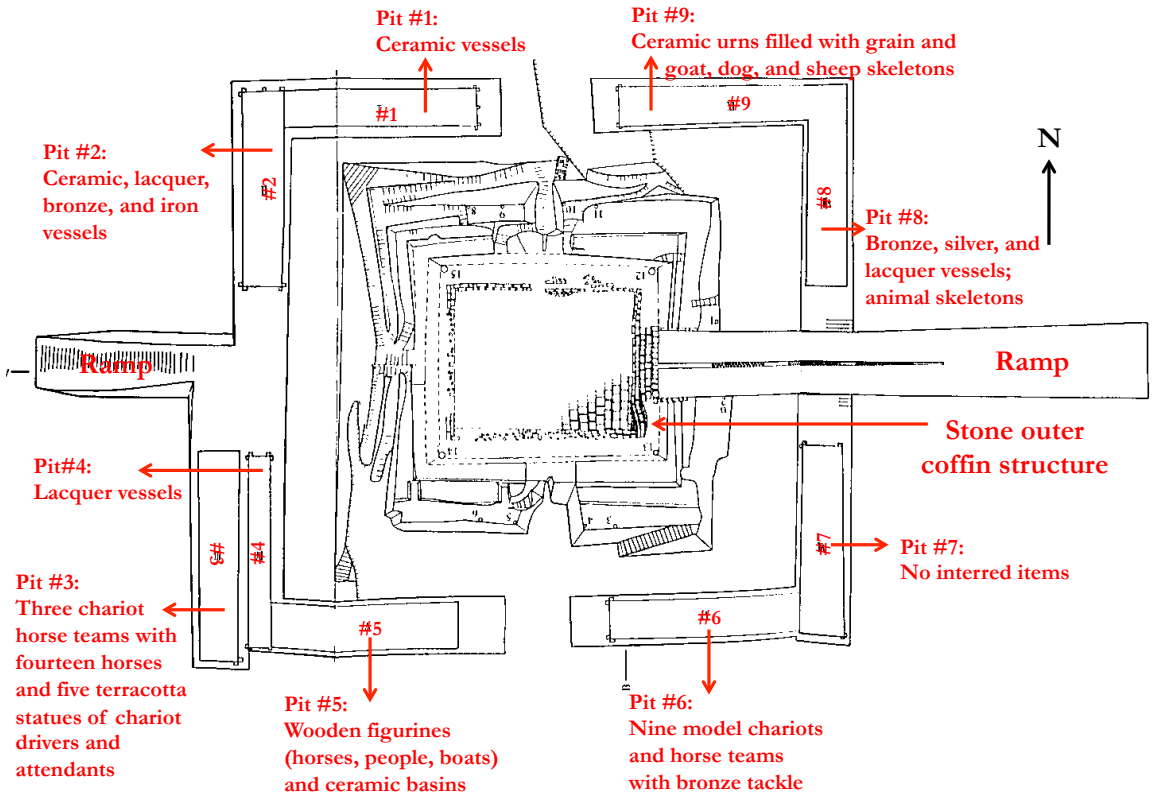


Image after Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Luquanshi wenwu baoguan suo 2006 (image 3, foldout between pp. 2-3), with English and graphics added

[60] Archaeologists did not excavate this other tomb.

The tomb had been looted, perhaps twice, as demonstrated by two holes that reached through the outer coffin structure into the inner coffin.[61] As a result, almost nothing remained of the inner structure that originally contained the deceased in his coffin, though based on evidence from inscriptions the likely occupant was Jingdi's son Liu Shun 劉舜 (r. 145-114 BCE), who remained on the throne of Changshan for thirty-two years.[62] The narrow pits surrounding the main coffin structure were not looted, however, and thus still yielded a huge number of goods. The pits were large wooden sarcophagi, constructed from huge timbers. Each pits was filled with different types of goods (see Figure 3.6). These included dozens of bronze vessels as well as the remains of three lacquered chariot carriages and fourteen horse skeletons.

The pits were not filled to capacity with goods. Rather, large portions of them remained empty, with burial items grouped together in rows and clustered against the walls closest to the burial pit and central coffin structure (see Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Photograph of Burial Pits 1 and 2, Tomb of King of Changshan

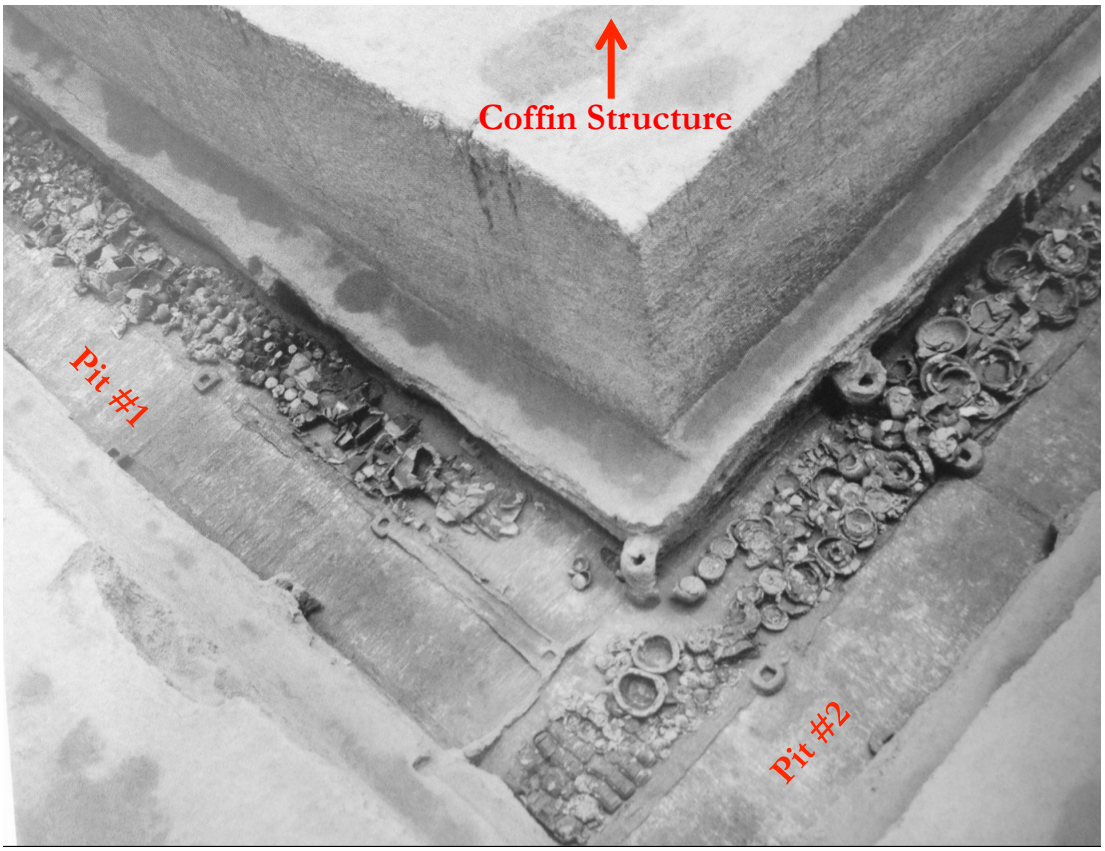


Image After Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Luquanshi wenwu baoguan suo 2006 (color plate 10), with English and graphics added

[61] Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 3.

[62] Specifically, several of the bronze burial items are inscribed "29th year" (*er shi jiu nian*). Only Liu Shun served as king of Changshan longer than twenty-nine years. Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 89.

The arrangement would have allowed allowed space for laborers as well as organizers and participants in the funeral to move around the pits and arrange burial goods before the pits were covered. It is impossible to determine the precise order in which all of the goods were placed around the tomb, or whether they were placed there before or after the wooden coffin was slid down the ramp and interred in the center of the tomb.[63]

Several different organizing principles can be discerned by the arrangement of goods within the pits. All of the real and model chariots as well as the wooden figurines were located on the southern side of the tomb in pits three, five, and six. Bronze, ceramic, and lacquer vessels, meanwhile, were primarily in the northern pits.[64] The bronzes were located only in the pits numbered two and eight by the archaeologists (see Figure 3.6). Pit eight contained the majority of the bronzes, placed alongside silver and lacquer vessels as well as animal skeletons. The adjacent pit nine contained even more animal skeletons as well as large ceramic urns with grain. The evidence thus suggests that these two pits were storage chambers for food and other provisions. The style of bronzes recovered from pit eight confirms that the items placed there were designed for food production and storage.[65] Pit eight, for example, contained a tripod (see Figure 3.8) and a ladle. More tellingly, four of the eight bronzes in pit eight that have inscriptions refer to a "provisions officer" (*shi guan* 食官); a large bronze vase in particular refers to a "provisions [officer?] of Changshan" (*Changshan shi*？常山食?).[66]

The inscriptions on bronzes from pit eight also suggest that the bronzes themselves were the products of the kingdom of Changshan. For example, a bronze tripod contained the following inscription (see Figure 3.8):

> 食官鼎盖一重九斤十兩廿九年效見
> One tripod with lid belonging to the provisions officer. Weight of 9 *jin* 10 *liang*. Presented in the 29th year.

Another bronze, this one a lamp, also in sarcophagus eight, contained an inscription indicating that it was also "presented in the 29th year." At another location on the lid of the tripod, however, a second inscription reads: "30th year, fifth [month?]" (*sa nian wu* 卅年五).[67] It is somewhat difficult to discern from the picture in the archaeological report, but the first inscription appears to have been cast with the vessel. We can only assume that the second, shorter inscription was etched onto the lid of the vessel later for unknown reasons.

---

[63] The center of the east ramp contained the remnants of a long wooden pole, encircled with iron rings. The archaeologists wrote that the pole might have served as a track to guide the coffin into the center of the tomb. It perhaps also could have been used to cart burial goods down to the corridors. See Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 4-6.

[64] The exception is pit four, which appears to have been filled with lacquer vessels. Unfortunately, most of the lacquers were crushed and deteriorated, leaving only traces. See Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 22.

[65] The report did not include a diagram of pit eight, so the placement of goods within the chamber remains unclear.

[66] Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 103.

[67] Unfortunately, the report does not provide any image or indication of this second inscription and its location on the vessel. Syntax patterns and evidence from other bronzes would suggest that the "five" refers to the month.

Regardless, the tripod and the lamp were both made for the provisions officer of the king of Changshan in the 29th year of Liu Shun's reign. The bronzes interred in pit two, however, were not necessarily made in Changshan, or at least not for the provisions officer at the Changshan court.

Image 3.8 Tripod from sarcophagus eight, tomb of the King of Changshan

Image after Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Luquanshi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, color plate 28

Image 3.9 Candlestick Lamp and Plate from Pit 2, Tomb of King of Changshan

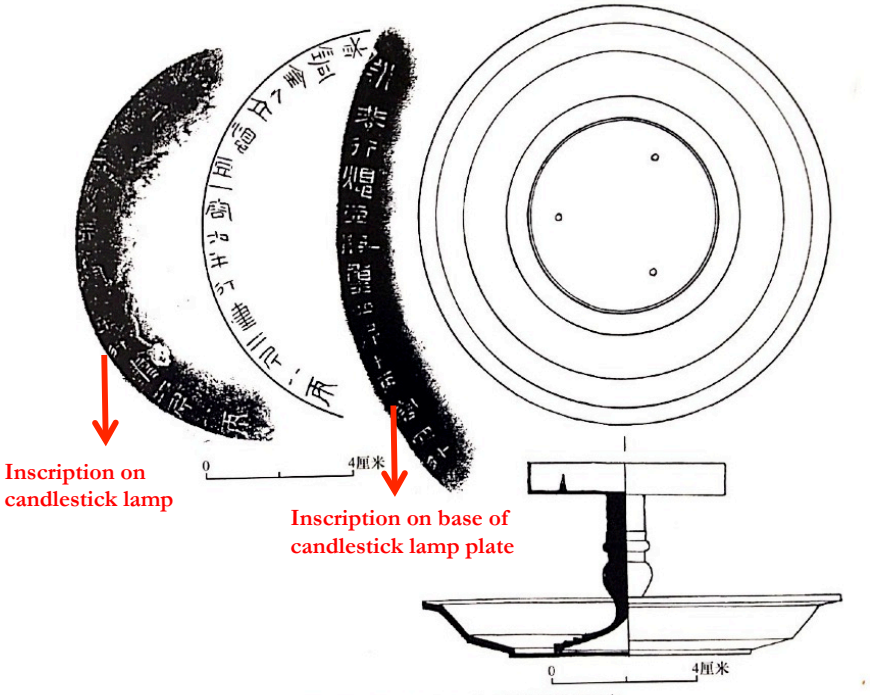


Image After Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Luquanshi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, black and white plate 5 (above) and 41 (below)

Image 3.10 Tripod Lamp and Plate from Pit 2, Tomb of King of Changshan

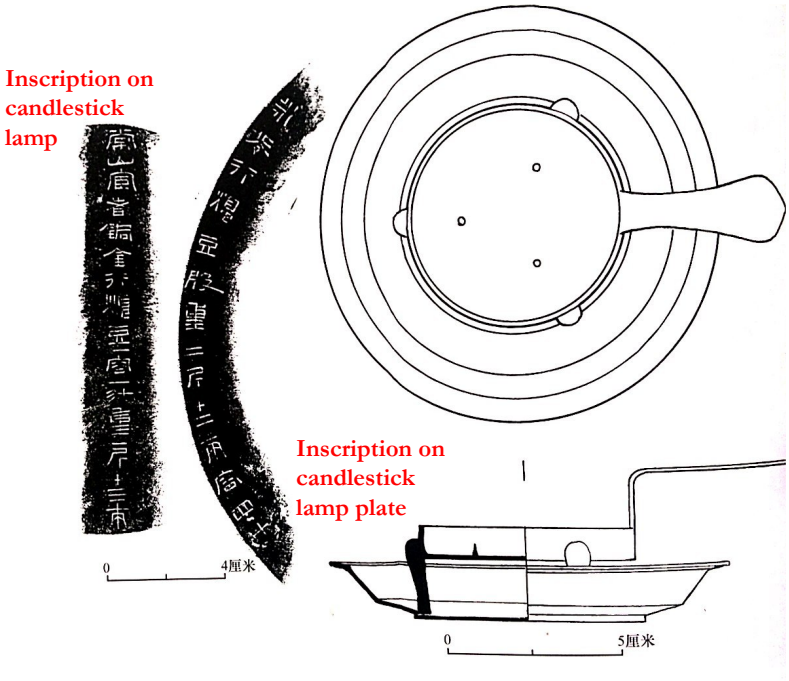


Image after Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Luquanshi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, black and white plate 4 (above) and 42 (below)

For example, pit two yielded three bronze lamps, all three of which contain inscriptions indicating weight and the person for whom the lamp was made. Two of the lamps, one a short candlestick lamp and the other a tripod lamp with handle, were found placed on plates in pit 2 (see Figures 3.9 and 3.10). The plates, which perhaps caught stray drips of oil from the lamps, are similarly sized, with upper lips 10 cm in diameter that recess in two faces down to their bases.[68] Each contains similar inscriptions engraved (not cast) onto the bases of these plates:

> Lamp Plate 1 (holding the candlestick lamp; see Figure 3.9):
> 永巷行燭豆般重四斤十兩容四升
> A plate for a lamp stand manufactured at the Yongxiang. The plate weighs 4 *jin* 10 *liang* and has a volume of four *sheng*.
>
> Lamp Plate 2 (holding the tripod lamp; see Figure 3.10):
> 永巷行燭豆般重二斤十二兩容四升
> A plate for a lamp stand manufactured at the Yongxiang. The plate is 2 *jin* 12 *liang* in weight with a volume of four *sheng*.[69]

The Yongxiang 永巷 was a bureau within the inner areas of the palace in charge of female attendants, and records indicate that the office was found in the imperial court and royal courts alike.[70] These plates were perhaps used in the Yongxiang of the court at Changshan before being interred.

Regardless, evidence from inscriptions on the lamps that stood in the plates suggests that the former were produced at different times than the latter. The inscriptions, located on the bottoms of both lamps, read:

> Lamp 1 (candlestick lamp; Figure 3.9)
> □者銅金□立燭豆一容□□□重二斤八兩
> One…standing lamp made of bronze for… The lamp has a volume of…and weighs 2 *jin* 13 *liang*.
>
> Lamp 2 (tripod lamp; Figure 3.10)
> 常山宦者銅金行燭豆一容一升重一斤十三兩
> One mobile lamp made of bronze for an officer of the kingdom of Changshan. The lamp has a volume of one *sheng* and weighs 1 *jin* 13 *liang*.[71]

These inscriptions strongly suggest that the lamps were made by or for an official of Changshan, and then placed upon plates that were made separately,[72] perhaps at a factory that produced luxury goods

---

[68] According to the archaeology report, the plate of the tripod lamp is 10.8 cm in diameter; the plate of the candlestick lamp is 10 cm in diameter. See Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 39.
[69] Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 39.
[70] Bielenstein 1980, 43 and 107.
[71] Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 2006, 39.
[72] It is worth noting here that the inscriptions on the plates and lamps record the volumes and weights of their vessels in the opposite order, further supporting the idea that the two were manufactured and inscribed separately.

for use at the royal court. During the funeral ceremony, the two items were paired together, perhaps placed there by some of the very "officers" (*huanzhe* 宦者) noted on the inscriptions.

Even if we cannot reconstruct all of these details, the important point for us to note here is that the items inscribed with the title *huanzhe* 宦者 ("officer") were all placed in pit two. None of them were found amongst the "Provisions Officer" bronzes found in pit eight. The pits were thus not only divided by the functionality of the vessels that they contained (i.e. food as well as vessels for cooking, serving, and storing food in pit eight; lamps, basins and other bathing items located in pit two), but also differentiated by offices at court. Whereas the provisions officer appears to have been in charge of stocking pit eight, officers in charge of the king's household and personal care, perhaps, placed goods in pit two. The evidence is not definitive, of course, but the divisions between types of bronzes and the inscriptions strongly suggest that different groups and offices at the court of Changshan were responsible for provisioning different parts of the tomb. The construction and execution of the king's funeral and the particular selection of interred goods thus enveloped the king within the structure of his own court offices.

Many more examples from royal tombs could be offered to support the notion that Liu royal households designed their mausolea and situated their funerary goods according to different criteria that followed royal funeral procedures as well as the administrative practices at royal courts. Despite the undeniable similarities across royal tombs, our close analysis of select material evidence demonstrates that there were probably multiple standards and systems for organizing and performing funerals in the kingdoms. Royal funeral ceremonies were thus probably an amalgam of local practices, procedures described in ritual texts, and regulations emanating from the imperial court. Given this complexity, the emissaries sent by the imperial court (described above) to "oversee the funeral rites" (*shi sang shi* 視喪事) of the kings must have cooperated with officials at the royal courts in designing the ceremonies. They worked to incorporate gifts from the imperial court, royal courts, and local areas into the funeral performance, combining all of these gifts together in a manger that did not clearly differentiate or indicate the statuses of the gift givers. In practice, then, the funeral ceremony and the bestowal of funerary goods was not solely or even primarily a means by which the imperial court controlled the kingdoms. Rather, funeral ceremonies could reinforce lateral ties between both in order to underscore their cohesiveness as members of the extended Liu family ruling household. As we will see in the next section, this capacity of funeral processions and ceremonies to forge shared, communal ties amongst participants was well-understood and can be seen in Western Han funerary art.

Funeral Ceremonies and the Ritual Creation of Community: A Painting from Mawangdui

The previous section focused on royal funerals in order to better understand the ritual and material context and illustrate a gap between royal funerary practice on the one hand and sumptuary regulations on the other that aimed to fit royal funerals within a rank hierarchy that left them subordinate to the imperial court. As our discussion showed, complicated traditions and practices at royal courts must have prevented the performance of actual funeral ceremonies from being merely reenactments of a rank hierarchy that privileged the imperial court. Further evidence beyond royal funerals provides further evidence that funeral ceremonies and processions were not primarily understood in terms of their capacity to uphold the rank hierarchy. Indeed, a painting from tomb three at Mawangdui suggests that funerals were valued for their ability to eliminate rank and status distinctions amongst participants. We cannot deny the possibility that sumptuary regulations guided the organization of funerals and helped instantiate rank hierarchies. Nevertheless, from the perspective of practice funerals must have been equally important in forging communal bonds.

Figure 3.11 Painting From Mawangdui, Tomb 3

Image after Fu Juyou and Chen Songchang 1992, 26-27

Though studies of the rich array of items buried in the early Western Han tombs at Mawangdui practically comprise a sub-field in their own right, the silk painting reproduced in Figure 3.11 has received little attention.[73] The painting was recovered from tomb number three, which housed a member of the noble Dai 軑 family from the Changsha 長沙 kingdom.[74] It was hung on one of the wooden timbers that separated the outer compartments of the tomb from the three nested inner coffins (*guan* 棺). Located on the western side and facing inward towards the inner coffins, the painting measured an impressive 2.21 m in length and .94 m in height, thus covering almost the entirety of the wall on which it was hung.[75] The eastern wall separating the inner coffins from the outer compartments also held a painting, but upon excavation only fragments remained. Our painting fortunately fared much better, though significant portions, particularly the upper center area, were so damaged that they can no longer be discerned.

The painting is dominated by the rows on the right side of the painting, which immediately demand our attention. Ranks of men on horseback range across the lower right sector of the

[73] For a description of the painting, see the archaeology report for tombs two and three, Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 109-11.

[74] Archaeologists have offered two possible identifications for the occupant of tomb three: 1) the son and heir of Marquis Li Cang 李蒼 (tomb one) and his wife, Lady Dai (tomb two); 2) the younger brother of Li Cang. See Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 386. Since our analysis here focuses on the painting alone, the specific identity of the tomb occupant does not affect our conclusions.

[75] The walls separating the inner coffins from the outer storage compartments measured 2.62 m in length and 1.14 m in height. See Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 34.

painting, while horse-drawn chariots move across the upper right. The rows extend to the edge of the painting and beyond, since the edge cuts off rows in both groups, implying a much larger collection of men and chariots than the field of the painting alone. The men on the lower right are arrayed into fourteen rows of about six each, overseen by robed men to their left. These men stand next to teardrop-shaped standards, which serve as markers by which the horse-riding men organized themselves into rows (see Figure 3.12).

Figure 3.12 Mawangdui Tomb 3 Painting (Details)

Image after Fu Juyou and Chen Songchang 1992, 27

Most of the men look forward with backs facing us, directing our gaze towards the chariots in front of them. A few, however, look to the side as if distracted, their attention caught by something else. Note, for instance, the man in the upper right corner of Figure 3.12 gazing off to his left. The same is true of the chariot drivers. Most face forward, toward the left side of the painting, but a few glance elsewhere. The driver in the upper left corner of Figure 3.13, for example, the right side of his cap clearly visible, looks back with arm extended, almost urging the chariot behind him to move along.

Figure 3.13 Mawangdui Tomb 3 Painting (Detail)

Image after Fu Juyou and Chen Songchang 1992, 27

This interplay between rigid rows of horses and chariots on the one hand and casual and unscripted movements and gestures by people within the rows is a key strategy for bringing viewers into the action depicted in the painting. By incorporating unexpected action into his overall pattern, the artist invited viewers to search for the exceptions to order that ostensibly governed the ranks of horses and chariots. In doing so, the viewer becomes part of the activity of the painting.

The ranks of chariots, facing left, direct our gaze toward that side of the painting, which has much more complicated dynamics of viewing. At lower left, we join a crowd of people who line the edges of the painting and the far left side of the ranks of horse riders. Some of them hold long poles that lean inwards, in the same direction that everybody is looking. Their attention appears to be caught by a musical performance unfolding in the center of the field (see Figure 3.14). The centerpiece of the performance is an enormous percussion instrument, probably a drum, suspended upon three posts, the central one adorned with a huge tassel. A totem pole-like post topped by an umbrella-like cover towers above the drum. Decorative swirls twist across the side of the drum, bracketed on either side by the two red drumheads, which the musicians are striking with mallets. We see them in mid-strike, leaning back to lend more force to their next hits on the drum. Next to them is a smaller rack, under which are seated two people. Their instrument is less easily identifiable than the drum: perhaps small chimes or bells? A robed man stands adjacent to the left of the rack while a few other figures, only the barest traces and hues of their robes still visible, also look on. The overall scene is spare but arresting. The single massive drum accompanied by a couple of chimes, surrounded by a field of blank space framed by the viewers, directs our attention towards what must have been a somber concert.

Figure 3.14 Mawangudi Tomb 3 Painting (Details)

Images after Fu Juyou and Chen Songchang 1992, 29 (left) and 26 (right)

Finally, we move to the top left of the painting, across which stretch three more rows, in this case of people (see Figure 3.15). In the top row, a line of robed men holding poles files towards the right, their ghostly white faces distinguishing them from the rest of the figures in the painting. At the head of the line is a man clutching a sword and covered by an umbrella held by an attendant immediately behind him. He stands at the top of a platform, perhaps having just ascended its nine stairs. Near the foot of the platform is the second row, this one comprised of capped men holding shields. In contrast to their counterparts in the row above, these men are tightly packed together, their robes and feet forming an almost indistinguishable mass. Their attention and movements are directed towards the man at the top of the platform. They stare up towards him, and almost as if in response their line gently slopes upwards in the same direction. In contrast, the third line of figures below is completely straight. They face towards the two lines ahead, but curiously, a close look at the figures in this line shows them to be faceless, with neither eyes nor mouths (see Figure 3.16). Moreover, they do not look towards the two lines in front of them, but without exception look at each other or to their sides. Despite the fact that this third line of men is physically close enough to see the action unfolding in front of them, they clearly are not seeing it.

Figure 3.15 Mawangdui Tomb 3 Painting (Detail)

Figure 3.16 Mawangdui Tomb 3 Painting (Detail)

Images after Fu Juyou and Chen Songchang 1992, 28

What are we to make of this painting, particularly the relationship between the three rows of figures in the upper left and the rest of the scenes? The excavation report described the painting as either an image of "chariots and standards" (*che me yi zhang* 車馬儀仗) or of a "battle lines in a funeral procession" (*jun zhen song zang* 軍陣送葬).[76] The funerary context of the painting itself is not the only reason that the latter interpretation is more plausible. Countless excavations of pre-imperial and early imperial tombs, including some of the tombs detailed above, have demonstrated that chariots and soldiers were integral components of funeral processions and ceremonies.[77] The painting itself strikes a somber tone worthy of a funeral ceremony. The drum-and-chime musical performance in the lower left is not accompanied by dancing or any other form of gaiety, while the rows of horses and chariots are imposing and serious, despite the occasional unscripted breaks in pattern described above. At a pedestrian level, then, the painting is a vivid illustration of the complexity of funeral ceremonies emphasized in the previous section. From music to clothing to chariots, a huge number of decisions had to be made in order to perform a funeral for members of the wealthy and politically powerful. The artists employed a solemn and vast composition (recall the rows extending beyond the painting's edge) that invited viewers into the complicated scene as participants. We see the action of the ceremony unfold along with the horse riders, charioteers, and viewers of the musical performance that fill the fields of the painting.

And yet, the artists who painted the upper left corner erected a stark barrier between viewers and ceremony participants on the one hand and the man at the top of the platform with his retinue of white-faced attendants on the other. The figures in the lower third row form an unbroken wall. Their eyeless faces are quite literally unable to see the man on the platform, his attendants, and the soldiers carrying the shields. The editors of the archaeological report wrote that the man was probably the tomb occupant, a supposition that is certainly possible. They also wrote that he is the center of attention within the painting, the nexus around which all activity unfolded.[78] The composition of the painting and the faceless men, however, suggest that precisely the opposite was the case: the artists used every means at their disposal to separate the man on the platform from the rest of the activities of the funeral ceremony. Their intention quite possibly was to illustrate a division between the world of the living and that of the dead, which the man was now entering. In doing so, the artists invoked a concept that would have been quite salient for all participants in a funeral ceremony: members of the world of the living, despite differences in wealth and rank, held more in common with each other than they did with the dead. In this light, the faceless men in the painting are not just reminders that we in the world of the living cannot see or enter into the world of the dead. By stripping away all distinguishing facial characteristics of these figures, the artists also implied that in the context of the funeral ceremony participants become united into a community of living people, all joined together in sending the departed off on his journey through the afterlife.

Conclusion

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Gaozu adopted a hybrid political structure that distinguished his newly founded dynasty from its Qin predecessor. Since Gaozu was not strong enough to resurrect the "commandery-county" (*jun xian* 郡縣) system under imperial control that the Qin had used to administer the entire empire, he combined it with a network of autonomous kingdoms that were more reminiscent of pre-imperial forms of political organization. During the

[76] Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 109.
[77] See also Habberstad (forthcoming).
[78] Hunan sheng bowuguan and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004, 110.

first half of the Western Han, imperial court-royal court relations comprised a particularly fraught problem for Western Han emperors who sought to consolidate their control over the territory of the empire. Conflict between the imperial court and the kingdoms resulted in military rebellions by the latter that the imperial court managed to suppress. In the wake of these rebellions, the court moved to rein in the kingdoms and ensure that they remained subordinate. It executed a range of policies designed to support this aim, from appointing top administrative officials to the kingdoms to shrinking their size. It also promulgated a series of sumptuary regulations governing royal and noble funerals that situated the kingdoms within a hierarchy of ritual action. In this light, funeral sumptuary regulations were part of a larger attempt by the imperial court to subdue the kingdoms and assert its power and control over these potentially rebellious rivals.

As our discussion of both the regulations and especially material evidence from royal and noble tombs helped illustrate, however, "control" hardly suffices to describe the purpose of imperial court participation in funerals. Funerary ceremonies conducted for members of the imperial court, royal courts, and nobility were highly visible affairs that occurred on a regular, if unpredictable basis. Protocol officers and important figures from the imperial court, the courts of the kingdoms, and the nobilities would have regularly helped organize and participate in funerals across the empire. In doing so, they continued a tradition by which elaborate funeral ceremonies and processions occupied a central position in the political culture of the ruling elite. These ceremonies were guided by myriad traditions and regulations, and had always served as much to foster community and connections amongst members of the ruling class as to enforce rank hierarchies. This fact appears to have been no less true during the Western Han, and the regulations promulgated by Jingdi could not have superseded this function of funeral ceremonies. Indeed, as our discussion of the regulations and material goods from Western Han royal tombs demonstrated, it appears that the imperial court and royal courts alike were by no means bound to one form or type of funeral. Emperors and kings could create funerals that appropriately expressed the nature of their relationship and complied with practices that were important according to the traditions and precedents of their own courts. As a result, the imperial court and the royal courts of the kingdoms could use funerals as platforms to reaffirm the ties that bound together members of the imperial house.

As our discussion of the Mawangdui painting helped illustrate, artists and no doubt others who helped organize and perform funerals were fully aware of this notion that funerary ceremonies strengthened the bonds of the ruling community. The Mawangdui painting masterfully communicated the complicated and intertwined functions of a funeral: if funerals were focused on sending a deceased person off to the afterlife, they necessarily entailed the collapse of distinctions amongst participants in the funeral, who were united in both their dedication to seeing off the deceased person and in their status as members of the living world. I would argue that for royal and noble funerals alike these sorts of motivations were probably just as important and visible as were attempts by the imperial court to enforce rank and sumptuary regulations. My point is not to deny the existence or efficacy of funeral sumptuary regulations, but rather to underscore that their actual enforcement was not necessarily the most important aspect of any given funeral. Since funerals in particular were such important occasions inflected by complex beliefs, traditions, and practices, we would be taking a rather impoverished view of court funerary ritual if we were to view it only as a method by which the imperial court controlled royal courts and the nobilities.

If we turn back to our written sources, however, this notion of funerals as a ritual tool of control is precisely the picture that we get in the received histories, especially in the *Hanshu*, whether through the story of Zhou Yafu's "rebellious" purchase of funerary goods or through descriptions of Jingdi's sumptuary regulations. We are thus faced with an important question: if funerary regulations in both design and practice were not solely meant to assert control and power over the

kingdoms, how are we to explain the clear emphasis on hierarchy and control found in the *Hanshu*? On the one hand, since the *Hanshu* recounted regulations over royal funerals, we might not expect it to be concerned with the subtleties of their implementation. And yet, as we will see in the next chapter, a more detailed examination and comparison of court ritual as it is depicted and discussed in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* shows that the hierarchical nature of funerary regulations fits into a larger understanding of imperial court ritual and its function that developed over the course of the late Western Han. This discrepancy between the material evidence examined in this chapter and the ritual hierarchy enshrined in the *Hanshu* should alert us to the fact that descriptions of kingdoms and royal funerals in the latter text probably tell us less about actual practices between the imperial court and kingdoms and more about conceptions and representations of the imperial court itself.

Chapter 4

Who Gets to Praise the Emperor?
Court Audiences and Transformations in Court Ritual

In the fall of 52 BCE, Jishoushan 稽侯狦, the leader of the Huhanye 呼韓邪 branch of the Xiongnu 匈奴, encamped outside the Wuyuan Pass 五原塞, a mountain stronghold several hundred miles to the north of Chang'an. Beset by his own conflicts with rival *shanyu* 單于, or Xiongnu leaders, Jishoushan asked for permission to attend the audience held at court as part of the annual New Year festivities. His aim was no doubt to solidify his nascent alliance with the Han, an alliance that promised resources in struggles against his enemies.[1] Xuandi 宣帝 (r. 73-49 BCE) allowed him to participate in the audience, which he held at Ganquan Palace. The ceremony not only accorded the Huhanye special treatment but, at least as described in the "Annals of Xuandi" (*Xuandi ji* 宣帝紀) in the *Hanshu*, assumed spectacular proportions:

> 匈奴呼韓邪單于稽侯狦來朝，贊謁稱藩臣而不名。賜以璽綬、冠帶、衣裳、安車、駟馬、黃金、錦繡、繒絮。使有司道單于先行就邸長安，宿長平。
>
> 上自甘泉宿池陽宮。上登長平阪，詔單于毋謁。其左右當戶之群皆列觀，蠻夷君長王侯迎者數萬人，夾道陳。上登渭橋，咸稱萬歲。單于就邸。置酒建章宮，饗賜單于，觀以珍寶。二月，單于罷歸。
>
> The *shanyu* of the Huhanye Xiongnu, Jishoushan, came for the court audience. When summoned forth he was termed a "vassal lord" but was not called by name. He was given a seal with ribbons, cap, robe, passenger chariot with a four-horse team, gold, silk brocade, and silk thread. Officials were ordered to take the *shanyu* ahead to his mansion in Chang'an, overnighting along the way in Changping.[2]
>
> From Ganquan, the emperor spent the night at Chiyang Palace.[3] Then, he ascended the slope at Changping but ordered that the *shanyu* was not to be summoned. The *shanyu*'s group of left and right *danghu* all assembled to observe the emperor. Leaders of foreign groups, kings and nobles who came to greet the emperor numbered some several tens of thousands and lined themselves along both sides of the road. The emperor ascended the Wei River Bridge and everybody called out "long live the emperor!" The *shanyu* then went to his mansion. The emperor offered wine at Jianzhang Palace. Entertainment was provided

---

[1] According to the "Account of the Xiongnu" (*Xiongnu zhuan* 匈奴傳), Jishoushan was the son of the *shanyu* Xulüquanqu 虛閭權渠. Jishoushan was unable to assume his father's position, since a disgruntled former advisor installed a new *shanyu* after Xulüquanqu's death. Jishoushan became *shanyu* in 59 BCE, but was continually beset by rival claimants, especially the *shanyu* named Zhizhi 郅至. See *Hanshu* 94b.3795-7.

[2] Changping was located a few dozen miles north of Chang'an (Ru Chun 如淳 claimed 50 *li* north in his *Hanshu* commentary) across the Wei River but still south of the Jing River 涇水.

[3] Chiyang Palace was located north of the Jing River. The important point in the context of this passage seems to be that the *shanyu* stayed overnight closer to Chang'an than did Xuandi. The *shanyu* and his entourage thus would have observed the emperor's procession as it reached the slope of Changping, before the entire party continued south to view the emperor's passage over the Wei River Bridge.

for the *shanyu*, with precious treasures put on display. In the second month, the *shanyu* quit Chang'an and returned home.[4]

The audience at Ganquan and the subsequent banquets and entertainment at Jianzhang Palace west of Chang'an, adjoining Shanglin Park, provided the *shanyu* with a spectacular display of the material wealth and political might of the emperor and the imperial court.[5] Moreover, the spectacle allowed Xuandi's officials and indeed anybody else from the Chang'an area who managed to catch a glimpse of the emperor as he crossed the Wei River to see that the *shanyu* had officially submitted to Han suzerainty.

The performance, however, also featured subtleties of terminology and action that were probably significant only for groups within the imperial court. For example, the passage points out that when the *shanyu* came for his court audience he was called a "vassal lord" (*fanchen* 藩臣) during the ceremony but was not referred to by name. Nor was the *shanyu* summoned when the emperor arrived at Changping, where the Xiongnu leader and his entourage stayed. Presumably these modes of address and interaction distinguished the *shanyu* from other participants in the New Year's audience. It is worth emphasizing here that prior to 51 BCE a *shanyu* had never participated in the annual audience. Though Xuandi's use of the court audience to broadcast the submission of a powerful foreign dignitary would seem to be an almost intuitive political strategy, the "vassal lord" status of the *shanyu* and the special treatment he received alerts us to the fact that the occasion was by no means simple. By allowing the *shanyu* to participate, Xuandi invited difficult questions regarding the proper form of ritual to be employed and the difference in rank between Han subjects and foreign visitors. If the New Year's audience was typically understood to be a regular occasion for kings, nobles, and officials to reaffirm their loyalty to and support for the emperor, does the description of the *shanyu*'s address mean that his declaration of loyalty was different than theirs or that his status vis-à-vis the emperor was distinct? What, in the end, did this mode of address signify for both the *shanyu* and the court itself? More importantly for our purposes in this chapter: what does this court audience tell us about changing institutional arrangements behind court ritual as well as shifting representations of the emperor and the court?

***

As the description and questions above indicate, the 51 BCE audience provides a window into how court audience rituals in particular and court ceremonial in general changed as the imperial court accommodated new types of participants and new protocol. Even if study of these changes can tell us much about the imperial court, court audiences have received surprisingly little attention in the secondary literature. Rather, studies of court ritual have tended to emphasize the imperial sacrifices and ancestral cults, especially their reform in late Western Han.[6] Certainly, these ceremonies were important for the court and are highly visible in the historical record. We could hardly expect otherwise, since performance of ceremonial duties at imperial shrines, particularly

[4] *Hanshu* 8.271.
[5] This 51 BCE audience is thus one good example of using Shangling Park as a display venue to impress foreign dignitaries (see Chapter 2).
[6] See Chapter 1 above, 37-8 and n.50.

ancestral shrines, was universally understood as one of the most important duties of the emperor.[7] Moreover, the imperial court expended significant resources in maintaining the sacrifices and ceremonies at shrines throughout the empire.[8] Small wonder, then, that the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* both devoted separate chapters to imperial sacrifices: the "Treatise on the *Feng* and *Shan*" (*Feng shan shu* 封禪書) in the former and the "Treatise on Sacrifices" (*Jiao si zhi* 郊祀志) in the latter. As the *Hanshu* treatise in particular details, fervent debates about imperial sacrifices increasingly drew upon precedents and models derived from ancient sages and worthis. Eventually, in the waning days of the Western Han these discussions led to the consolidation of imperial altars to the suburbs around Chang'an and a reduction in the number of shrines dedicated to the emperors. When Wang Mang constructed the Mingtang 明堂 and Biyong 壁雍 in an area just to the south of the Chang'an city walls, he capped a classicizing trend in court ritual that looked to purportedly ancient models for guidance.[9]

Given this prominence of the imperial sacrifices in our sources, and the intriguing role of classical concepts in court debates about the sacrifices, scholars interested in court ritual should be forgiven for paying little attention to the seemingly less controversial and less heady topic of the audiences specifically and "court ceremonial" (*chao yi* 朝儀) generally. After all, compared to the imperial sacrifices, the topics received but spotty treatment in written sources. "Court ceremonial" itself is a broad category that encompasses a motley collection of ritual comprised of precedents, rules, and ceremonial protocol that defy easy summation. Even if we confine our discussion of court ceremonial to the annual "court audience" held as part of the New Year festivities, as this chapter will do, there are numerous contradictions and lacunae in the sources that make it difficult to tease apart a narrative of how this court ritual may have evolved during the Western Han.

I emphasize these problems even while mindful of the impressive amount of information about the court audience marshaled by Derk Bodde in his seminal study, *Festivals in Classical China*. As Bodde demonstrated, the court audience occurred annually at the beginning of the year: the tenth month of the lunar year prior to 104 BCE, and the first month after the calendar reforms of 104 BCE. In addition, the annual audience was accompanied by entertainment and amusements of various sorts, it being the central event of the New Year's celebrations that took place at court.[10] Moreover, the court audience coincided with the annual "presentation of accounts" (*shang ji* 上計) in which officials from commanderies and kingdoms submitted reports detailing the registered population, number of government officers, total tax receipts, and other critical information from

---

[7] As Loewe 1981, 106-7, showed, on the occasions when a new emperor was installed by non-hereditary means, officials emphasized his ability to perform and maintain the rites at the ancestral shrines.

[8] The most famous description of resources and personnel used to maintain sacrifices and rites in the cult of imperial ancestors comes in the biography of Wei Xuancheng 韋玄成 (*Hanshu* 73.3115-6), a high official during the reign of Yuandi who participated in debates about reform of sacrifices and ceremonies at imperial shrines and ancestral temples. For a concise description, see Loewe 1974, 179-80. Note that the *Hanshu* description specifically states that the resources and personnel listed do not include those required to raise the livestock used in the sacrifices, which presumably would have made the whole enterprise vastly more expensive. For an analysis of the entire "sacrificial economy" during the Han, as reflected in ritual texts, see Sterckx 2009.

[9] For a very thorough and nuanced discussion of this topic, see Tian Tian (forthcoming). See also Chapter 1, n.50 above.

[10] Bodde 1975, 139-61. As Bodde discussed, the New Year celebrations included a variety of ceremonies designed to mark the auspicious beginning of the year.

the territories of the empire.[11] As valuable as Bodde's study is, however, he focused almost exclusively on normative descriptions of the court audience and ignored debates about audiences recorded in the *Hanshu* and changes in the institutional arrangements that governed the audiences. Even the sources employed by Bodde show intriguing contradictions that raise questions about whether or not everything that is called a "court audience" in our sources necessarily referred to the same practice.[12]

While these lacunae and problems of interpretation have stymied study of court ceremonial, a bias in our sources presents a further barrier. The few descriptions of court audiences and ceremonial that we have present a relatively straightforward purpose for both: to provide a ritual program that upheld the Western Han hierarchy of ranks. From the beginning of the dynasty, when Gaozu's advisor Shusun Tong 叔孫通 devised the first court audience ceremony, the purpose of court ceremonial was almost universally understood as being "to venerate the ruler and to restrain the minister" (尊君抑臣).[13] Indeed, Sima Qian's famous description of Shusun Tong's ceremony, translated below, so brilliantly demonstrates the efficacy of the court audience in creating a ritual order at court that further discussion seems almost pointless:

> 儀：先平明，謁者治禮，引以次入殿門，廷中陳車騎步衛宮，設兵張旗志。傳言趨。殿下郎中俠陛，陛數百人。功臣列侯諸將軍軍吏以次陳西方，東鄉；文官丞相以下陳東方，西鄉。大行設九賓，臚傳。於是皇帝輦出房，百官執職傳警，引諸侯王以下至吏六百石以次奉賀。自諸侯王以下莫不振恐肅敬。

---

[11] Bodde argued that the submission of accounts continued to occur in the tenth month even after the court audience was changed to the first month from 104 BCE. In a manner similar to the United States and other modern nations, then, after 104 BCE the Han empire employed a "fiscal calendar" with start and end dates that differed from the calendar year. Moreover, an annual court audience in the tenth month continued even after the 104 BCE calendar reforms moved the main court audience in the first month. We cannot determine precise differences between the tenth-month and first-month audiences, however, since we have almost no information about the former. As Bodde also noted, the reports were submitted by "accounts officials" (*ji li* 計吏). We do not understand the role of these officials in the court audience as compared to the kings and nobles who actually held title to the land that the accounts officials reported on.

A newly excavated letter written on a wooden board recovered from a late Western Han tomb near Tianchang in Anhui province might cast some doubt on Bodde's analysis. That letter mentions a trip to submit accounts in the eleventh month by an official serving as an Assistant (*cheng* 丞) to a Governor (see Chapter 5 for a full translation and analysis). If Bodde was correct that accounts continued to be submitted in the tenth month even after 104 BCE, this letter suggests that submission of accounts and attendance at a tenth month audience was not always followed or required.

[12] I refer specifically here to the equation that Bodde drew between Sima Qian's description of Shusun Tong's 叔孫通 first court audience ceremony during the time of Gaozu and the description by Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 of the court visits to Chang'an by the Liu family kings. Analysis below emphasizes the differences and contradictions between these two sources.

[13] *Shiji* 23.1159.

至禮畢，復置法酒。諸侍坐殿上皆伏抑首，以尊卑次起上壽。觴九行，謁者言罷酒。御史執法舉不如儀者輒引去。竟朝置酒，無敢讙譁失禮者。於是高帝曰：「吾乃今日知為皇帝之貴也。」迺拜叔孫通為太常，賜金五百斤。

The ceremony commenced before dawn. Messengers governed the ritual, leading people in by rank as they entered the gates of the hall. Within the center of the courtyard were arrayed chariots, cavalry, soldiers, and guards. They set up their weapons and set high the flags and emblems. An order was passed on: "Forward." At the foot of the hall the gentlemen of the palace assembled to the sides of the stairs, and the stairs themselves held several hundred people. Organized by rank on the west, and facing east, were the meritorious ministers, nobles, generals, and military officers. Organized by rank on the east, and facing west, were the civil officials and the Chancellor. The *Taixing* set them into nine ranks, while heralds transmitted orders to them.[14] Thereupon, the Emperor emerged from his chambers in a litter and the many officers grasped their halberds and passed on orders with urgent precision. By order of rank, the regional kings on down to the officials at the salary level of 600 bushels were led in to offer their praise. From the regional kings on down, nobody failed to tremble in terror and shrink back in deference.

When the ritual was complete, all sat down as the regulation wine was set out. Everybody in attendance in the hall bent over and pressed his head down. Then, by order of rank from highest to lowest, each raised his head and wished the Emperor a long life. They drank from their goblets nine times, and then the messengers said: "Set aside the wine." Imperial Counselors commanded the rules of the proceedings and immediately led out anybody who did not conform to the ceremonial protocol. Throughout the court audience and presentation of wine, nobody dared to cry out or falter in maintaining ritual decorum. Thereupon, the emperor said: "Only now do I understand the nobility of being the Emperor." He appointed Shusun Tong to be Superintendent of Ceremonial and gave him five hundred catties of gold.[15]

Throughout the passage, Sima paid particular attention to space and rank. He repeatedly notes that the movements of ceremony participants, including their entrance into the hall's courtyard (廷) as well as their position on the stairs (陛) and within the hall itself (殿上) were governed by rank. As they toasted the emperor, ritual participants would have simultaneously displayed both their fealty to the ruler and their position within the hierarchy. Small wonder, then, that the ceremony caused ritual participants to "shrink in deference" (肅敬) and Gaozu to marvel at the power the ritual held in making him realize his own supreme status and authority. five hundred catties of gold and promotion to the position of Superintendent of Ceremonial for Shusun Tong were no doubt a small price to pay for such an effective ceremony. Most scholars have been content to understand Sima Qian's portrayal of the inaugural audiences as a representative prototype for all court audiences;

[14] Commentators have offered different interpretations for *jiu bin* 九賓. The rendering of "nine ranks" here follows the commentary of Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204-273 CE): "*Jiu bin* refers to the nine ritual protocols from the *Zhouli* for the nine different ranks of *gong*, *hou*, *bo*, *zi*, *nan*, *gu*, *qing*, *daifu*, and *shi*." (九賓，則周禮九儀也，謂公、侯、伯、子、男、 孤、卿、大夫、士也).

[15] *Shiji* 99.2724.

some have even understood it to be a copy of the protocols and statutes written by Shusun Tong that were supposedly used to execute court ceremonies.[16]

Accepting Sima Qian's portrayal of Shusun Tong's ceremony as an accurate and representative description for all court ceremonies, however, ignores not only his rhetorical aims but also the court audiences in our sources that seem altogether different (e.g. the 51 BCE court audience described above) and changes in the groups who actually participated in court audiences. We thus begin with an overview of changes to the court audience, its participants, and its presiding institutional arrangements over the course of the Western Han. As we will see, the Grand Herald gradually assumed control of designing and executing all court audience ceremonies *and* managing the disbursal of high rank and emoluments to allies of the throne. The unification of institutional administration of court ritual and rank under the office of the Grand Herald was partly due to a concerted effort during the reigns of Jingdi and Wudi in particular to arrange the Liu household kings and nobles into a hierarchy of ritual action. As the decades passed, new generations of kings, nobles, and officials came to participate in court audiences, while territorial expansion brought new participants into the ceremony, including members of foreign groups such as the Huhanye *shanyu*. Starting from the mid-Western Han, then, the Grand Herald became sole caretaker of an ever more specialized body of court ceremonial knowledge and administrative procedures that governed an expanded population of participants in court ritual.

The chapter then moves on to investigate how these changes might have played a role in discussions of ritual at court. We will focus on three groups of sources that illustrate conceptions of ritual at three different points in the late Western Han: the "Treatise on Ritual" (*Lishu* 禮書) and related sources from the *Shiji*; debates about the 52 BCE audience recorded in the *Hanshu* and related discussions from the *Yantielun* 鹽鐵論 (Salt and Iron Debates); and finally the "Treatise on Ritual and Music" (*Li yue zhi* 禮樂志) from the *Hanshu*. Detailed consideration of these sources and their depiction of court audiences and ceremonial shows that discussions of ritual underwent a fundamental transformation in the late Western Han, with the 52 BCE debates about the court audience an important turning point. Whereas the *Shiji* was primarily concerned with the question of whether or not ritual practices could remain free of manipulation within internal court political struggles, the 52 BCE debates and records in the *Yantielun* suggest that by late in Xuandi's reign at least some court officials were intensely interested in the capacity of audiences to represent models of the court to the outside world. This notion that ritual could help the court embody a "model" (*fa* 法) was developed further in the very late Western Han, which saw officers distinguishing between written regulations guiding court ceremonial and a more privileged notion of ritual models rooted in classical practice. A concluding analysis of discussion of the Liu household kings in the early histories, however, will confirm the picture provided in the discussion of the Grand Herald: the *Hanshu* understanding of ritual, which called upon classical models of a restrained and benevolent state, was paradoxically founded on a muscular form of imperial power that these models claimed to refute.

---

[16] See, e.g. Cao Lüning 2008, which focused on a text entitled "Statutes on Court Ceremonial" (*chao lü* 朝律) that was recently excavated from tomb 336 at Zhangjiashan. Unfortunately, unlike the documents from Zhangjiashan tomb 247, photographs and transcriptions of the bamboo strips from tomb 336 have not been published. For a short discussion of these "Statutes on Court Ceremonial" from Zhangjiashan, see Peng Hao 1993, 171. For the "Statutes on Court Ceremonial" as mentioned in received texts, see Hulsewé 1955, 66-67 n.44.

The Grand Herald: Court Audiences, Reform, and the Hierarchy of Ranks

Any observer of pre-modern court politics knows that ritual practices at all courts, in ideal terms, were partly designed to support hierarchies of rank. The early imperial Chinese were certainly no exception. Even if our discussion in the previous chapter emphasized that funerary ritual in particular was just as effective in forming communal bonds as it was in reinforcing hierarchies, the court audience was expressly designed to display the supreme status of the emperor and the subservience of his subject nobles and officials. Ritual masters from pre-imperial and early imperial times were intensely interested in the power of ritual as a tool to forge political order, a strain of early Chinese thought that has long attracted the attention of Euro-American scholars.[17] The *Xunzi* 荀子 (comp. ca. mid-3rd century BCE) is justifiably famous in this regard, though that text equally recognized the importance of ritual as a means for proper and efficacious interpersonal communication.[18] Nonetheless, the *Xunzi* loudly proclaimed the the indispensable role played by ritual in transforming the behavior of officials into refined action that upheld the rank order. The end result was a court that was "ordered and imposing" (*jiji qiangqiang* 濟濟鏘鏘).[19] All evidence suggests that this understanding of ritual as a tool for consolidating the court hierarchy was especially salient during the early decades of the Western Han. Indeed, Sima Qian's description of Shusun Tong's first court audience (translated above) can be read as a Xunzian celebration of court ceremonial's capacity to transform behavior and support the rank hierarchy.

Recognizing the rhetorical roots of Sima Qian's description, which we will explore in more detail below, however, is not to deny the fact that early Western Han rulers were very much preoccupied with organizing members of the imperial household and supporters of the new regime into a hierarchy of ranks. This concern extended to large portions of the populace, as demonstrated by the fact that the Han continued to disburse the "orders of merit and honor" (*jue* 爵) that had been used during pre-imperial times.[20] At the imperial court itself, however, court ceremonial was particularly focused on arranging kings, nobles, and officials according to a hierarchy of rank. The annual court audience held huge symbolic importance in this regard, as demonstrated by one of the tables in the *Shiji*, the "Annual Table of the Kings From the Rise of the Han" (漢興以來諸侯王年表). Sima Qian recorded not just the years that the kings assumed their throne and died, but also the years that the kings were deposed and when they came for the court audience.[21] The year-by-year notation of which kings attended court and which rebelled or committed a crime thus distinguished between the kings who fulfilled their duties and remained loyal to the imperial court on the one hand and those kings who failed in their duties and turned against the court. Two Qing-era commentators were probably correct, then, when they wrote that Sima Qian recorded court audience attendance in order to indicate whether or not the kings were acting in a properly

[17] The literature is too vast to summarize here. Pines 2000 (esp. 2 n.2 and 3 n.4-6) noted many of the important works.
[18] Nylan 2000, 177.
[19] *Xunzi*, "Da lüe" 大略 (*juan* 27). The full line reads: "The beauty of a court is that it is ordered and imposing" (朝廷之美，濟濟鏘鏘).
[20] See Loewe 1960 and 2010; Nishijima Sadao 1961.
[21] The table thus stands in contrast to the table of the kings in the *Hanshu*, which included only information about the succession within each kingdom.

deferential manner.[22] Other stories in the early histories confirm that the imperial court was quite keen to see the kings fulfill their court audience duties and harbored an almost paranoid fear of the significance of a missed court ceremony.[23]

We have already noted at the beginning of this chapter that the court audience occurred on the New Year (in the tenth month prior to 104 BCE and in the first month thereafter) and that part of the ceremony involved the "submission of accounts" (*shang ji*).[24] These requirements remind us that kings and nobles could not just "show up" for their court audience; preparations had to be made and protocol had to be followed in order to properly fulfill audience duties.[25] As we will see in the next section, the basis of court ritual became an increasingly important topic of debate in the late Western Han. Throughout the early Western Han, however, the imperial court continued to use the written rules and regulations developed under the Qin that governed court ceremonial (*chao yi* 朝儀).

---

[22] Wang Yue 汪越 (obtained *juren* degree in 1705) and Xu Kefan 徐克范 (fl. ca. early 18th century) offered this interpretation in their work *Du Shiji shi biao* 讀史記十表. See *Er shi wu shi bu bian* 1937, vol. 1, 14.

[23] In their descriptions of the king of Wu, Liu Pi's revolt in 154 BCE, the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* both noted that the king stopped attending the court audience on the pretext of illness after his son died in Chang'an at the hands of Wendi's son. Wendi became quite angry and even bound and interrogated an envoy from Wu, before eventually giving Liu Pi special dispensation that relieved him of his duty to travel to Chang'an to attend the court audience. *Shiji* 106.2823-24/*Hanshu* 35.1905.

[24] As Bodde 1975 (148-51) showed, the tenth-month audience appears to have not entirely disappeared, since we have a few references to it in the Eastern Han. Moreover, after 104 BCE accounts from the commanderies and kingdoms continued to be submitted at the end of the 9th month, which served as the end of the Han fiscal year. Nonetheless, in the *Hanshu* at least for the years after 104 BCE we read consistently of " attending the court audience in the first month" (*chao zheng yue* 朝正月). The tenth-month audience appears to have been of lesser importance; royal and noble attendance was probably expected in the first-month audience.

Note that Accounts Officials (*ji li* 計吏) were responsible for delivering the documents to the capital at the end of the ninth month. The precise connection between the delivery of the documents and the attendance of kings and nobles at the court audience, then, remains unclear.

[25] The royal and imperial courts alike appear to have recorded such protocol for the audiences, and not necessarily in a standardized format. For example, the Western Han royal tomb excavated in Dingxian 定縣, Hebei, for example, yielded a bamboo manuscript entitled "A Daily Record of the New Year's Court Audience of the Second Year of Wufeng (56 BCE) Attended by the King of Liu'an" (六安王朝五鳳二年正月起居記). According to an initial summary, the text detailed the journey of Liu Ding 劉定, King Miao 繆 of Liu'an, to attend the court audience in Chang'an. It apparently described the places that the king stopped and the activities that the king engaged in when he arrived at the capital. See Guojia wenwu ju guwen xian yanjiu shi, et. al., 1981, 12. Unfortunately, the text has not been well preserved, rendering detailed study impossible. It is nonetheless interesting to note that this text was found not in a Liu'an tomb, but a royal tomb far to the north in the kingdom of Changshan 常山. Records of royal journeys such as the Dingzhou text apparently circulated at least among members of the imperial family if not wider circles of the ruling elite. For the excavation report of the Dingxian tomb, see Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo 1981.

There is thus no question that a written protocol for court ceremonies existed from the beginning of the Western Han.[26]

Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the history of these protocols and how they changed over the course of the Western Han, let alone whether or not they were consistently followed. As a result, we must treat with extreme caution the following description by Chu Shaosun of the procedures that Western Han kings followed when making their court visits:

> 諸侯王朝見天子，漢法凡當四見耳。始到，入小見；到正月朔旦，奉皮薦璧玉賀正月，法見；後三日，為王置酒，賜金錢財物；後二日，復入小見，辭去。凡留長安不過二十日。小見者，燕見於禁門內，飲於省中，非士人所得入也。
> When the kings have a court audience with the Son of Heaven, Han regulations in all cases stipulate that they are to have only four audiences. When they first arrive, they enter for a minor audience (*xiao jian*). At dawn of the first day of the first month, they present hides and discs of jade as congratulatory offerings for the first month. This is the regulation visit. Three days later, the emperor sets out wine for the kings and gives them bronze cash and valuable items. Two days after that, they again enter for a short audience and then depart. In total they remain in Chang'an for no more than twenty days. The "minor audience" is a banquet audience within the forbidden gates and drink is offered in the inner fastness of the palace. It is not an occasion to which officials are allowed entry.[27]

Chu concludes with a statement about the frequency of court visits:

> 朝見賀正月者，常一王與四 侯俱朝見，十餘歲一至。
> Those who attend court audiences and offer congratulatory offerings in the first month usually include one king and four nobles, and they come once every ten years or so.[28]

Chu offered these descriptions in order to illustrate that King Xiao of Liang 梁孝王 did not follow Han regulations in his court visits and meetings with his brother and emperor, Jingdi. Conflicts with other sources, however, suggest that the protocol described by Chu Shaosun did not hold for all of the Western Han. For example, the records of court audiences included in Sima Qian's "Yearly Table of Kings from the Rise of the Han" (see above) do not follow the consistent pattern articulated by Chu. If Sima's table can be believed, some kings in the early Western Han visited court much more frequently than once every ten years, while others neglected to attend the annual audience for well over a decade.[29] The description of gifts also seems slightly anachronistic for the early Western Han. For example, in the mid- and late-Western Han, gifts of coins would have been extremely valuable to the kings, since in their eras the imperial court enjoyed a monopoly on minting

---

[26] See Hulsewé 1955, 37 and 66-67 n.44.
[27] *Shiji* 58.2090.
[28] *Shiji* 58.2091.
[29] Frequent court visitors included Liu Zhi 劉志 (r. 164-131 BCE) who ruled the kingdoms of Jibei 濟北 and Zichuan 淄川. He attended the New Year court audience seven times over the course of his thirty-three-year rule: in 161, 160, 159, 155, 149, 148, and then finally 143 BCE. Note the complete lack of court visits in the last ten years of his reign (perhaps he was too old and infirm to make the journey?). A much less frequent visitor was Liu Yong 劉庸 (r. 128-101 BCE), king of Changsha 長沙; he visited in 121, 114, and 101 BCE.

coins. As we saw in Chapter 2, however, prior to Wudi's monopoly on coinage kingdoms in the early Western Han the kingdoms also minted their own coins. Imperial gifts of coins during the court audiences of the early Western Han, then, would have been mostly symbolic and probably unimportant.

These problems indicate that Chu Shaosun was, at best, describing process in use during the late Western Han; we cannot assume that they represent regulations in force during the entire dynasty. Nonetheless, Chu's statement no doubt accurately reflects the fact that royal attendees of the court audience remained in Chang'an for a prolonged period of time while attending the first-month audience. During these periods, as Chu indicates, kings no doubt had opportunities to interact with the emperor in settings slightly less formal than the main ceremony (termed the "regulation audience" [*fa jian*] by Chu). We have descriptions elsewhere in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* of such intimate meetings between the emperor and the kings.[30] Moreover, even if the list of court audience gifts that Chu provides is suspiciously schematic or anachronistic, it is probably the case that the audience entailed material exchange obligations on the part of both the Liu kings and the emperor. The *Shiji* and *Hanshu* record other sorts of gifts presented at court during court audiences. One of the most famous was undeniably the king of Huainan 淮南, Liu An's presentation to Wudi of the *Huainanzi* 淮南子, a text he compiled at his court and presented to the emperor in a lavish spectacle that probably included music and dance.[31] The court visit, then, was an opportunity for material exchange as much as for communication and discussion of political matters.

Even if our records are incomplete, then, there is no question that performing court audiences with kings and nobles alike was a key duty for the imperial court. As the description of Shusun Tong's ceremony in the *Shiji* showed, the court audience required a body of officials to supervise the logistics of the ceremony and make sure all participants performed properly. The fact that many different groups of people participated in court audiences, including the kings and nobles but also officials, required careful attention to matters of rank in court audiences. It stands to reason that changes to these groups (e.g. expansion, contraction, shifts in rank) would have required different arrangements when performing the court audience. Precisely these sorts of changes deeply affected the Grand Herald (*Da Honglu* 大鴻臚), the officer charged with overseeing the audiences.

---

[30] The most well-known is no doubt an interaction between the king of Changshan 常山, Liu Sheng 劉勝, and Wudi during a court audience visit in 138 BCE by Sheng and several other Liu kings. After Liu Sheng recited a poem that lamented the harshness of imperial policies towards the kings, Wudi temporarily adjusted them, "reducing the number of memorials submitted by officials about the kings and augmenting benevolent policies that would make imperial relatives closer" (省有司所奏諸侯事，加親親之恩焉) (*Hanshu* 53.2425). As Vankeerberghen 2013 pointed out, the *Hanshu* poem is profitably understood less as a verbatim transcript of what Liu Sheng said than as an articulation of one model of the function of the kings in the late Western and Eastern Han. The relevant point for us, however, is that the *Hanshu* depicts Liu Sheng and Wudi conversing in a less formal manner. The description confirms what we might reasonably assume: the annual "court audience" required of the kings provided opportunities for the emperor not only to reaffirm the loyalty of the former, but also to reaffirm their bonds as imperial household members.

[31] See Kern 2014. We also read in the *Hanshu* that Liu De 劉德, king of Hejian 河間, compiled a series of classical texts and discussed matters related to music and classical ritual with Wudi during a court visit. The *Shiji* contains no such record, however, and Ban Gu clearly indicated that he held Liu De as a model counterexample to the rebellious Liu An. See the discussion later in this chapter and *Hanshu* 53.2410.

The Grand Herald experienced more changes in responsibilities over the course of the Western Han than most officials, eventually assuming responsibility over many aspects of court audience ritual and the management and presentation of titles. Table 4.1 summarizes these changes:

Table 4.1: Changes to the Grand Herald

Date	Change/reform
Early Western Han……..	Following Qin practice, the Director of Guests was in charge of relations with foreign groups. He might also have managed the disbursal and confiscation of some official seals and ribbons.[32]
148 BCE…….	Jingdi assigned the Director of Guests with the responsibility of presenting a posthumous name (*shi* 諡) and funerary dirge (*lei* 誄) upon the death of a Liu king. He was also made responsible for the official orders of appointment (*ce* 策) given to newly enfeoffed nobles. An official named *Taixing* 大行, meanwhile, was made responsible for the posthumous names and dirges of nobles as well as the official orders of appointment for the tutors assigned to Liu royals.[33]
144 BCE…….	As part of a series of changes to official titles, Jingdi renamed the Director of Guests *Taixing*. The old *Taixing*, meanwhile, was renamed *Xingren* 行人. The old *Taixing* thus became a subordinate officer of the old Director of Guests (who from 144 to 104 BCE would confusingly be called *Taixing*).[34]
104 BCE…….	The *Taixing* (old Director of Guests) was renamed Grand Herald, and to his duties were added all responsibility for the mansions (*di* 邸) used by visitors from the commanderies and kingdoms.[35] The Grand Herald also assumed responsibility

[32] The evidence is spare, but we read that when Zhou Bo 周勃 conspired with his allies at court to suppress the Lü 呂 clan and install Wendi on the throne, the Director of Guests, Liu Jie 劉揭, managed to confiscate Lü Lu's 呂錄 official seal that he carried as general of the Northern Army 北軍. Liu was successful and managed to turn control of the Northern Army over to Zhou (*Shiji* 9.409/*Hanshu* 3.102). The "Treatise on the Many Officials" (*Bai guan zhi* 百官志) from the *Hou Hanshu* states that the Grand Herald was in charge of disbursing ribbons and seals for the kings (*Hou Hanshu* 30.3583), but there is no evidence that he was in charge of royal seals and ribbons in the early Western Han. See Kumagai Shigezō 2001, 79 and 97.

[33] *Hanshu* ??.?? See also Table 3.? in Chapter 3.

[34] Only the *Shiji* records this change (*Shiji* 12.446). See Kumagai Shigezō 2001, 92-3.

[35] Presumably, these included the both the mansions in Chang'an and those near Ganquan, which Wudi had constructed in 104 BCE (see Chapter 1).

for the nobles, which had previously been managed by the *Zhujue duwei* 主爵都尉. Finally, the *Xingren* again became *Taixing*.[36]

28 BCE…… The Director of Dependent States (*Dian shuguo* 典屬國) was eliminated, with all duties combined under the Grand Herald.[37]

The scholar Kumagai Shigezō emphasized that these changes constituted the consolidation of both court ceremonial and management of court rank under the single office of the Grand Herald.[38] We already saw in the previous chapter that the reforms in 148 BCE of the Grand Herald were part of a larger reform of funerary practices at the imperial court that were likely a reaction to the 154 BCE rebellion, since they established a hierarchy of administrative practice designed to reflect the status of the humbled kingdoms vis-à-vis the imperial court and the nobles. The table shows, however, that the Grand Herald took on many more responsibilities beyond funerals. By 104 BCE he had come to coordinate the dispensation of posthumous names, funerary dirges, and official orders of appointment for all kings and nobles. To these tasks were added management of the villas that visiting guests used while staying in Chang'an, while finally in late Western Han the Grand Herald assumed responsibility for the dependent states.

After 104 BCE, then, and especially by late Western Han, the bureau of the Grand Herald commanded an established framework for incorporating kings and nobles into court ceremonies. This process that no doubt required the Herald to keep meticulous records on these groups, not least because both kingdoms and nobilities were heritable and in theory could continue across the reigns of multiple emperors, though in practice nobilities in particular frequently did not last beyond their first incumbent for reasons of a criminal conviction or lack of an heir. The work of the Grand Herald was by no means a small one, for the composition of both kingdoms and nobilities changed significantly over the course of the Western Han, as shown in Table 4.2.[39]

Table 4.2: Number of Kings and Nobles Appointed by Reign[40]

Emperor	Kings	Nobles				Total # kings and nobles appointed
		Royal Sons	*For merit*	*Favoritism*	*Total*	
Gaozu	11	3	137	3	143	154
Huidi	8		3		3	11

[36] *Hanshu* 19a.730.
[37] *Hanshu* 19a.735.
[38] Kumagai Shigezō 1997 and 2001. Much of the information in Table 4.1 is drawn from these two articles, which together provide the most in-depth analyses of changes to the Grand Herald during the Western Han.
[39] See the table in Loewe 2004, 290.
[40] The numbers in this table are taken from Loewe 2004, 290 and 391-93. Loewe based his tables and lists on information from the three *Hanshu* tables of nobilities (those given to royal sons, for merit, and for favoritism).

Empress Lü	3 (11)*	3	12	10	25	28
Wendi	16 (20)	14	10	3	27	43
Jingdi	25 (29)	7	18	4	29	54
Wudi	9 (33)	178	75	9	262	271
Zhaodi	(19)	11	8	6	25	44
Xuandi	5 (22)	63	11	20	94	99
Yuandi	6 (21)	48	1	2	51	57
Chengdi	4 (22)	43	5	10	58	62
Aidi	1 (19)	9		13	22	23
Pingdi	4 (22)	27		22	49	53

**The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of kingdoms that existed during each reign*

The biggest change in the kingdoms and nobilities came during the reigns of Jingdi and Wudi. Jingdi appointed twenty-five new kings, most of them his sons, while Wudi appointed 262 new nobles, a number that vastly outstripped even the large number of nobilities that Gaozu had appointed. Many of Jingdi's royal appointees replaced kingdoms that had been eliminated in the wake of the 154 BCE rebellions. Wudi's nobles, meanwhile, were primarily sons of kings and men who had distinguished themselves in military campaigns that expanded the borders of the empire to the west and south. Moreover, forty of Wudi's seventy-five nobles appointed for merit were members of foreign groups who had surrendered to Han suzerainty. Other important changes include a more than double increase during the reign of Xuandi in the number of nobles appointed for reasons of favoritism (*enze* 恩澤).

At the same time, for reigns after Wudi, the table tells a story of relative stability in the overall number of kings and nobles. We see, for instance, that starting from the reign of Zhaodi the number of kingdoms stayed more or less constant, at around twenty. The nobilities are a bit more difficult to discern, partly because we do not have complete records for when all nobilities were closed. Nonetheless, we can see from the table that in no case did an emperor vastly increase the number of nobilities bestowed across all three categories; only one or two categories at most saw a large increase. Moreover, and most strikingly, the number of nobilities bestowed for merit decreased significantly over the course of the late Western Han. And while Xuandi bestowed about twice the number of nobilities as his successor emperors, his predecessor Zhaodi gave out only a quarter of Xuandi's number. Moreover, as Michael Loewe showed in his detailed study of the nobilities, from 90 BCE to the end of the Western Han, the number in particular of existing nobilities bestowed for merit hardly fluctuated at all: in 90 BCE, there were 27 such nobilities, while in AD 10 there were 25.[41]

This overall stability in numbers by no means denies the significance of specific spikes in appointments during the late Western Han.[42] It does, however, fit well with the picture of the Grand Herald described above, which showed that by late Western Han the office commanded a set of relatively established protocols and procedures for court ritual. As Table 4.2 shows, the growth in numbers of kingdoms and nobilities through Wudi's reign was followed by a period of relative stability in the number and ratio of kingdoms and nobilities. As kingdoms and nobilities expired for a variety of reasons, new ones were created that maintained this stability. We must imagine the

[41] Loewe 2004, 315.

[42] On the fate of kingdoms and nobilities in late Western Han and their continuing, if transformed political significance, see Vankeerberghen (forthcoming).

Director of Guests supervising all of these new appointments, keeping track of them, and incorporating them into audience ceremonies of all sorts in the imperial palaces. This system had been in operation for over fifty years when Jishoushan requested the right to participate in the 51 BCE audience. His appearance would have raised many questions. Would he be treated as a royal, noble, or something else entirely during the audience? Given the institutional practices and records detailed here that the Director of Guests oversaw, he would have been the logical official to consult beyond the officials who debated the *shanyu*'s visit to Xuandi's imperial court. As our discussion in the next section will demonstrate, descriptions of the 51 BCE court audience indicate that there was a divide in ritual knowledge between the Director of Guests on the one hand and other officials more concerned with ritual theory and, ultimately, the proper representation of the court on the other. This dichotomy in discussions of court ritual is not at all evident in Sima Qian's analysis of the subject in the *Shiji*, however. This discrepancy alerts us to a growing concern with reforming ritual along classical lines and reassessing the legacy of the ritual "fixer" par excellence, Shusun Tong.

Writing and Rewriting the History of "Fixing the Rites" (*Ding li* 定禮)

The previous section traced transformations in ritual practice in order to demonstrate that by the end of Wudi's reign the administration of court audiences and court ceremonial fell under the purview of the Grand Herald, who became charged with incorporating a population of kings, nobles, and foreigners into programs of ritual practice that reflected the supremacy of the imperial court. This consolidation of ritual and rank under the Grand Herald continued apace after Wudi's reign. The relative stability in numbers of royal and noble court audience participants formed part of this larger trend of a settled and more routinized rhythm of court ritual that emerged over the course of the Western Han. How did Western Han writers, in their words, understand this "fixing of the rites" (*ding li* 定禮), and how was this "fixing" manifested in debates at court about ritual? The concept of "fixing the rites" is not without ambiguity, since the word *ding* encompasses at least two distinct fields of meaning in early texts: to settle, pacify, or stabilize on the one hand and to determine, specify, or prescribe on the other. The difference is significant, since the former meaning implies an acceptance of and settling with status quo practice, while the latter implies a more active intervention and insertion of new or previously unused practices. Reference to *zhi li* 制禮, a related phrase in Western Han discussions of ritual, does not necessarily solve the problem. Even if most translations understand the word *zhi* as "to determine," it can also mean "to mold" or "to fashion," as in the work of a skilled artisan or woodworker who creates an item by molding or carving materials with distinct properties that delimit a prescribed range of uses and design possibilities.[43]

---

[43] As the "Zhu shu" 主術 chapter of the *Huainanzi* put it:

> 是故賢主之用人也，猶巧工之制木也，大者以為舟航柱梁，小者以為（揖楔）〔椄楫〕，脩者以為榱桷，短者以為朱儒枅櫨。无大小修短，皆得其所宜；規矩方員，各有所施。
>
> "Thus the worthy ruler's use of men is akin to the skilled artisan's fashioning of wood (*zhi mu* 制木). He takes large pieces of wood to make boats or barges and pillars or rafters, and small pieces to make pins and pegs; elongated pieces to make eaves and rafters; shorter pieces to make red brackets and capitals. No matter whether large or small, long or short, every piece realizes that which is inherently proper to it; whether straight or curved, square or circular, each has a means to be used."

Discussions of court ritual in select Western Han texts reveal that this ambiguity played into a larger debate about the origins of the imperial court's ritual practices and the nature and purpose of court ritual itself. The texts discussed here span the final century of Western Han rule, from the "Treatise on Ritual" in the *Shiji*, debates on the court audience of the *shanyu* recorded in the *Hanshu* from around 51 BCE along with roughly contemporaneous discussions of ritual in the *Yantielun*,[44] and finally the "Treatise on Ritual and Music" from the *Hanshu*. Whereas the treatises from the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* were written as meditations on the role of ritual at court and in imperial governance, and provide accounts of the development of ritual over the course of the Western Han, the debates of 51 BCE and the *Yantielun* discussions of ritual were written in reaction to specific events and do not attempt to outline comprehensive histories of court ritual.

Nonetheless, all of these texts can be profitably read together in order to get a sense of changes in the discussion of ritual at court. As we will see, the *Shiji* "Treatise on Ritual" traced struggles between political rivals during the reign of Jingdi in order to illustrate the ambiguous nature of court ritual as a tool that could both transform human behavior and instantiate a hierarchy of ranks even while it simultaneously advanced personal political interests. For Sima Qian, the court was the setting within which actors could capitalize on the ambiguous nature of ritual to their own advantage. As the founding and pre-eminent "fixer" of rituals, the early Western Han ritual master Shusun Tong thus occupied an ambiguous position: he effectively fixed the rites as was necessary to exalt the position of the newly enthroned Gaozu, but in doing so he simultaneously left the door open for other "fixers" to come in and utilize court ritual to their own benefit. In the debates of 51 BCE and the *Yantielun*, however, we see a greater concern with the models of the court that would undergird the organization and performance of the audience. Ultimately, in its treatment of the 51 BCE debates the *Hanshu* perhaps took a cue from the *Yantielun* and altered the historical record in order to portray court officials as unanimously committed to a model of the court as the ritually standardized and hierarchical center. In its "Treatise on Ritual and Music," the *Hanshu* cements this understanding of the court by categorizing all debates about ritual in the Western Han as a conflict between "law" and "models" (both *fa* 法), with a classically-informed "model" of court ritual much more effective and desirable than written laws and regulations (which were the province of the Grand Herald, let us not forget). In short, the 51 BCE debates over the *shanyu* audience might have proven an important turning point in discussions of court ritual that allowed the *Hanshu* to write against the *Shiji* by arguing that a classically-informed "model" could finally end the political manipulation of court ritual and protocol. This change does not demonstrate that political struggles went away, but rather underscores the fact that by the late Western Han discussions of ritual had shifted towards the underlying principles upon which the imperial court was founded. The system of ritual and rank commanded by the Grand Herald had become standardized across different status groups while the towering position of the imperial court was universally accepted. The pressing question thus became not how to use ritual most effectively in order to assert status; by the late

---

Translation is my own, with reference to Major, et. al. 2010, 317.

[44] The *Yantielun* is a fictionalized account of a court debate convened in 81 BCE to discuss the merits and demerits of imperial economic policies, including the state monopolies on salt and iron as well as certain taxes. In the *Yantielun*, however, the debates range across many other topics. The text was compiled by one Huan Kuan 桓寬, an official who served as Gentlemen at court and then eventually Governor during the reign of Xuandi (r. 74-49 BCE). It was thus conceivably written some time around the 51 BCE court audience of the *shanyu*, if not slightly before. See Gale 1967; Levi 2010, lvii-lix; and Nylan 2010, 495-98.

Western Han that problem had become cast as a "legal" issue. Rather, the important question was what *sort* of ritual would provide an appropriate basis for a court of unmatched status and power.

Shusun Tong, Ritual Transformation, and the Political Life of Ritual in the Shiji

In his description of Shusun Tong's inaugural court audience, Sima Qian emphasized that the ceremony exerted transformative power over behavior and brilliantly instantiated the ritual hierarchy amongst all ritual participants. Note, for example, that Sima reported Gaozu as saying "not until today" (i.e. the day that he performed the court audience) did he thoroughly understand his status as emperor. Indeed, within Sima Qian's "account" (*zhuan* 傳) of Shusun Tong, the description of the court audience is an important turning point, and not only because it resulted in Shusun's promotion as Superintendent of Ceremonial. Immediately prior to the description, we read that Gaozu requested Shusun design the ritual, but only after he had initially jettisoned the old protocol used by the Qin, a move that resulted in his advisors running roughshod over the palace: "they drank wine during debates over the dispensation of merit and some of them, drunk, called out wildly, unsheathed their swords, and smote the pillars" (飲酒爭功，醉或妄呼，拔劍擊柱).[45] Shusun's court ceremony, however, eliminated the raucous behavior of Gaozu's newly victorious supporters (who were eager to receive their rewards for the military support they had lent the new emperor). It transformed a motley crew of fighting men into a group of respectful and deferential advisors, which Gaozu certainly required if he was going to effectively rule his acquired realm.

If "change" required the creation of ritual practices that transformed people in ways demanded by the new age, it was equally a process that unfolded in dialogue between historical actors and the institutions that they created and inhabited. In this context, the value of specific ritual practices as traditions was much less important than their utility in promoting desired political and social effects. Sima Qian makes this point quite clear later in the "Account" of Shusun Tong. First, the "Account" noted that upon Huidi's accession to the throne, the new ruler said that nobody knew anything about imperial temples, so Shusun was again appointed Superintendent of Ceremonial (having just served as Huidi's tutor) whereupon he "fixed the ceremonial norms of the ancestral temple" (定宗廟儀法). According to the "Account," "when it came to the partial fixing of the various ceremonial norms used by the Han, these were all decided and set down by Shusun Tong while he served as Superintendent of Ceremonial" (及稍定漢諸儀法，皆叔孫生為太常所論箸也).[46]

The key word in this final sentence is *shao* 稍, which can mean anything from "slightly" to "immediately." The "Account" here seems to imply the former, however, since the story that immediately follows this statement provides an example of how Shusun Tong's ritual work was conducted in an ad hoc manner in response to contingent events that unfolded over the course of his tenure in office. In the event, Shusun voiced criticism of a decision by Huidi 惠帝, Gaozu's successor, to construct a bridge between Weiyang Palace and Changle Palace, located east of Weiyang across a broad avenue in the capital of Chang'an (see Chapter 1). Huidi did so, Sima Qian wrote, in order to prevent inconvenience for the people of Chang'an, who were forced to clear the streets whenever the emperor left Weiyang in order to visit his mother in Changle. Shusun Tong, however, decried the fact that the new arrangement forced Huidi to walk above the route used to parade Gaozu's robe and cap to the founding emperor's ancestral temple, which was located

[45] *Shiji* 99.2722.
[46] *Shiji* 99.2725.

between Weiyang and Changle: "How can you allow your sons and grandsons in later generations to walk above the route to the ancestral temple?" (奈何令後世子孫乘宗廟道上行哉).[47] Huidi, terrified, said that he would immediately remove the bridge, but to this Shusun voiced equally strenuous objections:

> 人主無過舉。今已作，百姓皆知之，今壞此，則示有過舉。願陛下為原廟渭北，衣冠月出游之，益廣多宗廟，大孝之本也。
> The ruler does not act mistakenly. Now, the bridge is already constructed and the people all know about it. If you now destroy it, then you will show to them that you have acted mistakenly. I would desire that your Your Majesty construct a branch temple to the north of the Wei River and every month take the robe and cap to it on parade. To assist in increasing the number of ancestral temples is the root of filial duty.[48]

As Shusun Tong's criticism implies, Huidi's decision had created a conflict between the infallibility of the emperor and the emperor's duty to venerate his father. Shusun Tong's solution brilliantly accorded with both requirements. In doing so, Shusun paid little heed to the precedent of the cap and gown's previous parade route. The point, he emphasized, was to preserve not the particular form of the ritual, but rather the principle (or "root") that the ritual was designed to serve (in this case, filial duty). Shusun adopted this policy towards ritual, Sima Qian takes care to illustrate, at the very moment when he was creating all of the ceremonial protocol for the ancestral temples and the court.

If rituals were designed to uphold such principles, however, how was it possible to discern whether or not a given ritual or protocol would have the desired effect and actually serve the principle to which it was ostensibly dedicated? The question was particularly fraught, since people performed rituals and, as Sima Qian was quite keen to emphasize, the motivations that guided people to perform or enact rituals and protocol were never entirely clear. Sima drove that point home in his "Treatise on Ritual" (*Li shu* 禮書). Here, we note that Sima opened that text by saying that he "went to the ritual officers of the *Taixing* and saw what had been deleted and added from the [preceding] Three Dynasties" (余至大行禮官，觀三代損益). It is unclear if Sima here referred to the *Taixing* as the director of court ritual or as a subordinate officer to the Grand Herald. Regardless, Sima claimed that his discussion of ritual was at least partly based on his observations of documents stored in the bureau of one of these officers, who were responsible for court ceremonial (see above). As we will see, Sima's focus on the status and political ambiguities of ritual echoes the Grand Herald's express concern with rank in court ceremonies, which as we previously discussed Jingdi used to his advantage in asserting the supreme status of the imperial court.

Sima began his discussion by explaining the genesis of ritual in efforts to check and channel fundamental human desires before moving on to a short history of changes to the ritual order. After the ritual order of the Zhou collapsed, Sima wrote, the Qin incorporated ritual practices from all of the realms that it conquered. Shusun Tong then largely followed Qin precedent (see below) in devising his court rituals. Other officials later offered proposals for "fixing the ceremonies and rites" (*ding yi li* 定儀禮).[49] Wendi, however, beholden as he was to the theories of "specialists in the Way" (*Dao jia* 道家), viewed elaborate rituals as irrelevant to the task of governance and ignored

[47] *Shiji* 99.2725.
[48] *Shiji* 99.2725.
[49] *Shiji* 23.1160. Note that Sima Qian here, in contrast to his "Account" of Shusun Tong, did not write that Shusun "fixed" (*ding*) the rituals, but says only that other officers debated how to fix them.

proposals for their reform. The situation only changed when Jingdi came to the throne and Chao Cuo, 晁錯, brilliantly versed in "worldly affairs and legal punishments" (事務刑名), repeatedly remonstrated the following point:

> 諸侯藩輔，臣子一例，古今之制也。今大國專治異政，不稟京師，恐不可傳後。
> The regional kings serve as a protective screen and along with your ministers form uniform ranks; this is the arrangement of ancient and contemporary times. Now the great kingdoms monopolize governing powers and adopt differing policies. They do not accept the authority of the capital. I fear they cannot be passed on to your successors.[50]

When Jingdi subsequently adopted Chao Cuo's proposals, Sima Qian wrote, the kingdoms revolted and the emperor was forced to execute Chao Cuo "in order to resolve the crisis" (以解難). After noting that the story was covered in his biography of Yuan Ang 袁盎, Sima concluded that subsequent to the catastrophe of the rebellion and Chao Cuo's execution, "officials did nothing but cultivate relations and find comfort in their salaries, while nobody dared to further debate [setting the ceremonies and rites]" (後官者養交安祿而已，莫敢復議).[51] Sima thus juxtaposed the creation of a ritual order that fixed the regional kings in the ritual hierarchy with personal efforts on the part of officials to "cultivate relations"; namely, to forge personal networks of associates who could serve as bulwarks against the tragic fate suffered by Chao Cuo.

When we look at the "Accounts" (*zhuan*) of Yuan Ang and Chao Cuo which Sima Qian placed together in the same chapter of the *Shiji*, the interplay between the ritual order and personal alliances comes into sharper focus. Sima Qian used Yuan Ang's story to highlight the difficulty of understanding the motivations behind invocations of ritual protocol. Yuan Ang, son of a bandit from Chu who had been forcibly moved to Anling 安陵 (just outside Chang'an) after Gaozu came to power, had served as a household steward to Lü Lu 呂祿, brother of Empress Lü. In other words, Yuan Ang had grown up in service to the most powerful family in the capital at the time. As Sima noted, Yuan Ang "often drew upon fundamental principles in the most fervent manner" (常引大體忼慨).[52] As an illustration, Sima described Yuan Ang's attacks against Zhao Tong 趙同, a eunuch favorite of Wendi who regularly insulted Yuan Ang. When Wendi set out one day with Zhao Tong by his side, Yuan Ang threw himself in front of the imperial chariot in protest:

> 臣聞天子所與共六尺輿者，皆天下豪英。今漢雖乏人，陛下獨柰何與刀鋸餘人載！
> I have heard that those to whom the Son of Heaven bestowed chariots six *chi* in length were all noble elites from throughout all under heaven. Now, even though the Han lacks people, Your Majesty on his own volition for some reason rides with a man who has undergone the knife![53]

The "fundamental principle" here is not entirely clear, but Yuan Ang clearly cast Wendi's association with Zhao Tong as a breach of protocol, implying that the favor bestowed upon Zhao should be reserved for powerful and able men who could effectively serve the emperor. Yuan Ang, however,

---

[50] *Shiji* 23.1160.
[51] *Shiji* 23.1160.
[52] *Shiji* 101.2739.
[53] *Shiji* 101.2739.

was not motivated by a desire to strengthen the empire. As Sima Qian implied, he rather wished to save his reputation, threatened as it was by Zhao Tong's insults.

Sima Qian devoted much of the remainder of his biography to the rift between Yuan Ang and Chao Cuo, who in contrast to Ang hailed from Yingchuan 穎川 and first gained a position not with a powerful family but as a subordinate officer to the Superintendent of Ritual, thanks to his "refined learning" (*wen xue* 文學).[54] Yuan Ang emerged victorious after convincing Jingdi that Chao Cuo and his policy proposals had motivated the king of Wu to revolt. After Jingdi executed Chao Cuo, Yuan Ang was appointed Superintendent of Ritual; his friend and ally at court Dou Ying 竇嬰 simultaneously rose to the post of Grand General (*Da jiangjun*). Sima Qian described their relationship as a close alliance, with a retinue of officers (its size no doubt exaggerated) eager to ally themselves to Yuan and Dou:

> 兩人素相與善。逮吳反，諸陵長者長安中賢大夫爭附兩人，車隨者日數百乘。The two men consistently got along with each very well. After the rebellion of Wu, the heads of all the mausoleum towns as well as worthy officials within Chang'an attached themselves to the duo. Every day the number of chariots that followed them counted in the hundreds.[55]

The irony is hardly disguised: whereas Yuan Ang was quite willing to righteously criticize others such as Zhao Tong for transgressing court protocol by riding in the same chariot with the emperor, his growing power attracted crowds of followers who formed a veritable procession (no doubt comparable to if not surpassing in size anything that the emperor could muster). The "fundamental principles" that Yuan Ang invoked in enforcing the ritual order, Sima dryly observed, were less closely adhered to when it came to Yuan's personal behavior. For Sima, then, the history of ritual reform in the Western Han illustrated that even if ritual actions were in theory meant to undergird the status and rank hierarchy, and ultimately to exalt the supreme status of the emperor, in reality they could serve as vehicles for advancing private interests. By implication, whether or not a ritual was proper depended upon the motivations of its advocates. The textual (classical or otherwise) history of a ritual bore little relevance to its efficacy or potential value as a model for reform.

Ritual Practice and Principles of Status in the 51 BCE Court Audience and Yantielun

When we turn to the court audience of 51 BCE, some thirty-five years after the death of Sima Qian and the completion of the *Shiji*, a variety of sources about the audience in the *Hanshu* and related discussions of ritual in the *Yantielun* show that debates during this period about the audience in particular and court ritual in general framed the problems of court ritual in completely different terms. The dramatic description of the 51 BCE court audience and reception in Chang'an included in the "Basic Annals" of Xuandi and described in the introduction to this chapter is actually one of three different descriptions in the *Hanshu*. The two additional treatments of the event are found in the "Account of the Xiongnu" (*Xiongnu zhuan* 匈奴傳) and the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi" (*Xiao Wangzhi zhuan* 蕭望之傳). These three descriptions, similar as they are, nonetheless exhibit subtle differences that allow us to trace the decision-making process and isolate the issues at stake as

---

[54] Chao Cuo was appointed Supervisor of Precedents to the Superintendent of Ritual (*Taichang zhang gu* 太常掌故). Wendi eventually appointed him tutor to the heir and future Jingdi after Chao Cuo was sent to study under Fu Sheng 伏生, a master of the *Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書).

[55] *Shiji* 101.2742.

officials debated how to incorporate Jishoushan into the first-month New Year's audience ceremony. Specifically, official debate about the visit of the *shanyu* centered upon the status of the visiting leader in comparison to the Liu kings also in attendance.[56] In doing so, they invoked two different models of the court as either a bounded entity whose ritual practices could acknowledge specific political relationships or a boundless body that sat atop a standardized and inflexible hierarchy of ritual relationships that brooked no exception. Discussion of court audiences and guest rites in the *Yantielun* reflect a similar clash of models. As we will see the *Hanshu* perhaps took a cue from this treatment of ritual debates in the *Yantielun* when it altered the record in order to depict a united officer corps committed to a model of the court as a standardized and hierarchical ritual center. The final section will depart from there to give a more detailed discussion of "models" of court ritual in the *Hanshu*.

Whereas the description of the 51 BCE court audience in the "Account of the Xiongnu" provides a detailed accounting of the gifts given to the visiting *shanyu*, the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi" and the "Basic Annals" provide no such descriptions. The procurement and organization of gifts were the province of the Grand Herald, and would likely not have figure into court debates. In the case of the 51 BCE audience, those debates focused on where the *shanyu* was to be positioned during the audience and the titles that would be used to address him. We will visit the description from the "Basic Annals" below, but for now emphasize only that the "Basic Annals" exhibits a fundamental difference from the description in the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi," for it claims that "all" (*xian* 咸) officials supported putting the *shanyu* in a position below the kings during the audience ceremony, while Xuandi went against their recommendation and ordered the *shanyu* to be ranked above the kings. The "Account of Xiao Wangzhi," by contrast, says that the Chancellor and Imperial Counselor believed the position of the *shanyu* during the audience should be below that of the kings, while Xiao Wangzhi argued it should be above. Several factors support a conclusion that the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi" is the more accurate description of the debate. Most importantly, it is simply more believable that officials would hold differing opinions about such a major and unprecedented event as a court audience featuring the *shanyu*; the unanimity of opinion given in the "Annals" does not convince. So, too, does it seem more likely that Xuandi would be more willing to directly contradict the opinion of his highest officers if he could draw upon support from officials holding other opinions. Given that the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi" thus more likely reflects the actual dynamics of the 51 BCE debate, we begin with that source. After a discussion of the *Yantielun*, however, we will return to draw rhetorical connections between that source and the description of the 51 BCE court audience debate in the "Basic Annals."

According to the "Account of Xiao Wangzhi," when Xuandi invited his ministers to debate the protocol to be employed for the *shanyu*'s audience, Huang Ba 黃霸, the Chancellor, and Yu Dingguo 于定國, the Imperial Counselor, argued that during the ceremony the *shanyu* should assume a position below the kings:

> 聖王之制，施德行禮，先京師而後諸夏，先諸夏而後夷狄。《詩》云：『率禮不越，遂視既發；相士烈烈，海外有截。』

[56] By no means should we assume that *all* of the Liu kings were present in 51 BCE. It is, indeed, unclear if there was ever a court audience that all of the Liu kings attended at the same time. This fact is illustrated by even a cursory overview of *Shiji* 17, "Table of Kings from the Founding of the Han" (*Han xing yi lai zhu hou wang nian biao* 漢興以來諸侯王年表), which notes the years that the Liu household kings attended court audiences in Chang'an. Though Sima Qian's table covers only the years 205 to 101 BCE, in none of those years did all of the kings attend court.

陛下聖德充塞天地，光被四表，匈奴單于鄉風慕化，奉珍朝賀，自古未之有也。其禮儀宜如諸侯王，位次在下。

The institutions of the sage kings spread virtuous power by practicing ritual. They esteemed the capital ahead of the kingdoms and esteemed the kingdoms ahead of foreigners. The *Odes* say:

> Following the rites without transgression,
> Everywhere observing their enactment.
> Men of service were majestic,
> And beyond the seas all was ordered.[57]

The sagely virtue of Your Majesty fills Heaven and Earth and your bright rays pervade the four corners of the world. The *shanyu* of the Xiongnu has bent towards your moral force, offering up precious items and giving his praise at court. Since ancient times, this has never occurred. Ritual protocol for him should properly be set as analogous to the Liu household kings, and his court position should be below theirs.[58]

The Chancellor and Imperial Counselor cited a hoary past in which the royal capital sat above the vassal kings, who themselves ranked above foreign groups. In doing so, the duo cast the *shanyu* as analogous to these legendary foreigners of ancient times, thus arguing that their position should be below the Liu household kings during the 51 BCE audience. This argument by analogy implicitly asserted that the Han imperial court should model itself on the patterns of high antiquity, though the link between the *Odes* quotation and the hierarchy of capital-kingdoms-foreigners seems tenuous at best.

By contrast, when Xiao Wangzhi expressed his opposition to the Chancellor and Imperial Counselor, he did not provide any guiding model for how the court "should" rank vis-à-vis foreigners, but rather rooted his argument in Western Han patterns and politics alone:

單于非正朔所加，故稱敵國，宜待以不臣之禮，位在諸侯王上。外夷稽首稱藩，國讓而不臣，此則羈縻之誼，謙亨之福也。

The *shanyu* is not added to the first-month calendar, so he is called a rival kingdom. It is proper both to receive him with a ritual that does not treat him as a submitted lord and to fix his position above that of the kings. A foreigner has bowed his head and proclaimed himself a vassal (*fan* 藩). If the central states demur and do not treat him as a submitted lord, this action would manifest the propriety of holding tight to the reins and the felicity of being circumspect.[59]

According to Xiao Wangzhi, participation in the New Year's audience necessarily implied acceptance of Han suzerainty. Since the *shanyu* had never participated in the audience and was thus an "enemy kingdom," it would not be appropriate to suddenly treat him as if he were a regular part of the audience ritual. Rather, Xiao argued, if the emperor used rites that were not reserved for lords who had submitted to the Han court, then he could avoid the complicated obligations that treating the *shanyu* as a vassal would entail. As Xiao continued, this strategy was particularly appropriate because

[57] Mao #304, "Chang fa" 長發.
[58] *Hanshu* 78.3282.
[59] *Hanshu* 78.3282.

when foreigners came to submit they were always "disordered and inconstant" (荒忽亡常).[60] The descendants of the *shanyu* could thus not be depended upon to maintain their obligatory court audience visits and offerings. By installing the *shanyu* in positions higher in status than those of the kings, Xiao argued, the emperor would not treat him and his descendants as "submitted lords" (*chen*). This is what Xiao meant when he urged the emperor to "hold tight to the reins," for when the *shanyu*'s descendants inevitably faltered in fulfilling their court audience obligations he "would not have to treat them as rebellious lords" (不為畔臣).

Huang Ba and Yu Dingguo on the one hand and Xiao Wangzhi on the other advanced two different models of the court. The former argued that the hierarchy of ranks atop of which sat the emperor and the imperial court could not allow for any exceptions; the *shanyu* had to be incorporated into the court audience in a manner that recognized his more distant ritual relationship from the emperor compared to the Liu household kings. Xiao Wangzhi, meanwhile, argued that the court audience was sufficiently flexible to allow for the recognition of particular political situations and relationships that did not necessarily fit into the standardized hierarchy advocated by Huang Ba and Yu Dingguo. At the same time, Xiao's advice was almost nonsensical from a practical perspective. Even if not treating the *shanyu* as a vassal lord would prevent the emperor from entering into risky ritual obligations, the fact remained that the *shanyu* was coming to participate in the New Year's court audience, which was designed to reinforce the ties of service that bound the kings and nobles to the emperor. All Xiao Wangzhi could say was that a ritual *not* for vassals be used. Precisely what this ritual would be, he could not say. When the emperor issued his edict about the 51 BCE audience, which largely agreed with Xiao Wangzhi's advice, this detail had clearly been decided:

> 蓋聞五帝、三王教化所不施，不及以政。今匈奴單于稱北藩，朝正朔，朕之不逮，德不能弘覆。其以客禮待之，令單于位在諸侯王上，贊謁稱臣而不名。
> I have heard that during the reign of the Five Lords and Three Kings, wherever ritual order was not employed was not subject to government policies. Now, the *shanyu* of the Xiongnu has called himself a northern protective vassal and he desires to attend the first-month court audience. This was not something that We caused nor can it be broadly encompassed under Our virtuous power. Guest ritual will be used to receive the *shanyu* and We order his position to be placed above that of the kings. When summoned forth he will be called a submitted lord but his name will not be uttered.[61]

Though he clearly acted on Xiao Wangzhi's advice, Xuandi must have consulted with other officials, including the Grand Herald, regarding the actual format of the 51 BCE audience before he issued this final decision, which includes details about how the ceremony was to be performed.[62] Most importantly, he decided to combine "guest ritual" (*ke li*), typically used to receive foreign visitors, with the New Year's court audience ritual. In arguing against the opinion of Huang Ba and Yu Dingguo, then, Xiao Wangzhi not only rejected a universalized and hierarchical model of the court

[60] *Hanshu* 78.3282.
[61] *Hanshu* 78.3283.
[62] The statement after Xiao Wangzhi's opinion in the "Annals of Xiao Wangzhi" that the emperor "adopted his opinion" (采之) might be relevant here. The verb *cai* 采 (literally "gather" or "pick," but also "select" or "choose") does not mean whole or complete adoption, but rather connotes a process of selection and combination.

for the organization of the audience, but also allowed for the combination of different sorts of ritual forms.

We see this division even more clearly in the *Yantielun*, which records several debates over the Xiongnu and court audiences. These descriptions paint a distinct division between learned court officers (termed Xianliang 賢良 or Wenxue 文學) on the one hand holding to ritual principles and a hierarchical model of the court and Counselors (*daifu* 大夫) on the other who allow for more flexible rituals that do not necessarily advance a universal model of the court as the ritual center. We should not imagine that the *Yantielun* provides an "accurate" transcription of any court debate, since the text was compiled decades after the debates that it purports to describe. At best, we can treat it only as the musings of the compiler, Huan Kuan, on important issues of his day. This fact does not necessarily detract from the value of the *Yantielun* as a source, however, since the text undoubtedly engaged with some of the key issues at the imperial court of Huan Kuan's day, and shows how learned officers at court might have interpreted and reformulated debates such as those over the 51 BCE court audience.

For example, in the "Chong li" 崇禮 chapter of the *Yantielun*, a Counselor and Xianliang debate the rationale for treating Xiongnu visitors as guests and presenting them with sumptuous gifts and performances meant to awe the visiting foreigners. The Counselor opens the debate:

> 飾几杖，脩樽俎，爲賓，非爲主也。炫燿奇怪，所以陳四夷，非爲民也。夫家人有客，尚有倡優奇變之樂，而況縣官乎？故列羽旄，陳戎馬，所以示威武，奇蟲珍怪，所以示懷廣遠、明[盛]德，遠國莫不至也。
>
> Decorated stools and canes and refined goblets and vessels are for guests. They are not for the hosts. The dazzling and rare are used in order to be displayed before foreigners. They are not for imperial subjects. Even a family with a guest will offer amusements such as singing performers and rare oddities. So how much more should be the case for the central government? We thus set out feathered standards and array military horses to show our imposing martial strength. Strange beasts and precious rarities show that we have embraced wide and distant lands and let shine our overflowing virtue, such that faraway realms do not fail to come present themselves.[63]

The Counselor advances two points about opulent guest rituals. First, they are for foreigners and foreigners alone. Just as a special performance at a home is only given once in a while in honor of visiting guests and does not infringe upon the regular rhythms of the household, guest audiences for foreigners are tightly circumscribed occasions that do not alter the basic dynamics governing the ruler and his subjects. A second and related point is that the opulent goods and spectacles employed in guest rituals are valuable not for their intrinsic worth but for their pragmatic value as tools to overawe foreigners and cause them to submit.

In response, the Xianliang retorts that the exchange of goods during court audience ritual was actually a means to display the stunning ritual power of the imperial court. In this model, material goods were lower-order symbols that only served to highlight the discrepancy between tribute-bearing audience participants and the morally superior court:

> 今萬方絕國之君奉贄獻者，懷天子之盛德，而欲觀中國之禮儀，故設明堂、辟雍以示之，揚干戚、昭雅、頌以風之。

[63] *YTL* 7.1/50/5-7.

> Rulers from distant realms of myriad areas who bear gifts and tribute embrace the overflowing virtuous power of the Son of Heaven, desiring to observe and appreciate the ceremonies of the central states. So we set up the Mingtang and the Biyong in order to display to them, and we raise up our shields and axes and present hymns and songs to transform them.[64]

The central question for the Xianliang, then, was this: which "treasures" (*bao* 寶) had the greatest and longest-lasting value? As he goes on to argue, the dazzling items that the Han court typically displayed to foreign visitors in the guest rites were nothing more than the exotic oddities that the foreigners themselves were exporting to Chang'an. The comparative advantage of the Han court was not its ability to present items that foreigners were already familiar with, but to demonstrate a moral and ritual propriety that was completely lacking in foreign lands:

> 隋、和，世之名寶也，而不能安危存亡。故喻德示威，惟賢臣良相，不在犬馬珍怪也。是以聖王以賢爲寶，不以珠玉爲寶。
> The Sui pearl and He jade are famous treasures for the ages, but they cannot bring peace to the endangered nor preserve the vanquished. Therefore, when it comes to illuminating virtuous power and displaying authority, only virtuous officers and able ministers can achieve these aims. They do not rest upon hounds and horses or riches and oddities. For this reason the sage king views virtue as a treasure, not pearls and jade.[65]

The Xianliang concludes by citing the story of the famous Chunqiu minister Yanzi 晏子, whose adherence to ritual practices at the ancient court of Qi 齊 supposedly prompted the king of Jin 晉 to realize the virtuous power of Qi and abandon all plans to invade the realm. The exchange with the Counselor thus allows the Xianliang to reframe the debate not as a question of goods but of people: by focusing on useless baubles instead of virtuous people, the ruler neglects to employ his most useful tool he has to neutralize the threat from abroad. By extension, then, in refocusing the conversation on the officers at the imperial court, the Xianliang recasts guest audiences not as opportunities to awe the Xiongnu and other foreign dignitaries, but as chances to showcase his own cultivation and sophistication in matters of ritual propriety.

The Counselor, of course, pointed out that the Xianliang and Wenxue's discussion of court ritual entirely neglected real military threats posed by the Xiongnu. Drawing upon rhetoric of the Xiongnu's foreign disposition reflecting Xiao Wangzhi's claims that the Xiongnu were "disordered and inconstant" (see above), in the "Shi wu" 世務 chapter the Counselor argued that over-reliance on the transformative power of ritual would expose the Han court to the volatile Xiongnu and their untrustworthy behavior. As the Counselor argued, equal attention to military preparedness was as necessary as adherence to ritual practices, since as he put it, "if we are not prepared, we cannot repel an enemy" (內無備，不可以禦敵).[66] This was doubly important when dealing with the Xiongnu, since they were absolutely unpredictable, not operating according to principles that were compatible with central states civilization:

---

[64] *YTL* 7.1/50/10-11.
[65] *YTL* 7.1/50/18-20.
[66] *YTL* 8.5/60/17.

春秋不與夷、狄之執中國，爲其無信也。匈奴貪狼，因時而動，乘可而發，飇舉電至。而欲以誠信之心，金帛之寶，而信無義之詐，是猶親蹠、蹻而扶猛虎也。

The *Annals* did not include the Yi and the Di amongst the central states because they were completely unreliable. The Xiongnu are greedy and rapacious. Moving in response to opportunity and sending out expeditions when they can be successful, they rise up like a whirlwind and strike like lightning. The Wenxue, however, wants to adopt a mind of integrity and employ treasures of gold and silk, believing these tricksters with no sense of propriety. This is like making friends with a brigand or approaching and caressing a vicious tiger.[67]

The Wenxue and Xianliang of the *Yantielun* agree with the Counselor's concern about the shifty nature of the Xiongnu, since they make quite similar statements in other sections of the text.[68] In his response to this particular statement, however, the Wenxue plays on the notion of the word *di* 敵, which the Counselor clearly understood as "enemy" but the Wenxue interprets as "peer" or "match":

春秋王者無敵。言其仁厚，其德美，天下賓服，莫敢交也。德行延及方外，舟車所臻，足迹所及，莫不被澤。

According to the *Annals* true kings have no peer. This means that the kings' humaneness is abundant and their virtue exquisite, such that all guests throughout the world submit and none dare to approach them as equals. Their virtuous power extends beyond borders: wherever boats and chariots travel, wherever footpaths lead, none fail to receive their grace.

The crux of the Xiongnu problem in the *Yantielun*, then, was not whether or not the Xiongnu could be caused to submit to Han suzerainty. Rather, it was the appropriate model that the court should follow when interacting with the Xiongnu. While the Counselors cast the Xiongnu as dangerous "enemies" that could only be met with military measures, the Xianliang and Wenxue camp cast them as potential subjects would could not possibly be considered a "match" to the morally and ritually superior Han court. The Counselors necessarily posited a divide between the Xiongnu and the Han,

---

[67] *YTL* 8.5/60/19-22.

[68] See the "Bei hu" 備胡 chapter. in which the Xianliang states:

匈奴不變業，而中國以搔動矣。風合而雲解，就之則亡，擊之則散，未可一世而舉也。

As long as the Xiongnu do not change their mode of living, the central states will be thrown into disorder. The situation is like when converging winds cause clouds to disperse: if we move towards them they will flee and if we attack them they will scatter. We cannot possibly neutralize them within a single age (*YTL* 7.2/51/30-31).

The interesting point is that even if this description of the Xiongnu from the Xianliang accords with the statement of the Counselor in the "Shi wu" chapter, the two camps come to opposite conclusions: the former argues that the mercurial nature of the foreigners renders them impervious to military attack, while the latter claims that it prevents them entering into the ritual order of central states civilization.

but the position of the Wenxue assumed that no such divide was possible, since the "true king" of the Han was in an entirely different and superior category than the Xiongnu. This assertion is interestingly self-serving, since as we saw above the Xianliang and Wenxue camp argued quite forcefully that in order to "display authority" (*shi wei* 示威) the ruler had to employ not extravagant material items but rather officers who were virtuous and morally cultivated. By elevating the status of the true king, which we must understand as an idealized Han emperor, the Xianliang and Wenxue claimed that it was not just the ruler's virtuous power that was peerless, but also their own. In the *Yantielun*, then, the court audience becomes an opportunity for the righteous officer to display his own moral perfection on a borderless stage.

To return to the *Hanshu*, as readers might recall the description of the 51 BCE court audience debate in the "Basic Annals" eliminates all reference to the disagreement between Xiao Wangzhi and the other officers and instead states that "all" (*xian*) officers argued that the *shanyu* should be position below the Liu kings. In doing so, the "Basic Annals" reflects a *Yantielun*-like sensibility regarding the audience: the question was not what was politically feasible in the context of Han-Xiongnu relations, but rather what sort of model of itself the court was obligated to present to the world. In doing so, it is worth emphasizing that the "Basic Annals" clearly sided with the *Yantielun*'s depiction of ritually proper officers clashing with officials committed to a stronger state. In the conclusion to the chapter we will suggest that in depicting officers united around a model of a ritually hierarchical court the *Hanshu* was just as committed to centralized state power, though on different terms. Before we get there, however, we must take a closer look at the *Hanshu*'s discussion of ritual and the distinctions it draws between regulations (*fa*) and classicizing ritual models (also *fa*).

Law and Ritual: Crafting a Narrative of Ritual Reform in the Hanshu

As we have seen, the 51 BCE court audience debates and the *Yantielun* presented a radically different discussion of ritual compared to the *Shiji*. Whereas the latter showed that Sima Qian was primarily interested exploring the ambiguous nature of court ritual as both a means for instantiating the status hierarchy and a tool for advancing personal interests, the former showed greater concern with the bases and models that undergirded ritual practices at court. Despite the fact that some modern scholarship has tended to view the establishment of court ritual protocol in the Western Han as a process of compiling regulations about ceremonial into legal texts,[69] in fact this narrative is entirely absent until the late Western Han. This fact is illustrated most clearly when we compare the two narratives of "fixing the rites" in the *Shiji*'s "Treatise on Ritual" and the "Treatise on the Rites and Music" of the *Hanshu*, which ascribe quite different roles to the ritual expert Shusun Tong:[70]

---

[69] In his recent study of the emergence of "ritual canons" (*li dian* 禮典), for example, the historian Gan Huaizhen cast the efforts of Shusun Tong as part of a series of attempts over the course of the Western Han to "fix the rites" (*ding li*) of the Han imperial household. As Gan wrote, "during the Han, 'court ceremonial' (*chao yi*) was always seen as a type of legal code (*fa dian*). These documents were stored and managed by legal officers (*li guan*) and served as models for court ceremonial." See Gan Huaizhen 2003, 83.

[70] Scholars writing in Western languages have said little about Shusun Tong. The exception is Nylan 2008, 736, which emphasized Shusun Tong's importance as a successful model for negotiating "professional standards" demanded by the court and the belief that cultivated and learned classicists (*ru*) should not be bound to "convention." Nylan did not investigate changing interpretations of Shusun Tong's legacy over the course of the Western and Eastern Han, our focus here. In this essay and elsewhere (e.g. Nylan 2000, 2005), however, she has emphasized that starting during the late

From the *Shiji*, "Treatise on Ritual"
至秦有天下，悉內六國禮儀，采擇其善，雖不合聖制，其尊君抑臣，朝廷濟濟，依古以來。至于高祖，光有四海，叔孫通頗有所增益減損，大抵皆襲秦故。自天子稱號下至佐僚及宮室官名，少所變改。
When the Qin gained control of all under heaven, it brought in all the rites and ceremonies of the Six Kingdoms, selecting the best from among them. Even if they did not accord with the system of the ancient sages, their exaltation of the ruler and restraining of ministers in a highly ordered court was consistent with ancient times and later. Coming to the time of Gaozu, whose shining brightness extended to the four seas, Shusun Tong made significant additions and subtractions, but for the most part his rites all continued the Qin precedents. From the title taken by the Son of Heaven on down to assisting officials as well as the titles of palaces, chambers, and offices, there was little change.[71]

From the *Hanshu*, "Treatise on the Rites and Music"
漢興，撥亂反正，日不暇給，猶命叔孫通制禮儀，以正君臣之位。高祖說而嘆曰："吾乃今日知為天子之貴也！"以通為奉常，遂定儀法，未盡備而通終。
The Han arose, eliminating disorder and returning to a proper path. Day after day the emperor had insufficient time to rest, yet he still ordered Shusun Tong to craft the ritual ceremonial and thus align the positions of ruler and minister. Gaozu sighed with delight: "Only today have I understood the nobility of being the Son of Heaven!" He appointed Tong as Superintendent of Ceremonial. Tong thereupon fixed the ceremonial regulations, but died before they were fully complete.[72]

Whereas the *Shiji* presents a picture of continuity between Shusun Tong's work and Qin precedent – precedent that informed everything from the emperor's form of address to the names of buildings – the *Hanshu* entirely omits any mention of the Qin. Instead, it quotes the conclusion of Sima Qian's description of Shusun Tong's ceremony and then writes that Shusun Tong set about setting the "ceremonial regulations" (*yi fa* 儀法) but died before finishing the project.[73]

Western Han written texts only gradually gained prominence over ritual practice and specialist knowledge as means for attaining positions in the government and status at court. See also Kern 2001.

[71] *Shiji* 23.1159-60.

[72] *Hanshu* 22.1030.

[73] It is worthwhile to consider both of these statements from the ritual treatises in light of the description of Shusun Tong's efforts in setting the rites, found in his biography in both the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. As noted above, that statement reads: "[Shusun Tong] set the ceremonial norms of the ancestral temple and then partially set the various ceremonial norms of the Han" (定宗廟儀法,乃稍定漢諸儀法). Two points are important. First, this description places the ceremonial of the ancestral temples and all other ceremonial in separate categories. Second, in contrast to his composition of the ancestral temple ceremonial, Shusun Tong only "partially" (*shao* 稍) set the other ceremonies. Based on the different descriptions in the treatises on ritual from the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, for Sima Qian this appears to have meant that Shusun Tong only slightly changed the Qin ceremonial, which for the most part remained intact and in use. Ban Gu, however, says that Shusun died before the ceremonial was "fully complete" (*jin bei* 盡備).

It is important to stop here and note that I have thus far translated *fa* 法 as "regulations," but the word can also mean "model," as a in a model that is to be emulated or followed. The *Hanshu* "Treatise on Ritual" plays on these two notions of *fa*, clearly privileging the latter as the more desirable understanding. As the "Treatise" makes clear, corrupt and lazy officials rely excessively on penalizing "laws" (*fa*) and punishments, with the court ignoring the importance of "completing a model" (*cheng fa* 成法) for "moral transformation" (*jiao hua* 教化) of the populace. This latter project, the "Treatise" argues, could only be achieved by establishing the classical ritual institutions such as the Biyong 辟雍 and the Yangxu 羊序, which were ritual schools established at the local level that would spread ritual instruction throughout the realm. In order to illustrate this theme, the "Treatise" quotes at length from four memorials submitted by important Western Han exegetes advocating ritual reforms: : Jia Yi 賈誼, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, Wang Ji 王吉, and Liu Xiang 劉向. All of them emphasize the importance of "moral transformation," with some drawing a negative contrast between this effort and the sad state of contemporary governance, which relied upon venal officers who only adhered to narrow rules, prosecuted criminals, and heard legal cases. As Wang Ji wrote: "the means by which vulgar officers shepherd the people do not embody that which is stipulated by ritual propriety and cannot be universally practiced for generation upon generation" (今俗吏所以牧民者，非有禮義科指可世世通行者也). In his proposal to establish the Biyong and Yangxu, and set the rites and music, Liu Xiang makes the point even more strongly, noting that the "laws" (*fa* 法) practiced in the Western Han were not the laws of Gao Yao 皋陶 (the legendary prime minister of the ancient sage emperor Shun 舜), but officials constantly requested to "fix the laws" (定法), adding to and deleting from them as they saw fit, "responding to the demands of the times" (救時務). In contrast, everybody said they "would not dare" (不敢) to set the rites and music. As Liu Xiang smartly put it: "With this they dare to kill people but do not dare to cultivate people" (是敢於殺人不敢於養人也), before continuing on:

> 初，叔孫通將制定禮儀，見非於齊魯之士，然卒為漢儒宗，業垂後嗣，斯成法也。
> Early on, when Shusun Tong was about to set the ritual ceremonial, he encountered criticism by specialists from Qi and Lu. However, in the end he became the founding classicist of the Han and his enterprise passed down to his successors. This proposal will transform it into a model.[74]

Liu Xiang quite clearly situates his call to establish the ritual institutions of the Biyong and Yangxu within a tradition that began with Shusun Tong. In order to do this, however, he must imply that Shusun Tong's work was unfinished. Otherwise there would be no need to "complete" (*cheng* 成) it and transform it into a model.

The clearest way to demonstrate that Shusun Tong's legacy was unfulfilled, of course, was to note the incomplete nature of his writings on court protocol. It is worth pointing out here, however, that Liu Xiang did not really mention Shusun Tong's writings at all. For him, it was sufficient that Shusun Tong's work provided a set of policies that, if completed, could establish a more humane form of governance that did not overly rely on shifting laws that were oppressive and more often than not served the interests of venal officials. In making this argument, Liu Xiang curiously turned Sima Qian's argument on its head. Recall that the latter had explored, through the story of Yuan Ang, how ritual could provide a smokescreen to obscure the private interests of venal and

[74] *Hanshu* 22.1034.

unscrupulous officials. Liu Xiang, by contrast, effectively claims that properly reformed court ritual and protocol will provide a bulwark against the seductive power of punitive laws, which are so easily manipulated to serve the whims of particular officials and the fleeting demands of the age. Nonetheless, at least in his memorial included in the "Treatise on Rites and Music," Liu Xiang does not cast the task of ritual reform as primarily a project of writing a legal text that completes the court protocol started by Shusun Tong. Rather, he seems to be primarily concerned with the opportunities ritual reform provided to eliminate an ever-shifting landscape of rules and regulations that were subject to the wrong kind of political influence. In other words, even if Liu Xiang's solutions and emphasis differ from what we saw in the *Shiji*, he still shares Sima Qian's concerns regarding the political and social bases for ritual reform.

Whereas Liu Xiang emphasized connections between Shusun Tong's work and the establishment of classical ritual institutions, however, at the conclusion of his "Treatise" Ban Gu posited a division between the two. He emphasized first of all that despite the achievements of late Western Han ritual reforms, the work of moral transformation promised by these institutions was not yet complete:

> 然德化未流洽者，禮樂未具，群下無所誦說，而庠序尚未設之故也。孔子曰：「辟如為山，未成一匱，止，吾止也。」
>
> 今叔孫通所撰禮儀，與律令同錄，臧於理官，法家又復不傳。漢典寖而不著，民臣莫有言者。又通沒之後，河間獻王采禮樂古事，稍稍增輯；至五百餘篇。今學者不能昭見，但推士禮以及天子，說義又頗謬異，故君臣長幼交接之道浸以不章。
>
> However, the reason that virtuous transformation has not yet spread to all corners is because the rites and music are incomplete, the masses below have no place to recite and explain [the classics], and the Yangxu are not yet established. Kongzi said: "It is like the building of a mound: if you stop before the last basket of earth, it remains forever."[75]
>
> Today, Shusun Tong's rituals and ceremonies are recorded together with the statutes and ordinances and stored with the legal officers. Moreover, legal specialists have not transmitted them further. The Han canons have been set aside with nobody writing them, and amongst the people and ministers none offer opinions on the matter. Additionally, after Shusun Tong died, King Xian of Hejian chose precedents related to the rites and music. These gradually increased into a compilation that reached more than 500 *pian*.
>
> Now, learned men are unable to bring them to light. They only promote rites for the men of service up to the Son of Heaven. Their explanations are furthermore disordered and contradictory. As a result, the Way of association between ruler and minister, elder and younger, is mired, without any proper form.

Ban Gu's emphasis here is on establishing the Yangxu ritual schools, which would theoretically provide the instruction necessary for the entire realm to follow the proper "Way of association." In doing so, however, Ban Gu categorized the rites of Shusun Tong as legal writings recorded with statutes and ordinances, while the texts on ancient ritual and music compiled by King Xian of Hejian were in a different category. Even if Ban Gu's statement that "learned men were unable to bring to light" the writings of King Xian of Hejian betrays a preference for those over the protocol of Shusun Tong, in fact neither could really serve as the basis for "completing a model" for ritual instruction. The key for Ban Gu was the reanimation of classical ritual institutions such as the

[75] *Analects* 9/19. Translation follows Leys 1997, 41.

Yangxu; in championing this policy he posited a divide between legal regulations and ritual models founded on these institutions. Both of these concepts could be written as *fa* 法, but Ban Gu clearly privileged the latter sense of *fa* as a model for emulation in his discussion of court ritual.

And yet, one final text from the *Hanshu*, which also privileges King Xian of Hejian, reveals that this division between ritual and law was founded on a muscular form of imperial power otherwise obscured by Ban Gu's emphasis on a type of moral transformation that naturally flowed from the establishment of ritual institutions. That text is the "Account of the Thirteen Kings of Jingdi" (*Jing shi san wang zhuan* 景十三王傳) from the *Hanshu*, which recounts the royal lines of all of the sons of Jingdi, most of whom were installed on their thrones after Jingdi suppressed the 154 BCE rebellion. The *Shiji* also devoted a separate chapter to these kings, their rule, and the reigns of their offspring in the "Hereditary House of the Five Imperial Lines" (*Wu zong shi jia* 五宗世家). Both chapters provide rich accounts of these kings and the fate of their kingdoms, though given its much later composition the *Hanshu* chapter provided details on many more successor kings and was able to describe the ultimate end of all of the kingdoms. Nonetheless, the *Shiji* account does describe many of the full reigns of the kings appointed by Jingdi, so comparison of the two chapters provides one means to investigate different representations of Liu household royalty.

Such a comparison is particularly enlightening because both the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu* clearly state that their descriptions of the kingdoms should be understood as descriptions of the decline of the kingdoms. As a side-by-side reading of the appraisals to both chapters demonstrates, however, the processes of decline that both chapters narrate are starkly different:

> Appraisal to the "Hereditary House of the Five Imperial Lines" from the *Shiji*
> 太史公曰：高祖時諸侯皆賦，得自除內史以下，漢獨為置丞相，黃金印。諸侯自除御史、廷尉正、博士，擬於天子。自吳楚反後，五宗王世，漢為置二千石，去「丞相」曰「相」，銀印。諸侯獨得食租稅，奪之權。其後諸侯貧者或乘牛車也。
> The Grand Archivist states: During the period of Gaozu, the vassal kings were all enfeoffed, and were allowed to make their own appointments of officials from the *neishi* on down. The Han only installed the Chancellor with a golden seal. The vassal kings appointed the Imperial Counselor, Director of Trials (*Tingwei zheng*), and Academicians in imitation of the Son of Heaven. After the rebellion of Wu and Chu and the appointment of the generation of kings from the five imperial lines, the Han installed officials at 2,000 bushels and eliminated the title Chancellor, replacing it with a Minister (*Xiang*) who received a silver seal. The vassal lords received land rent and tax income only to provide their household income, which took away their political power. Amongst the impoverished vassal lords of later generations, there were some who were reduced to riding around in ox-drawn carts.

> Appraisal to the "Account of the Thirteen Kings of Jingdi" from the *Hanshu*
> 贊曰：昔魯哀公有言：「寡人生於深宮之中，長於婦人之手，未嘗知憂，未嘗知懼。」信哉斯言也！雖欲不危亡，不可得已。是故古人以宴安為鴆毒，亡德而富貴，謂之不幸。
> 漢興，至于孝平，諸侯王以百數，率多驕淫失道。何則？沈溺放恣之中，居勢使然也。自凡人猶繫于習俗，而況哀公之倫乎！夫唯大雅，卓爾不群，河間獻王近之矣。
> In appraisal, we state: In the past, Lord Ai of Lu said, "I was born deep within palaces and raised at the hand of women. Not even once have I known worry or fear." How true were his words! Even if he desired to not be in peril, such wishes could not be

> achieved.[76] This is why the ancients believed the comforts of a palace banquet to be like a poison. Wealth and status without virtuous power: this is called misfortune.
>
> From the establishment of the Han all the way to the reign of the filial emperor Ping, the number of vassal kings can be counted in the hundreds. Most of them were arrogant, licentious, and had departed from the Way. What was the reason for this? Mired in unchecked indulgence, their positions made them act this way. Since common people can still be caught up in vulgar practices, how much more must be the case for a person such as Lord Ai?[77] When it comes to the most refined sort of behavior whose preeminence cannot belong to the ordinary crowd, King Xian of Hejian came quite close.[78]

Whereas the *Shiji* appraisal provided a rather subdued account of the process by which the Liu household kings lost their temporal power, the *Hanshu* articulated a moral theory to explain the downfall of the kings. Gone from the latter are all of the *Shiji*'s references to the political and administrative changes that impoverished the kings in the wake of the 154 BCE rebellion. The *Hanshu* in fact does not even mention the rebellion, arguing that the downfall of the kingdoms was the result of the Liu kings' indulgence in the luxuries inherent to their station and the resulting degeneration. For the *Hanshu*, then, the story of the kings of Jingdi was a moral narrative, not a political process.

The celebration of King Xian of Hejian in the *Hanshu* "Account of the Thirteen Kings of Jingdi," indicated in the appraisal, is merely the most obvious way that the chapter casts changes within the royal courts in moral terms. In doing so, the *Hanshu* chapter answers a question contained in the *Shiji* account about the proper role of the kings. The *Shiji* "Hereditary House of the Five Imperial Lines" relates an exchange between the king of Zhao, Liu Pengzu, and the king of Zhongshan, Liu Sheng. The latter, we read, "did not take pleasure in governing his palaces or performing rites, but enjoyed operating like a legal clerk" (不好治宮室禨祥，好為吏事).[79] A crafty politician, he liked to trick his senior officers, all of them sent by the imperial court located in the capital of Chang'an 長安, into uttering compromising or taboo statements. Pengzu duly recorded and used these words as evidence for blackmail. Thus cornered, few officials dared limit Liu Pengzu's actions or issue critical reports to Chang'an. In this manner, the king was able to rule relatively unchecked for over six decades, while most of his senior officers failed to maintain their

---

[76] The quote from Lord Ai is a shortened version of a quote from the "Ai Gong" 哀公 chapter of the *Xunzi* (*XZ* 31/146/17), though the *Hanshu* uses it to make quite a different point. In the *Xunzi*, Lord Ai asks Kongzi about sadness, worry, hard work, fear, and danger, which he says he has not experienced because he grew up in the safety of his palace. Kongzi says that the Lord will feel all of these states as he goes about his ritual and political duties, since the slightest indication of things or people amiss in his ceremonies or court audiences will cause the Lord to reflect on the implications such signs hold for the safety and stability of his realm. Upon engaging in this sort of reflection, the Lord will naturally feel worry and anxiety. The *Hanshu* passage here draws upon this message, but emphasizes the corrupting effects of luxury in the palace. Whereas Kongzi in the *Xunzi* says that a virtuous king will feel worry despite the fact that he has unrivaled material comforts, the *Hanshu* says that these material comforts will necessarily place the ruler in danger.

[77] In other words, since Lord Ai has so many more temptations than a less wealthy and lower status common person, he will be even more likely to engage in vulgar and licentious practices.

[78] *Hanshu* 70.2436.

[79] *Shiji* 59.2099.

position in Zhao for more than a couple of years. Liu Sheng, by contrast, showed little interest in government, choosing rather to enjoy his court at Zhongshan:

> 勝為人樂酒好內，有子百二十餘人。常與趙王彭祖相非曰：「兄為王，專代吏治事。王者當日聽音樂，御聲色。」
>
> 趙王亦曰：「中山王但奢淫，不佐天子拊循百姓，何以稱為藩臣！」
>
> Liu Sheng took pleasure in music and wine, and enjoyed his inner quarters, fathering more than 120 children. He and Liu Pengzu often criticized each other. Sheng said: "My elder brother, as king, unilaterally stands in place of his officers and governs. Kings should listen to music every day and attend to their amusements and pleasures."
>
> For his part, the King of Zhao said: "The King of Zhongshan only revels in debauchery and does not help the Son of Heaven succor the people. How can he be called a vassal lord?"[80]

The exchange presented the two kings as exemplifying contrasting models for Liu household kings: they could either serve as activist kings and directly involve themselves in the administration of their realms (Liu Pengzu) or they could remain within their palaces and enjoy their refined comforts (Liu Sheng). The *Shiji* account does not seem entirely satisfied with either mode, since Liu Pengzu and Liu Sheng each persuasively point out the drawbacks of their counterpart's behavior. The question thus remained: what alternative remained for the Liu household kings?

The *Hanshu* answer in the "Account of the Thirteen Kings of Jingdi" is clear: devotion to classical learning and adherence to classical rituals, which would prevent the kings from falling into a morally degenerate state, allows them to successfully pass on their realms while ensuring that the imperial court maintained a superior position vis-à-vis the kingdoms. The moral exemplar and classicist king *par excéllence* in the *Hanshu* account is King Xian, who, we read, "cultivated learning and delighted in the ancients" (修學好古). While the *Shiji* says only that Liu De's devotion to classical learning attracted classicist scholars (*ru* 儒) from "east of the mountains" (山東), the *Hanshu* tells us that Liu De promoted study of the "six arts" (六藝), setting up Academicians (*Boshi* 博士) in select classical texts and "cultivating the rites and music" (修禮樂). Such refined learning, we read, stood in contrast to the superfluous scholarship of Liu An 劉安, the king of Huainan 淮南, who rebelled before committing suicide in 122 BCE. Liu De eventually traveled to Chang'an for a court audience with his nephew Wudi 武帝 (r. 140-87 BCE), during which he "presented" (獻) a musical performance for the young emperor and gave him detailed information about ancient palaces, among many other matters.[81] Upon his death, Liu De received the posthumous name Xian 獻. As

---

[80] *Shiji* 59.2099. Note that Liu Sheng and Liu Pengzu are here debating and playing with the notion of what it means to be a "vassal lord," precisely the same question that occupied participants in the debate about 51 BCE visit of the *shanyu*.

[81] The biography of Liu De does not give the year of this court visit. Chapter 17 of the *Shiji* 史記, "Yearly Table of Kings Since the Founding of the Han" (*Han xing yi lai zhuhou wang nian biao* 漢興以來諸侯王年表) noted that Liu De came for a court visit during Wudi's reign just once, in 130 BCE, the same year of his death. This 130 BCE visit was most likely undertaken during the annual New Year audience held (usually) at Weiyang Palace in Chang'an, and in all likelihood was in fact the court visit noted in Liu De's *Hanshu* biography. As we saw in Chapter 3, however, many of the

the *Hanshu* account noted, discussion at the imperial court about this posthumous name focused on the king of Hejian's wise and morally proper behavior, as well as his benevolent concern for his subjects.[82]

King Xian is thus the ideal king, exhibiting a loyal devotion to the emperor that was founded on classical principles of ritual order. Equally important, however, is the fate of the other kings in the "Account of the Thirteen Kings of Jingdi." Many of the royal lines detailed in the chapter collapse in ignominy, while almost all of them are marred by shocking criminal and sexual scandals. The murderous and depraved actions of Liu Jian 劉建, Jingdi's grandson and king of Jiangdu 江都, was merely the most outrageous of a series of crimes by Jingdi's kings that we need not investigate in detail here.[83] The important point for our purposes is that the "Account" repeatedly details the legal mechanisms by which the imperial court investigated royal wrongdoing. Top kingdom officials appointed by the imperial court would submit reports detailing the crimes of the kings, envoys from Chang'an would investigate the cases, and imperial court officials would decide on sentences of individual kings and the fate of entire kingdoms. On several occasions, kingdoms were eliminated on the recommendation of these officials. Even if several kings were able to evade detection and blackmail imperial court officials, the "Account" describes a world in which wayward kings were constantly subject to surveillance and punishment at the hands of the imperial court. By contrasting the idealized ritual perfection of King Xian with the legal transgressions of the kings, the "Account" thus suggests that the ritual order that King Xian exemplified rested on a procrustean system of state power that brooked no hint of transgression on the part of the kingdoms.

Conclusion

This chapter has linked institutional changes in court ritual practice to debates about ritual amongst officers at court. As we saw in the beginning of the chapter, the early Western Han saw a series of changes to the Grand Herald, which gradually assumed administrative responsibilities over rank and the organization and execution of court ceremonies. These changes were accompanied by both a territorial expansion and a growth in the number of kings and nobles, including ennobled foreigners, who would have attended the New Year's court audiences. The appointment of nobles in particular during the reign of Wudi was a central strategy in weakening the kingdoms, since Wudi appointed hundreds of royal sons to nobilities in order to dilute the power of the Liu kings, who saw their lands carved up into smaller and smaller territories. After the reign of Wudi, however, this growth stopped and the numbers of kings and nobles stabilized, with new kingdoms and appointments mostly serving to keep the proportion of kings and nobles relatively equal. By the end of Wudi's reign, then, the Grand Herald administered a system of court ritual designed to organize

---

details of the New Year court audiences remain unclear, and we cannot necessarily assume that *Shiji* 17 recorded all court audience visits made by the kings.

[82] According to the *Hanshu* biography, upon the death of Liu De, the Prefect *Taixing* submitted a memorial recommending the name, citing regulations about the assignment of posthumous names: "Rules on posthumous names indicate: 'Discerning and penetrating is called Xian.' It is appropriate to give [Liu De] the title King Xian" (諡法曰『聰明睿知曰獻』，宜諡曰獻王). This followed a statement from the Commandant of the Capital (*Zhongwei* 中尉), who cited Liu De's upright behavior, penetrating intellect and thoughtful disposition, as well as the benevolence and generosity that he showed towards his subjects, including men and women who had lost their spouses. No mention is made of his compilation or collection of classical texts. *Hanshu* 53.2411.

[83] Loewe 2004 summarized some of them.

an expanded but stabilized pool of participants in court audiences and other forms of ritual. By the time the 51 BCE audience of the *shanyu* occurred, then, this system had been in operation for some fifty years, plenty of time to accumulate a significant body of precedents that would have guided all manner of details for the organization and execution of court rituals.

The 51 BCE audience, however, appears to have been an important turning point, since in preparation officials debated the underlying principles that were to guide the organization of the *shanyu*'s unprecedented audience. In the event, some officers argued that the *shanyu* should be positioned below the Liu kings in the audience. In doing so, they invoked a notion of the court as the ritual center of a nested hierarchy of realms, with the innermost one occupied by the kings. Another officer, meanwhile, argued that the *shanyu* should be placed above the kings, since in doing so the Han court would not be treating him as a submitted vassal ruler and thus would not be obligated to attack him when he inevitably faltered in his ritual obligations. The two camps thus offered two different models of how the court should be organized: either as the center of a ritually standardized, hierarchical realm, or as a more flexible body that was able to adjust court rituals and protocol in order to account for political contingencies. As we saw, this opposition between the two camps was reflected in the *Yantielun*. That text championed a classically-informed model of the court as the supreme ritual center of a borderless space organized into a status and tribute hierarchy. At the same time, it denigrated another understanding of the court that derided the symbolic power of this model as unable to withstand the real military threat posed by the Xiongnu.

This concern over the proper models for court ritual is largely absent from the *Shiji*, which focused rather on the ambiguous properties of court ritual. As the *Shiji* argued, even if court ritual possessed a Xunzian capacity to transform behavior in a manner that was appropriate for one's status (exalting the emperor in the process), court ritual could also be twisted to serve the private political interests of squabbling court officers. The move towards discussion of models in the 51 BCE audience debates were not an indication that such struggles had ceased. We get hints at this fact even from the *Yantielun* itself, since that text has the Xianliang and Wenxue advocating both a universal and standardized hierarchy of rank *and* the centrality of court officers to the proper execution of court audience rituals. In the view of the *Yantielun*, it was only on the basis of ritually cultivated action by morally perfect officers that the desired model of a court governed by a standardized hierarchy of rank could be achieved.

The *Hanshu* "Treatise on Ritual and Music" focused much more explicitly on the problem of which models the court should follow in its organization and execution of court ritual. Part of its argument entailed a reassessment of the legacy of Shusun Tong, who by late Western Han times was known as the "founding classicist" (*ru zong* 儒宗) of the dynasty. As we saw, however, in contrast to the *Shiji* the *Hanshu* downplayed Shusun Tong's adherence to Qin precedent and instead emphasized that Shusun had been unable to complete his writings on court ritual and protocol in a manner that would allow for the "completion of a model" that would guide all ritual action at court. Particularly in his conclusion to the "Treatise," Ban Gu argued that only with the establishment of ritual schools throughout the realm could such a model be achieved. The writings of Shusun Tong and even of the famed classicist king par excellence, Liu De of Hejian, could not provide a full basis for emulating classical ritual models since their writings were either hopelessly mixed together with legal writings or much too voluminous and confused. Ban Gu thus espoused a classicizing model of ritual in which audience ritual was just part of a much larger, empire-wide set of models that would allow for the "moral transformation" (*jiao hua*) of the entire populace. At the same time, as we saw, this desire to instantiate the moral power throughout the realm was backed up by a muscular form of state power that the classicizing models of ritual otherwise obscured.

As we saw in Chapter 3, funerary ritual could not really accommodate all of the demands for centralization and standardization placed upon it by the imperial court, since funerals were such important rites for families, helped solidify horizontal links between members of the Liu ruling house, and were highly inflected by local practices. Court ritual, however, provided a means much more suited to promote hierarchy and centralization; indeed, that had always been its *raison d'être*. The important point for our purposes is that all of the writings about court ritual examined in this chapter were produced by people who themselves participated in court rituals. We should not be surprised that they are doing their best to carve out their own definitions of court audience rituals in a manner that we would probably not see for funerary ritual – since those were so much more guided by local and familial precedent and practice. Discussions of court ritual analyzed in this chapter give us an opportunity to see how court members were theorizing their own places in an expanded and more crowded court audience that in some ways was a microcosm of the expanded empire. There was a resonance between imperial expansion, efforts on the part of the imperial court to solidify political control, and court ritual. In this context, courtiers began to consider their place within the larger empire and devise a system that preserved and indeed celebrated their indispensable positions at court.

Chapter 5

The Practice and the Rhetoric of Bureaucracy: Official Duties, Personal Benefit, and Changing Models of Officialdom

Some time in the last year of the reign of Chengdi (r. 33-7 BCE), a reshuffling of offices occurred among some senior generals at court. The details of why this happened and the specific figures involved are less important than the way that the *Hanshu* described their dismissal and the subsequent filling of the vacated positions:[1]

> 是歲，右將軍褒、後將軍博坐定陵、紅陽侯皆免為庶人。以光為左將軍，居右將軍官職，執金吾王咸為右將軍，居後將軍官職。
> That year, the General of the Right Lian Bao and the Rear General Zhu Bo were convicted in the matter of the Marquis of Dingling, Chunyu Zhang, and the Marquis of Hongyang, Wang Li. They were both reduced to the status of commoner. Kong Guang was made General of the Left while fulfilling the official responsibilities of the General of the Right. The Superintendent of the Capital, Wang Xian, was made General of the Right while fulfilling the official responsibilities of the Rear General.[2]

Two points bear emphasis. First, in the wake of the dismissals, Kong Guang and Wang Xian performed professional double duty, simultaneously executing the duties of two separate general offices. The passage thus exemplifies the notion of "distinct duties" (*fen zhi* 分職) spread amongst defined posts throughout all levels of the government. A range of pre-imperial texts extolled this ideal,[3] and as a matter of actual practice workable definitions of professional duties must have existed for most officials in the empire.[4] We could not otherwise expect so many different territories to be administered and government functions to be executed in the absence of such definitions. A second observation regarding this passage, however, undercuts the notion of "discrete duties." Not only were all of these posts "generals," implying at least the possibility of overlap in duties. More importantly, all of these generalships were high advisory positions at court occupied by some of the most powerful people in the empire. Their significance was probably

---

[1] Chapter 6 analyzes some of the political battles behind these changes.

[2] *Hanshu* 81.3356.

[3] A passage from the "Fei ru xia" chapter of the *Mozi*, for example, argues that when classicists (*ru* 儒) claim that human knowledge and effort cannot fathom heavenly-endowed fate (*tian ming* 天命), they encourage officials "to slacken in their distinct duties" (怠於分職). Much of the *Xunzi* provides extended meditations on distinctions" (*fen* 分), above all in government, and we read throughout of the importance of "distinct duties" in crafting an ordered realm. Finally, the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 includes a discussion of the topic in its "Fen zhi" 分職 chapter.

[4] Excavated texts from the Juyan 居延 corpus refer regularly to officials "simultaneously carrying out" (*jian xing* 兼行) the duties of different offices at the same time. The *Hanshu* uses the same phrase once, in the account of Wang Zun 王尊: "In the Chuyuan era (48-44 BCE), Wang was recommended as a plain and honest advisor and promoted to be magistrate of Guo. He was transferred to fill the magistracy of Huaili while simultaneously carrying out the business of the magistracy of Meiyang" (初元中，舉直言，遷虢令，轉守槐里，兼行美陽令事) (*Hanshu* 76.3227).

rooted less in the duties supposedly inhered to them and more in their status as court offices that offered access to the emperor, other important officers, and palace spaces.[5]

The tension in this *Hanshu* passage between officially defined duties on the one hand and the reality of slippage in duties between offices and the overriding importance of status on the other raises a question: how are we to understand references to official posts and duties? If we cannot take them at face value, how should we interpret them? More broadly: how did officials imagine their professional lives? Did they have an overall understanding of the structure of officialdom and their place within that structure? Did they have what we might think of today as career goals? If so, were those goals to ascend a hierarchy of defined offices, or did they have other aims in mind? Such questions run against the grain of most scholarship on Han government and administration, which has tended to ask normative questions, including: How did the early empires function? What administrative practices did they employ? How was officialdom structured and how did officers gain promotion and move up the hierarchy? Centuries of research into such questions have yielded a rich amount of information on early administration and greatly improved our understanding of the early empires.[6]

Such questions, however, tend to accept without question our sources' picture of officialdom. Admittedly, even if we move beyond questions of structure, we cannot hope to understand the actual experience of official service and what Han officers actually thought about their "careers." Nonetheless, a critical reading of some of our key sources on officialdom and the means by which they depict offices can call into question their veracity as accurate depictions of government structure and bring to light new questions about the rhetorical construction of officialdom. For example, one of the most important sources we have on Western Han officialdom is the "Table on Officers and Ministers" (*Bai guan gong qing biao* 百官公卿表) from the *Hanshu*. The "Table" is divided into two sections, and the vast majority of scholarship has focused on the first, which is actually not really a table. It is rather a description of high offices, their duties and rank, a selection of subordinate officers (with their duties and rank), and laconic descriptions of changes to the offices that occurred over the course of the Western Han. Hans Bielenstein used this first section of the "Table" as the main source for his seminal work, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times*. He largely followed the categories found in this section, supplementing its descriptions with a dizzying array of material from later commentaries and other Han-period descriptions, mostly fragmented of Han offices. In doing so, Bielenstein painted an overall picture of officialdom as a collection of offices with highly defined duties arranged in hierarchical fashion.

As valuable as *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* continues to be as a reference work, the book overlooks two important features of the *Hanshu* "Table." First, the majority of offices described in the first section of the "Table" were located in the imperial court. Only in very short passages at the end do we read of governors and other officers serving in the commanderies and other areas outside of Chang'an. By drawing upon commentaries and later sources in order to fill out this picture of regional administration, Bielenstein obscured the fact that the "Table" is not a description of the "bureaucracy," but rather of the imperial court. Second, the second section of the "Table" is the *actual* table: an MS Excel-like vision of historical changes to officialdom with offices arranged in rows running up the *y*-axis and time running in columns from right to left on the upper *x*-axis. The cells of the table contain the names of incumbents and thus indicate the years when different officials were appointed and dismissed from their posts (see below for a more detailed discussion). Readers of the "Table" can thus track the careers of individual office-holders as they advanced up

[5] See Chapter 1 for a discussion of court space and social status.

[6] For one of the best overviews of scholarship on the topic, see Yoneda Kenshi 2000.

the hierarchy. Bielenstein's *Bureaucracy of Han Times* does not really reflect on the rhetorical value of the "Table" or how it might have compared to other descriptions of offices from the Han. Rather, his book essentially translates into English the "Table" view of officialdom: an official career was a matter of advancing up a hierarchy of offices with clearly defined duties.

We know, however, that this pattern was *not* typical for most officers. Even though characterizations of early imperial administration as a "meritocracy" persist, specialists have increasingly called attention to several facts that illustrate the highly stratified nature of Han officialdom, which allowed for little upward mobility in the hierarchy. First, officials in the imperial court at the rank of 2,000 bushels were endowed with the *ren* 任 privilege, which allowed them to sponsor a son or brother as a Gentleman (*lang* 郎) at court.[7] As many scholars have pointed out, appointment as a Gentleman was often an important first step to gaining high office.[8] The fact that high court officials could fill the ranks of Gentlemen with their own family members meant that elite office-holders tended to concentrate in just a few prominent families. Second, while we know that the performance of officials throughout the empire was evaluated in a variety of ways, we have little evidence to link positive evaluation of performance and ability with career advancement. In some cases we can actually demonstrate that there was *no* such relationship. For example, at the highest levels, it appears that highly rated responses to policy questions submitted by the emperor (the so-called *duice* 對策) had no bearing on official appointments and promotion.[9] Finally, and most importantly, the key to gaining *any* position was a recommendation by a high official.[10] The central government depended on recommendations to fill offices, and such recommendations tended to put forth names from prominent families.

If most officials in the Western Han court could not have expected to advance up a hierarchy of clearly defined offices – despite the picture provided by the "Table" of the *Hanshu* – how did they imagine their own service within the government? How did it differ from the vision of the *Hanshu*? And, for that matter, how can we best explain the emergence of the *Hanshu* "Table" as the dominant understanding of how officialdom should function? In Part One of this chapter, we examine the first question, investigating evidence from texts excavated from tombs, especially the "daybooks" (*rishu* 日書) and "greeting tablets" (*ye* 謁), that shed light on how officials might have conceptualized their service within government. As we will see, the daybooks and tablets show that low-level officials in the commanderies were hardly striving for high-level posts. The content and material characteristics of both point us toward different conclusions. First, the daybooks suggest that officials fit their careers into a variety of hemerological systems that cast different days as auspicious or inauspicious for certain types of days. The sheer diversity of systems evident in the daybooks indicates that officials actively fit their careers into a pursuit of "personal welfare" that had little to do with bureaucratic advancement.[11] The tablets, meanwhile, show that this pursuit of personal welfare was woven into daily forms of administrative practice that reveal little concern with job descriptions or a separation between "official duties" and more personal concerns. Surely there were cases here and there of talented officers advancing up to the highest official posts in the empire, but such cases were exceptions not the rule.

Part Two applies this fact to interpret a growth during the late Western Han of literature on promotion and officialdom, of which the *Hanshu* "Table" was but a late example. In advancing the

---

[7] Loewe 2004, 131-34.
[8] Fukui Shigemasa 1988 discussed this phenomenon at length.
[9] See *Ibid*., 275.
[10] On recommendation and recruitment, see also de Crespigny 2007.
[11] For "personal welfare," see Poo 1998.

notion that offices should be clearly defined and arranged in hierarchical fashion, they pushed against a more common understanding of official service as an enterprise to be carried out for personal benefit. The pursuit of personal (or, better, familial) benefit, after all, was what everybody caught up in political battles at the imperial court was doing. We thus should not assume that the *Hanshu* "Table" was just an expression of a "classical" vision of bureaucratized government, *à la* the *Zhouli* 周禮. Classical ideals were undeniably important to the *Hanshu* "Table" and its preceding works on the bureaucracy. They were also, however, part of an intellectual and literary trend that, as we will explore in the next and final chapter, emerged in the context of political struggles that made a vision of government disconnected from familial and factional struggles extremely attractive.

Daybooks, Greeting Tablets, and Official Service

Prior to the late-20th century explosion in excavated texts recovered from pits, wells, and tombs, scholars interested in studying the government depended almost entirely on descriptions in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, along with a few other fragmented texts and commentaries.[12] Scholars interested in institutional history and the administration of the early empires have focused on close analysis of newly excavated texts to shed light on the structure and workings of the imperial government.[13] As many scholars have noted, administrative texts excavated from tombs (as opposed to those from pits and wells) pose knotty interpretive problems, since they must first of all be understood within their funerary context. The dominant question has been: were administrative texts from tombs the "real" versions actually used in bureaucratic practice or were they copied and prepared specifically for burial?[14] Most likely, this question can only be answered on an individual basis. We probably should not expect all such texts to follow one model or the other. Regardless, in this section we will shift our attention away from whether or not these texts are "accurate" reflections of administrative practice and towards an analysis that understands texts from tombs (administrative or otherwise) as complicated projections of the status and identity of imperial officers.[15] Specifically, close readings of daybooks suggests that officers were above all concerned with ensuring that official service would provide them with resources and tools that benefited themselves and their families. Meanwhile, information from the so-called "greeting tablets" (*ye*) confirms that this desire to use an official position to secure greater resources for self and family was not a deviation from "official" activity, but was actually inscribed into formal administrative practice.

[12] The one major exception, of course, was the corpus of recovered and excavated texts from Juyan, which scholars began to study from the early 20th century.

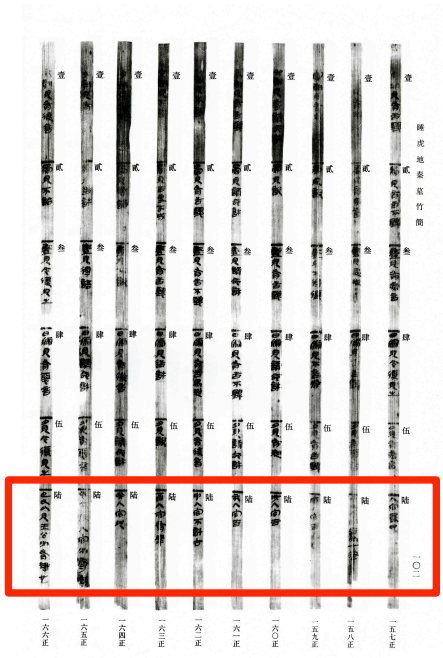
[13] Such work has only gathered steam with the gradual publication of the stunning amount of Qin-era bamboo and wooden documents recovered from a well near the town of Liye 里耶 in western Hunan. For recent treatments in English, see Yates 2012-13 and the essays in Pines et. al. 2013.

[14] See, e.g., the discussion in Yates 2013.

[15] We cannot always determine precisely whether or not a given tomb occupant buried with texts was in fact a government officer. Most scholars have maintained that a tomb with a text probably must have been the tomb of an official or "scribe," since writing and the use and possession of official documents were necessarily related to the state. I would agree with this assessment, but in fact the daybooks and greeting tablets discussed here contain so much information related to official service and are so patently concerned with the actions of officers that it hardly matters whether the given occupant of a tomb that yielded such texts actually held a government post.

We begin with the daybook literature.[16] Only a small minority of the texts found within the excavated daybook corpus deal explicitly with government, politics, and official service. Most of the texts explain whether or not specific days in the sexagenary "stem-branch" (*gan zhi* 干支) cycle are auspicious or inauspicious for a host of other activities: travel, marriage, construction, etc. At least two different texts shared between daybook manuscript finds, however, do explicitly incorporate official service into hemerological systems. The first details different auspicious and inauspicious days for "entering office" (*ru guan* 入官) and is found in three different daybook manuscripts: Manuscript A and B from the Qin tomb at Shuihudi (ca. mid-3rd century BCE) and the daybook manuscript from the early Western Han tomb at Kongjiapo.[17] We begin with Shuihudi Manuscript A, the shortest of the three. In Manuscript A, the text is entitled "Good Days for Entering Official Service (*ru guan liang ri* 入官良日), and like much of the Shuihudi corpus the text is written on one of several registers running across the strips (see image 5.1).

Image 5.1: Shuihudi Daybook Manuscript A, strips 157-66



"Good days for entering official service"
Ru guan liang ri
入官良日

Image after Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiao zu 1990, 102, with English added

[16] For lists and descriptions of tombs with daybooks, see Kalinowski 2010 and Harkness 2011.
[17] The Shuihudi tomb, part of a group of Qin tombs excavated in 1975 near Yunmeng, Hubei province, contained hundreds of bamboo slips and two sets of daybook manuscripts, labeled A (*jia* 甲) and B (*yi* 乙). For the report, see Xiaogan diqu di er qi yigong yinong wenwu kaogu xunlian ban 1976. Photographs and transcripts of the manuscripts recovered from Shuihudi are assembled in Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiao zu bian 1990. The Kongjiapo manuscripts were found in a tomb numbered eight (M8) by archaeologists. Workers at a brick factory in Suizhou, Hubei province, discovered the tomb along with fifteen other Western Han tombs. The tomb and the daybook manuscript is detailed in Hubei sheng kaogu wenwu yanjiu suo 2006. See also Harkness 2011, 27-29.

The text mostly details the significance of days containing different earthly branches (*zhi*), along with two specific days demarcated by a stem-branch combination:

入官良日
丁丑入官，吉，必七徙。
寅入官，吉。
戌入官，吉。
亥入官，吉。
申入官，不計去。
酉入官，有罪。
卯入官，凶。
未午辰入官，必辱去。
己醜，以見王公，必有拜也。
Good days for entering official service
Entering office on the day Dingchou: auspicious, certain transfer seven times[18]
Entering office on Yin days: auspicious
Entering office on Xu days: auspicious
Entering office on Hai days: auspicious
Entering office on Shen days: you will be dismissed before the 10th-month submission of accounts [i.e. before the end of the year]
Entering office on You days: criminal behavior
Entering office on Mao days: Inauspicious
Entering office on Wei, Wu, and Chen days: certain dismissal in disgrace
Entering office on the day Jichou: due to an audience with a king or lord, certain appointment.[19]

On the basis of this particular text, Yates has argued that the application of hemerological principles to entering official service might have created tension between the central government and the rest of the bureaucracy. As Yates put it, even if such "hemerological prescriptions" were "an integral part of administrative praxis," they also "may have conflicted on occasion with the demands of the state."[20] He provided a hypothetical example of just such a "conflict": the appointment of an official on a day that was inauspicious according to the hemerological system. In such a case, the appointed official might object or try to avoid taking office on the inauspicious date. Yates emphasized that we cannot ever know how these texts were actually consulted or the extent to which they were actually used. He did, however, link them to larger bureaucratic practices and introduced the idea that such ideas could have caused conflict between local officials and the central government.

This argument, however, does not account for variations between different versions of the "entering office" text. Table 6.1 below compares the predictions given for the different earthly branch days in the Shuihudi A and B and Kongjiapo manuscripts.

---

[18] The term *qi xi* 七徙 could also be translated as "promotion up seven levels." In Han texts, at least, the more common word for "promotion" is *qian* 遷. Possibly, "seven" (*qi*) here indicates not a specific number but rather just "many" or "frequent."
[19] Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiao zu 1990, 102 (photographs) and 208 (transcription).
[20] Yates, 1995, 340.

Table 5.1: Prognostications Regarding Earthly Branch Days from "Entering Office" Texts

Earthly Branch	**Shuihudi A**	**Shuihudi B**	**Kongjiapo**
Zi 子	*N/A*	Long employ, transfer seven times (久 七徙)	Auspicious (吉)
Chou 丑	Auspicious, transfer seven times (吉 七徙)	Long employ, transfer seven times (久 七徙)	Auspicious (吉)
Si 巳	*N/A*	*N/A*	Auspicious (吉)
Yin 寅	Auspicious (吉)	*N/A*	Auspicious (吉)
Xu 戌	Auspicious (吉)	Travel (行)	Travel (行)
Hai 亥	Auspicious (吉)	Sent Far Distances (傷去)	Sent Far Distances (易去)
Shen 申	Dismissal before 10th-month submission of accounts (不計去)	Transfer before 10th-month submission of accounts (不計而徙)	Transfer before 10th-month submission of accounts (不計徙)
You 酉	Criminal behavior (有罪)	Criminal behavior (有罪)	Criminal behavior (罪)
Mao 卯	Inauspicious (凶)	Inauspicious (凶)	Inauspicious (凶)
Wei 未	Certain dismissal in disgrace (必辱去)	Dismissal in disgrace (辱而去)	Disgrace (辱)
Wu 午	Certain dismissal in disgrace (必辱去)	Dismissal in disgrace (辱而去)	Disgrace (辱)
Chen 辰	Certain dismissal in disgrace (必辱去)	Dismissal in disgrace (辱而去)	Disgrace (辱)

Admittedly, the manuscripts show consistencies. According to all three, for example, You 酉 days result in "criminal behavior" (*zui* 罪), while Mao 卯 days are uniformly deemed inauspicious. There are just as many discrepancies, however, both large and small. Minor differences for Wei, Wu, and Chen days, for example, have the Kongjiapo manuscript saying only that entering office on those days will result in "disgrace" (*ru* 辱), while the Shuihudi manuscripts provide more detail, saying that those days bring "dismissal in disgrace." A much larger discrepancy is seen in prognostications for Hai days, with Shuihudi A calling them "auspicious" while Shuihudi B and Kongjiapo predict they will result in "travel (or dismissal) to distant locations" (*dang qu* 傷去), hardly good news within a

daybook literature that consistently highlighted the dangers of travel.[21] Shuihudi B and Kongjiapo, meanwhile, add prognostications that are not found in the Shuihudi A text. Such variations across just the earthly branch portion of these three texts demonstrate that there must have been a wide range of systems, some of them contradictory, employed by would-be officers interested in determining when they should "enter office."

The diversity of information seen here suggests rather that individual officers or would-be officers collected a range of information that they employed throughout their careers in an attempt to ensure that time in office was as beneficial and efficacious as possible. We see this most clearly if we take a closer look at both the content and material aspects of the Kongjiapo text, transcribed and translated here:

入官，寅，巳，子，丑，吉。申，不計徙。亥，易去。戌，行。卯，凶。午，辰，未，辱。酉，有罪。

入官毋以十月戊午。十一月亥 [end strip 196]，巳。十二月子…二月甲，乙，辛，戌，亥，癸，庚寅，申…[*continues for rest of months through middle of strip 197*]

入月四日，七 [end strip 198] 日，十六日，十八日，廿六日，不可入官，不死必 end [end strip 199]

戊子，庚子，不可入官，辰，不可為嗇夫，必以獄事免 [end strip 200]

入官以朔日數，直？者，直？者

Entering official service

For entering official service: Yin, Si, Zi, and Chou days are auspicious. If a Shen day, then before the submission of accounts in the 10th month you will be transferred. If a Hai day, then ?… If an Wu day, you can travel. Mao days are inauspicious. Wu, Chen, and Wei days will bring disgrace. You days will lead to criminal behavior.

Do not enter office on the Wuwu day of the 10th month; the Hai and Si days of the 11th month; the Zi…day of the 12th month…days of Jia, Yi, Xin, Xu, Hai, Gui, the Gengyin day, and Shen days in the 2nd month…[*this continues for the rest of the months*]

You cannot enter office on the fourth, seventh, sixteenth, eighteenth, or twenty-sixth days. If you do enter office on one of those days, if you do not die, you will certainly fall ill.

You cannot enter office on the days Wuzi and Gengzi. On Chen days you cannot be appointed [or perform the duties of?] a Bailiff (*sefu*). If this happens, you will certainly be dismissed due to a legal matter.

For entering official service, start counting from the first day of the month. [End is incomprehensible][22]

The important point to highlight is that in addition to the prognostications and proscriptions for the earthly branch days, the Kongjiapo "entering office" manuscript also outlines systems that are completely absent from the Shuihudi A manuscript. For instance, we read that specific days of the different months of the year are to be avoided, while the fourth, seventh, sixteenth, eighteenth, and twenty-sixth days of ANY month are to be avoided. Then, with no explanation we are forbidden

[21] A similar discrepancy between the texts is seen for Xu days. Prognostications and taboo days regarding travel comprise one of the most prominent categories of information in the daybook literature. See Liu Tseng-kuei 2009, 931-33.

[22] Hubei sheng kaogu wenwu yanjiu suo 2006, 84 (photograph) and 153 (transcription).

from entering office on Wuzi and Gengzi and then given the specific directive not to serve as bailiff, lest we be dismissed due to a legal conflict.

Given this diversity of proscriptions alone, the Kongjiapo "entering official service" manuscript appears to have combined many different taboo systems regarding appointments. Certainly, given the different systems outlined just within this one manuscript, the potential for a day to be inauspicious according to one system and auspicious according to another was very much possible.[23] Presumably it would have been up to the owner of the strips to make that determination when such conflicts between different systems arose. In other words, the potentially contradictory content of the Kongjiapo "entering official service" texts suggests that the owner of the strips, or a specialist under his hire, had to judge how to act according to the different systems available to him.

When we look at the actual arrangement of the texts on the strips, the agency of the tomb occupant and presumed owner of the strips comes into sharper focus (see Image 5.2).

Image 5.2: Kongjiapo "Entering Office" Text

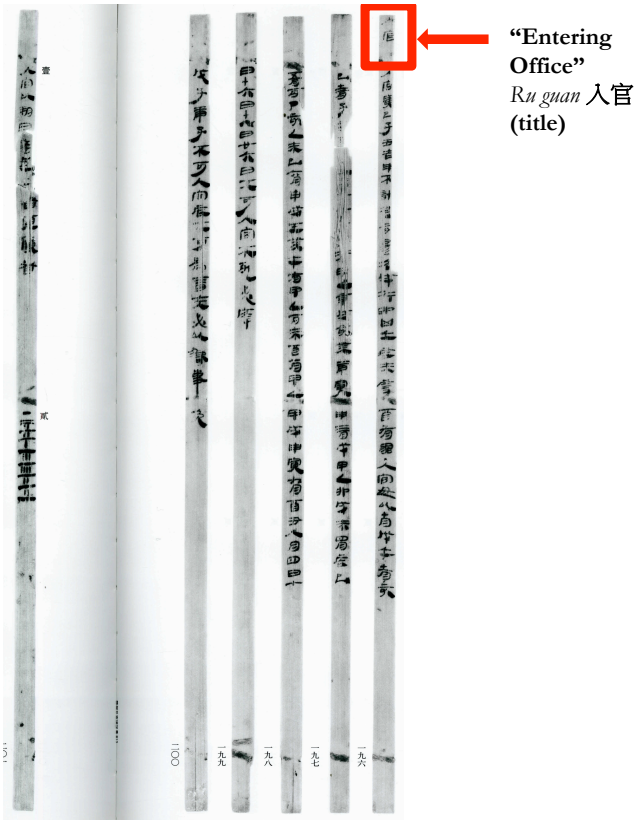


Image after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi kaogu dui 2006, 84, with English added

Certain features of the strips indicate that they were not composed at the same time, and certainly not as a unitary text. For example, the written text does not occupy the same amount of space on each of the strips, with strips 199 and 201 containing no more than half the amount of text included

[23] Poo 2013 also emphasized inconsistencies in the hemerological systems described in daybooks.

on strips 196-8. Even more tellingly, the calligraphy seen in the title of the text (indicated in image 6.2), is quite different from the calligraphy seen in the rest of the strips (see image 5.2).

Image 5.3: "Entering Office" (ru guan) *in title and main text of Kongjiapo manuscript*

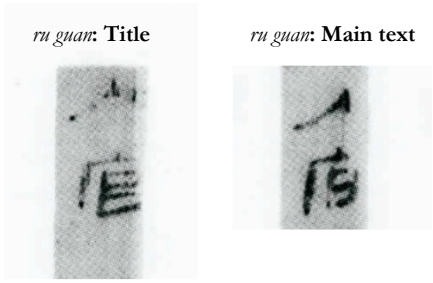


Image after Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Suizhou shi kaogu dui 2006, 84, with English added

Note, for example, the clearer articulation in the title, compared to the main text example, of the element *dui* 自 under the roof radical in the character *guan* 官. Meanwhile, the roof radical in the main text example extends much further down, reaching past *dui*. This difference in handwriting between the title and the main text suggests that whoever compiled the strips into the manuscript that was interred at Kongjiapo did not actually write the text. Rather, he assembled together the different strips regarding entering official service that he found interesting, important, or useful, and gave his assembled strips the title *ru guan*.

Shuihudi A and B and Kongjiapo are just three examples. Officials from all over the empire must have employed similarly complex and diverse hemerological systems that they consulted for their own purposes. Given the huge number of systems that must have existed, we can hardly expect the central government to have kept track or to lend much authority to any one particular system. In the hypothetical scenario that Yates presented above, representatives from the central government could easily counteract any invocation of a hemerological system by local officials simply by referring to a different system that offered a contrasting prognostication. In all likelihood, then, the daybook literature probably tells us little about conflict between central and local levels of the government, let alone the state's commitment to using cosmological or hemerological principles as guides to bureaucratic practice. Rather, the "entering office" texts point us towards a rich hemerological literature that operated in highly localized contexts and in specific ways, with officials using this literature to chart their own paths to success. This path had less to do with progressing up a bureaucratic hierarchy and more to do with creating conditions that promoted their own personal and familial interests and avoided potentially dangerous situations.

This is not to say that the search for personal and familial benefit was completely divorced from the day-to-day duties of officers. A close look at two caches of excavated letters and "greeting tablets" suggests that forming alliances and networks in order to secure resources and favors was a generally accepted activity within government service, and that communication channels and administrative institutions could be regularly called upon to employ such networks and resources. We begin with a collection of letters from a tomb dating between 104 and 56 BCE, excavated near

the town of Tianchang 天長 in present-day Anhui province, an area that during the Western Han belonged to the province of Dongyang 東陽 county in Linhuai commandery 臨淮郡.[24]

(Board 10, recto)
賁且伏地再拜請 (Line 1)
孺子孟馬足下: 賁且賴厚德, 到東郡, 幸毋恙。賁且行守丞 (Line 2)
上計, 以十二月壬戌到雒陽, 以甲子發。與廣陵長史卿俱, □以賁且家 (Line 3)
室事羞辱左右。賁且諸家死有餘罪, 毋可者, 各自謹而已, 家毋 (Line 4)
可鼓者, 且完而已。賁且西, 故自亟為所以請謝者, 即 (Line 5)
事復大急。幸遺賁且記, 孺子孟通亡桃 (逃) 事, 願以遠謹 (Line 6)

(Board 10, verso)
為故。書不能盡意, 幸少留意。志歸至, 未留東陽, 毋使歸 (Line 7)
大事。寒時幸進酒食, □察?諸?。賁且過孟故縣, 毋緩急, (Line 8)
以吏亡劾, 毋它事。伏地再拜 (Line 9)
孺子孟馬足下。 (Line 10)

I, Ben Qie, bending down to the ground and twice bowing, send an inquiry (end Line 1)

I humbly write to you, Meng[25]: Thanks to your good grace,[26] I have arrived in Dong commandery.[27] I hope you are well. While I was carrying out the duties of the Assistant to

[24] See the archaeology report, Tianchang shi wenwu guanli suo 2006, 20. Neither the documents nor other burial items give a precise date, but the report concluded based on the type and style of items and their similarity to other Han tombs from the area that it probably dated to the mid-Western Han. Yang Zhenhong 2011a, however, presented convincing evidence on the basis of one of the letters (board #10) that the tomb dated between 104 and 56 BCE. The thirty-four wooden boards recovered from the tomb were found in the storage compartment (one of two) on the northern side of the outer coffin. They include many letters as well as two boards totaling the number of registered households in Dongyang and the number of people from different districts (*xiang* 鄉) within the county available for labor under the *suan* 算 corvée tax. For a diagram of the tomb and its contents, see Tianchang shi wenwu guanli suo 2006, 5. Based on an analysis of the letters and inscriptions on the lacquers in the tomb, Yang Zhenhong 2011b argued that the tomb probably belonged to a man named Xie Ziweng 謝子翁, whose son Xie Meng 謝孟 was an official in Dongyang county. Full transcriptions and photographs of all of the thirty-four boards have yet to be published; we have transcriptions and photographs of just ten of the boards in the report. He Youzu 2006 provided an important follow-up study that amended many of the transcriptions in the report. I thank Antje Richter for her generous help in reading and translating this letter.

[25] The term *ruzi* 孺子 is a polite term used by elders to refer to younger people, while *meng* 孟 was commonly used in courtesy names (*zi* 字) to indicate an eldest son (followed by *zhong* 仲 for second or middle son, and so on). Ben Qie's use of the term *ruzi* along with *meng* suggests that Xie Meng was the oldest son and heir in his family and also that Ben Qie himself was of an older generation than Xie Meng. In other letters from the Tianchang cache, some writers preface their name with a humilific self-address (*jian zi* 賤字), indicating youth or lower status vis-à-vis the recipient. The fact

the Governor (end 2) and submitting the accounts, I arrived in Luoyang on the day Renxu in the eleventh month and left on the day Jiazi.[28] While there, I met with the senior officer

---

that Ben Qie does not use such humilifics to refer to himself supports the idea that he is older than Xie Meng. For a discussion, see Yang Zhenhong 2011b, 44.

[26] Ben Qie is probably referring to help that he received from some person or people, perhaps even Xie Meng himself, but the precise identify of this person is unclear as is the nature of the assistance. The phrase could also be a polite, formulaic statement.

[27] My translation here assumes that Ben Qie returned to Dong commandery, where he worked as an assistant to the governor (in an acting capacity?), after his travels to Chang'an to submit the accounts. Yang Zhenhong 2011a, 11-12, however, argued that Ben Qie was not working for Dong commandery upon traveling to Chang'an and "acting as the assistant to the Governor," based on the following points, a) by stating that he "arrived in Dong commandery" (*dao Dong jun* 到東郡) at the beginning of the letter, Ben Qie implied that when he wrote the letter he had "just" (剛剛) arrived in Dong commandery, so it would be unlikely that he would have been entrusted to submit accounts of Dong commandery after serving there for such a short period of time; b) because he was not a Governor or Commandant appointed by the central government, he was probably a "Bureau of Merit" level local official, whose ranks were usually drawn from members of the local elite (following Yan Gengwang's analysis); c) it would be hard to imagine that Ben Qie could receive a "note" (*ji* 記; mentioned later in the letter) while working in Dong commandery from Xie Meng, who seems to have been located far to the south in Dongyang county within Linhuai commandery; d) Ben Qie and Xie Meng clearly had a very close relationship, one that seems to have been based on blood kinship or perhaps a common hometown; e) Ben Qie mentions that he passed through Xie Meng's "old county" (*gu xian* 故縣), probably located somewhere near Dongyang county, which would have been unlikely if he was coming from Dong commandery, which is far to the north of Dongyang and Linhuai. Yang concludes that Ben Qie was probably an assistant to the governor of Linhuai commandery. Her reasoning is plausible, but not fully convincing, since she does not consider the possibility that Ben Qie had not "just" arrived in Dong commandery for the first time, but returned there from his trip to Chang'an. There is also no reason to assume that it would be difficult for Ben Qie to receive the "note" (*ji*) from Xie Meng if the two were working so far from each other (as we will see below, the tablets from Yinwan demonstrate that letters regularly were exchanged across far distances via courier). In addition, though Yang calls attention to the implausibility of Ben Qie traveling through the "old county" (*gu xian*) of Xie Meng if he was located in Dong commandery, her reasoning offers no explanation as to why Ben Qie ended up in Dong commandery. Finally, Yang assumes throughout that the reference to the "old county" (*gu xian*) in the letter is to Ben Qie's hometown, when in fact it could also refer to a previous location where Xie Meng held office. The problem is difficult and I do not claim to have a definitive solution. At best, we can probably only offer tentative answers regarding Ben Qie's identity and place of residence and employment.

[28] In other words, Ben Qie stayed three days in Luoyang, a logical resting place, since the city lay between Dong commandery and Chang'an. The archaeology report and He Youzu 2006 transcribed this line as follows: 以十二月壬戌到雒陽以甲子發兵廣陵. Yang Zhenhong 2011a, however, changed *bing* 兵 to *yu* 與, which makes more sense in the context of the letter and is supported by the photograph in the archaeology report (see Tianchang shi wenwu guanli suo 2006, 14, image 26).

from Guangling.[29] He (?) brought up matters regarding my family (end 4) and humiliated you.[30] Members of my family may have done terrible things,[31] but none of them could have done this. Each of them acts with the utmost circumspection, such that nobody in my family could be successfully linked to the crimes.[32] The matter was dropped and that was all.

I traveled west.[33] The reason I write this request to you in some haste is that (end 5) matters have become extremely urgent. It would be fortunate if you could send me a note (*ji* 記). You have fled to avoid the whole matter, and I hope you did so in order to act cautiously from a greater distance (end 6; to verso).[34] Your letter cannot convey fully your intent, but it would be fortunate if you could impart some small sense of it. I had planned to return home to you, but having not yet stopped by Dongyang, I did not want to bring this serious affair home with me.[35] During this cold season, take care to eat and drink, and… (unreadable)…I passed by your old county and there was no sense of crisis or emergency (end 8).[36] There was an investigation of an officer who had fled, but nothing else appeared to be afoot (end 9). Bending down to the ground, I bow twice.

Humbly sent to Meng.

Ben Qie paints a dramatic picture of himself and Xie Meng in peril, pursued by officials for a crime or some other transgression, unfortunately left unexplained in his letter and all of the other letters thus far published. Even if the details of this particular story remain obscure, it is clear that Ben Qie and Xie Meng were quite close, perhaps even relatives. The official from Guangling, who we can

---

[29] As Yang Zhenhong 2011a pointed out, the word *qing* 卿 after "senior officer" (*zhang shi* 長史) was probably not a name, since the word *qing* was regularly appended after the names or titles of officers as an honorific. This pattern is seen in the materials from Yinwan (see below).

[30] Reading *zuoyou* 左右 as a polite reference to Xie Meng, the addressee, a common usage in letters. Because of the unreadable character before *yi* 以 at the beginning of this sentence, the relationship between the affair with Ben Qie's family and the humiliation of Xie Meng is unclear.

[31] The phrase "crimes whose punishments cannot be expiated by the death penalty" (*si you yu zui* 死有餘罪) should probably not be understood as a reference to specific crimes.

[32] The phrase *ke gu zhe* 可鼓者 is difficult to interpret. He Youzu 2006 glossed it as *zhu* 屬 ("to attach," or here "to go along with"). Yang Zhenhong 2011a interpreted *gu* as "to play up" (*guchui* 鼓吹). Regardless, this sentence emphasizes that neither Ben Qie nor his family could be linked to the accusations (whatever they were) put forth by the official from Guangling.

[33] Ben Qie continued west from Luoyang to Chang'an to complete the submission of accounts. As his statement later in the letter suggests, Ben Qie might have originally planned to head south, towards Dongyang and Xie Meng.

[34] Alternatively, if the "desire" (*yuan* 願) were Xie Meng's, we could translate the line as follows: "with the desire to act cautiously from a greater distance." It is unclear how Ben Qie already knew that Xie Meng had fled, but given the apparent intimacy between the two men it is likely that they had already been corresponding with each other.

[35] The "serious affair" (*da shi* 大事) mentioned here presumably refers to Ben Qie's interrogation by the official from Guangling.

[36] This "old county" (*gu xian* 故縣) probably refers to a county where Xie Meng previously served as an officer before he took up his post in Dongyang. Ben Qie here perhaps sought to reassure Xie Meng that the investigation against him had not spread to other areas in which Xie Meng had connections.

only assume was part of the investigation against Xie Meng, must have know the connection between the two men, and accordingly placed significant pressure on Ben Qie in order to gain information. The important point for our purposes is that in the course of carrying out his duty of submitting accounts in Chang'an, Ben Qie was somehow implicated in the investigation. He quickly reported the incident in a "letter of request" (*qing* 請) that he sent to Xie Meng.

There is no reason to assume that the affair with Ben Qie, Xie Meng, and the officer from Guangling was a "private" dispute, and not only because we cannot establish solid lines between the public and the private. When we focus on the material context of letter-writing and correspondence, it is clear that "letters of request" such as the one exchanged between Ben Qie and Xie Meng would have employed the regular channels of communication employed throughout officialdom.[37] Even if the letter from Ben Qie should not be understood as representative example of all letters sent through such channels, documents exchanged between officers were clearly not limited to edicts and other official orders and reports traveling between the capital and local areas. The exchange of requests and letters of all sorts was part of the normal course of official service, and evidence from some wooden boards, often called "greeting tablets" (*ye* 謁) in the secondary literature,[38] shows that these letters, regardless of content, could theoretically have been processed by and stored within local bureaus in the same manner as edicts, orders, and reports. From the perspective of the quotidian operations of officialdom, then, the line between actions sanctioned as part of the official duties of a given post (e.g. maintaining household registration records, submitting accounts) easily blurred with other concerns.

Our first example comes from another document from the Tianchang tomb, a tablet recording the delivery of a letter to Xie Meng:

(Top row) …伏地再拜
|進|[39] 書
孟馬足下

(Bottom row) 口口孟
謝漢
進
東陽

[37] On these channels, see Loewe 1967. For a concise description of the sealing and transmission of official documents, see Giele 2005, 354-61.

[38] The excavated corpus of *ye* greeting tablets, dated mostly to the Western Han, is so small that it is quite difficult to make generalizable arguments about their nature and function (in contrast to the smaller and simpler *ci* 刺 tablets from the Eastern Han and post-Han periods that are much more numerous). A detailed critique of the *ye* category must remain outside the bounds of our discussion, but the evidence presented here illustrates that *ye* conveyed a range of information, followed different compositional formats, were often accompanied by and served as records for the delivery of other documents or gifts that we usually do not have, and were regularly handled by multiple people, following paths of composition and delivery that are exceedingly complex and difficult to reconstruct. Korolkov 2012 presented a fascinating and valuable study of the tablets, but tended to assume the coherency of *ye* as a document genre.

[39] Only the lower portion of this character, which does indeed appear to be the radical *chuo* 辶, is visible (see image 5.4).

謝孟

(Top row) …prostrate on the floor, bowing twice
Send on this letter
[To] the honorable Xie Meng

(Bottom row) ? ? Meng
Xie Han
Send to
Dongyang,
Xie Meng

The laconic nature of the tablet provides little information. It does, however, show that a "letter" (*shu* 書) accompanied the tablet. Moreover, differences in handwriting between the text written on the top row and the smaller addressee text on the bottom row show that the tablet underwent a multi-person chain of transmission (see image 5.4).

Image 5.4 Board #14 Tianchang tomb 19 (M19)

图三二 木牍（M19：40-14）

Image after Tianchang shi wenwu guanli suo and Tianchang shi bowuguan 2006, 15

The extremely large size of the characters on the top row of the Tianchange board, particularly the *xia* 下 of *ma zu xia* 馬足下, lend greater visual emphasis to the humble language employed by the letter writer or writers (perhaps Xie Han and the other person listed on the bottom right?). *Ma zu xia* (literally, "at the feet of my horse") is not attested in received pre-Han or Han texts, but *zu xia* is an extremely common honorific phrase added to the names of letter addressees or recipients in formal interlocutory exchanges.[40] It seems likely that the writer of the letter indicated on board 14 wrote this *ma zu xia* and the rest of the text on the top row. When the tablet and accompanying letter arrived wherever Xie Meng was (presumably Dongyang),[41] the recipient wrote the instructions to forward the letter to Xie Meng found on the lower right. We do not know the content of the letter indicated on this tablet, but if the letter from Ben Qie is any indication, it is certainly possible that it was related to Xie Meng's delicate legal situation and had nothing to do with executing the duties of his office.

Boards excavated from a late Western Han tomb dated ca. 11 BCE and located near Yinwan 尹灣, in the northern coast region of present-day Jiangsu province, demonstrate this pattern even more clearly. The Yinwan boards were buried with an official named Shi Rao 師饒, who worked in the "Bureau of Merit" (*Gong cao* 功曹) of Donghai commandery 東海郡. We begin with two tablets that were clearly produced for Shi Rao within the "Bureau of Merit," since the addressee on the recto of one of these tablets (Yinwan board 23) is not Shi Rao but a man named Ni in Chang'an:

(Recto) 進長安令
兒君

(Verso) 東海太守功曹史饒謹請吏奉謁再拜
請
威卿足下　　師君兄

(Recto) Send to the Magistrate of Chang'an
Nijun

(Verso) The clerk Rao from the Bureau of Merit of Donghai commandery, out of the utmost respect, has asked an officer presenting a tablet and bowing twice
[To present] a request
[To] the Honorable Wei from my most humble self　　Shi Junxiong[42]

This particular tablet was never sent to Chang'an, since it was buried with Shi Rao, though it could be a copy of an original that did make it to the capital. Regardless, at least three people were involved in the production, delivery, and receipt of this tablet: Shi Rao himself, the courier official who took it to Chang'an, and Wei Nijun in Chang'an. Certainly others could have been involved: a

[40] For an example from a famous letter, see Sima Qian's "Letter in Response to Ren An" (*Bao Ren An shu* 報任安書) (*Hanshu* 62.2725). Examples from speeches and formal political rhetoric at court are numerous; see, e.g., *Hanshu* 4.108. Note that *zu xia* is a formal convention and does not necessarily or consistently indicate differences in age or status between writing or speech partners. Recall also that Bi Qie used the phrase *ma zu xia* twice in his letter to Xie Meng, and it is also found on the greeting tablets from Yinwan (see below).

[41] Is it Dongyang, or is it the capital of Linhuai commandery?

[42] Lianyungang shi bowuguan, et. al. 1997, 137.

fourth scribe who actually wrote the document, for instance. Regardless, the important point to emphasize is that this tablet was produced on the orders of Shi Rao within the Bureau of Merit.

The second board from the Yinwan find also produced in the Bureau of Merit (Yinwang board 22) has no addressee on the recto. Moreover, a line of text after a dot on the board is written in smaller characters and clearly by a different hand than the writer of the rest of the text.

(Verso) 東海太守功曹史饒再拜
謁 • 奉府君記一封繞叩頭叩頭

(Verso) Clerk Rao from the Bureau of Merit of the Governor of Donghai bows twice
A visit • I have presented one sealed record to the Governor. Shi Rao, kowtowing, kowtowing.[43]

The distinctive features of this board suggest several points. First, it was not necessary for a greeting card to have an addressee that provided delivery information. In this case, Shi Rao himself appears to have taken the tablet, which gave his title and announced that he was "visiting" or "extending greetings" (*ye* 謁). Presenting this table afforded him entry to the bureau (*fu* 府), probably the bureau of the Governor of Donghai, to which he delivered the record or report (*ji* 記). After the delivery, he wrote on the tablet that the report had been delivered and then signed his name, "Shi Rao, kowtowing, kowtowing." It is difficult to interpret this "kowtow." Who was meant to read that Shi Rao had kowtowed? Was this formal language necessary to verify that the report had been delivered to the governor's bureau? Regardless, this tablet was clearly not the only document carried by Shi Rao when he made his visit. Rather, it became a record, perhaps filed away in Shi Rao's Bureau of Merit, that the main report had been delivered.

This record-keeping function of the tablet becomes significant when we look at a third tablet (Yinwan board 16), which shows that a "request" (*qing*) from the Governor of Langye, perhaps the same sort of "request" that Ben Qie wrote to Xie Meng, was forwarded to Shi Rao:

(Recto) 奏東海大守功曹
師卿

(Verso) 琅邪大守賢迫秉職不得離國謹遣吏奉謁再拜
請
君兄馬足下　　南陽陽平卿

(Recto) To be presented to the Bureau of Merit of the Governor of Donghai
[To] the Honorable Shi

(Verso) Governor Xian of Langye, due to pressing demands of official business rendering him unable to leave his realm, with the utmost respect has dispatched an official carrying a greeting tablet and bowing twice
[To] present a request
[Given to] the honorable Shi Junxiong　　The Honorable Yang Ping of Nanyang[44]

[43] Lianyungang shi bowuguan, et. al. 1997, 137.
[44] Lianyungang shi bowuguan, et. al. 1997, 134.

Unfortunately it is difficult to discern clear differences in handwriting, though the characters on recto are smaller than those on verso and exhibit some differences, including thinner rightward falling strokes. Moreover, "The Honorable Yang Ping of Nanyang" is written in much smaller characters compared to the rest of the text on recto (see image 5.5).

Image 5.5 Board 16 from tomb of Shi Rao at Yinwan

Image after Lianyungang shi bowuguan, et. al., 1997, 27

Based on the pattern seen in the unaddressed tablet translated above, the verso message from Governor Xian of Langye was probably written first and then the official carried the tablet with him to the Bureau of Merit in Donghai. Upon his arrival, an official at that Bureau wrote on recto that the request was to be presented to the "honorable Shi" (*Shi qing* 師卿). The courier official was then admitted and presented the request, while the verso name on the lower left, "The Honorable Yang Ping of Nanyang" was added. Perhaps this Yang Ping was the messenger himself, and the scribe was just making a notation of who delivered the "request" to Shi Rao. The Bureau of Merit and ultimately Shi Rao himself kept the tablet for record-keeping purposes.

In sum, the evidence from the Tianchang and Yinwang documents show that a) tablets commonly accompanied other documents (which could have been sealed) and b) multiple officers working in a given office could have seen the tablets and documents, helped admit the couriers delivering them, and helped process and file the tablets away. The presentation of greeting tablets and their accompanying documents of all types, even letters that had nothing to do with what we might think of as "official" duties (record-keeping, submitting accounts, etc), were thus a regular part of the activities and duties of low-level officers.[45] The Tianchang and Yinwan documents thus provide a perspective on officialdom that complements what we saw in the daybook literature from Shuihudi and Kongjiapo. The latter showed that officials tried to fit aspects of their careers in officialdom into hemerological systems that would allow them to act in the most personally beneficial and efficacious manner. The former, meanwhile, suggest that actions within office to promote personal or familial interests, exemplified in Ben Qie's letter to Xie Meng, were not extra or illicit activities that lay outside of "proper" action, but were in fact inscribed into the very rhythms and practices of the bureaucracy itself. Moreover, and perhaps most importantly, in all of these documents there is an almost complete absence of concern for promotion up the bureaucratic

[45] My analysis of the Yinwang tablets thus differs from Korolkov 2012, which argued that the tablets were used "to stress…the informal character of communication" (317), for the following reasons: 1) they refer to Shi Rao not by name (*ming* 名) but by polite name (*zi* 字); 2) some of the important senders could have found other more formal means to request an "audience" (*qing* 請) with Shi Rao; 3) and the use of self-deprecating language by the sender, such as "at the feet of a horse" (馬足下), even when the sender was more highly ranked than Shi Rao (e.g., a governor). Korolkov emphasized these characteristics in order to draw a distinction between the "informal" tablets and more formal, hierarchical communications in other sorts of official documents (which he did not specify). Use of the polite name, however, is not an indication of informality, since only family members or very close associates would call somebody by his *ming*. Moreover, Shi Rao refers to himself by his *ming* on one of the unsent Yinwan tablet; surely he would not have used the more formal term to refer to himself. Korolkov's own fascinating analysis of the calligraphy on the Yinwan tablets, which showed that the verso message was written in a more flourishing style with larger characters compared to the addressee information on recto, also supports the idea that the tablets were formal documents. Moreover, phrases such as *ma zu xia* are highly formal (and formulaic). If anything, their usage would have implied the utmost respect and adherence to the dictates of etiquette and protocol. Finally, Korolkov does not reflect on the possibility that the tablets could also be accompanied by other documents and serve as markers for their delivery (e.g., note his description of board 22 (Karolkov 2012, 314), which claims that the statement written in smaller characters is perhaps evidence that the tablet was "recycled for some other needs"). We should probably hesitate before drawing a particularly clear distinction between any sort of "formal" and "informal" writing in the early period (not least because any writing material was rare and expensive), including the greeting tablets.

hierarchy. Career advancement based on skills, competency, and performance measured against defined official duties was not just rare: based on current evidence from our excavated sources the subject appears to have been largely missing from conversations and activities within officialdom.[46]

Tables, Careers, and Articulating an Autonomous Officialdom

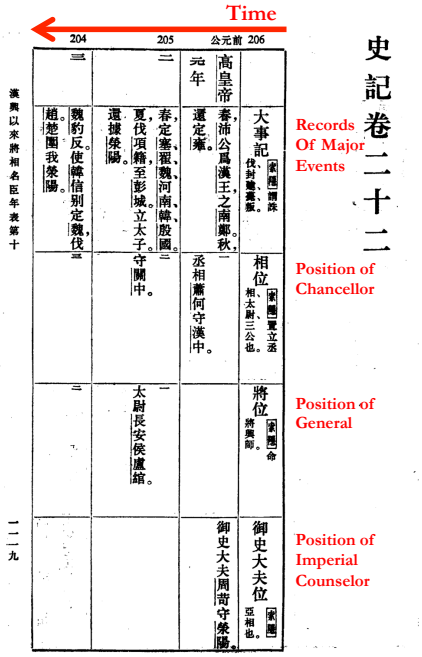
The evidence presented above shows that the practice of government in the Western Han included a mixture of administrative duties and actions designed to secure and protect personal and familial interests. "Official" and "unofficial" actions were thus so tightly intertwined in the context of day-to-day government business that we must cast a skeptical eye upon any source that claims to champion the former against the negative influence of the latter. When we do so, statements about the duties of offices and the nature of official action emerge not as reflections of reality but as part of a highly complex discussion that drew equally upon administrative and literary conventions in order to advance different models of the imperial court. What models of the court can we identify? We begin with a comparison of two sources that at first glance might appear to be the most transparently administrative sections of the received histories: the "Chronological Table of Generals, Ministers, and Famous Officers Since the Establishment of the Han" (*Han xing yi lai jing xiang ming chen nian biao* 漢興以來將相名臣) from the *Shiji* and the "Table of Officers and Ministers" from the *Hanshu*. As we will see, while both tables take the highest levels of officialdom as their subject, they evince starkly different visions of the imperial court, with the *Shiji* table contextualizing the appointment of officials within the context of important dynastic events and the *Hanshu* table completing divorcing the careers of officers from such events. In the *Hanshu*, we instead view a comprehensive structure of high officialdom at court that is independent of the vicissitudes of politics, war, and even reigns of emperors. In the final section, we will contextualize this change in literary terms, drawing connections between the *Hanshu* table's depiction of the court and the formal and rhetorical properties of the "Admonitions" (*zhen* 箴) on offices, a poetic genre that first emerged in the late Western Han.

Officers, Events, and Careers: The Shiji "Chronological Table"

The "Chronological Table of Generals, Ministers, and Famous Officers" (hereafter, "Chronological Table") from the *Shiji* is divided into four categories organized into rows. These rows run chronologically, starting in 206 BCE when Gaozu was crowned King of Han 漢王 and ending in 20 BCE, during the reign of Chengdi.[47] Since these dates fall decades after his death, even if Sima Qian started the "Chronological Table" he could not have finished it. We will explore the significance of this fact below, but now note only the four categories that occupy the rows: "Records of Major Events" (*Da shi ji* 大事記), "Office of Chancellor" (*Xiang wei* 相位), "Office of General" (*Jiang wei* 將位), and "Office of Imperial Counselor" (*Yushi daifu wei* 御史大夫位) (see image 5.5).

[46] My analysis here is not only relevant for "lower" levels of officialdom, since the Yinwan greeting tablets include correspondence with a governor, who would have ranked at 2,000 bushels.
[47] The best studies of the *Shiji* "Chronological Table" remain the words completed by Qing scholars and assembled in *Er shi wu shi bu bian*. Yi Ping 1989 is an excellent modern study that expands upon or revises points made by Qing scholars.

Image 5.5 Shiji "Chronological Table" With Categories Indicated



Incidents detailed in the row "Records of Major Events" include installation and deaths of emperors as well as some empresses and Liu household kings, the naming of imperial heirs, major insurrections, visits to imperial temples and altars, invasions by the Xiongnu, and omens of various kinds. The "Position of Chancellor" row details the dates when chancellors were appointed,[48] further numbering years of their terms in office within each table cell in continuous fashion starting from the year of appointment. The "Position of General" row also details the appointment of individual people, but not to one single position. The table lists any appointment to a high military post, but when a person receives appointment to the irregularly filled office of Grand Commandant (*Taiwei* 太尉), the cells number the years that the incumbent held the office. In a few instances, we read that a general has been promoted to the position of Chancellor. Finally, the "Position of General" row also details some of the military exploits and victories of the generals. The "Position of Imperial Counselor" row, meanwhile, does not number the years that incumbents held the post of Imperial Counselor, and simply gives the names of people appointed. At least, that pattern holds until the year 51 BCE, when we read that the "Superintendent of Transport Chen Wannian became Imperial Counselor" (太僕陳萬年為御史大夫).[49] From 51 BCE on, then, the "Chronological Table" provides the posts previously held by all of the newly appointed Imperial Counselors.[50]

Every row of the "Chronological Table," with the exception of "Position of Imperial Counselor," also curiously contains statements written in text running upside down (see example in

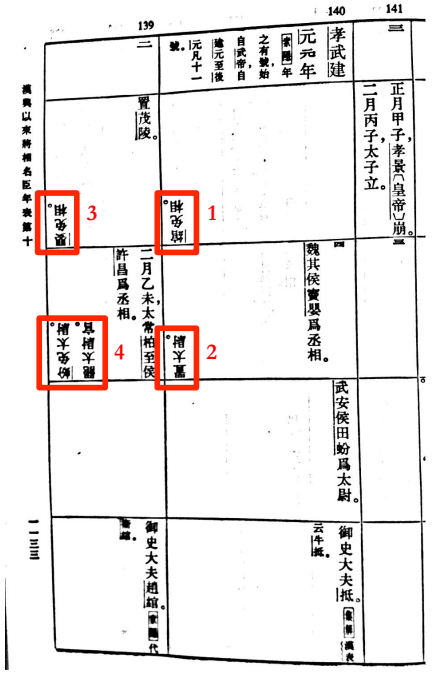
[48] Sometimes the table provides months and stem-branch days, while elsewhere it says only that a given person "was made Chancellor" (*wei chengxiang* 為丞相).

[49] *Shiji* 22.1150.

[50] From 51 BCE on, the "Chronological Table" notes twelve Imperial Counselors and gives the previous posts held by all of them.

image 5.6). Unfortunately, at our current remove we cannot determine the orientation of these statements as originally written on the bamboo strips that comprised the table.[51]

Image 5.6 Example of Upside-down Text from Shiji "Chronological Table," with Translations



1. **Wei Wan was removed from the office of Chancellor.**
   綰免相。
2. **The office of Supreme Commander was installed.**
   置太尉。
3. **Dou Ying was removed from the office of Chancellor.**
   嬰免相。
4. **Tian Fen was removed from the office of Supreme Comander. The office of Supreme Commander was abolished.**
   蚡免太尉。
   罷太尉官。

Since the Qing period scholars have pondered this reversed text, with many arguing that it holds the key to a mysterious moral or didactic message that Sima Qian encoded into the text. Responding to that idea, Yi Ping 易平 has noted that aside from a few exceptions which were probably later interpolations, the upside down statements follow a definite pattern. First, when Chancellors whose appointments are detailed in the "Position of Chancellor" row died or were removed from office, this information was raised up one column to "Records of Major Events" and written upside down. We see this in image 5.6, which shows that the removal of Wei Wan and Dou Ying were both recorded in this manner. Second, when the office of "Supreme Commander" (*Taiwei* 太尉) was established or abolished,[52] the incident is recorded not in the "Position of General" row but raised up one row to "Position of Chancellor" and written upside down. Despite item number four in

[51] I am unaware of any excavated table written on bamboo with text running in opposite directions.
[52] Several ministers held the position of Supreme Commander (*Tai wei*) during the Western Han, and historians usually say that the office was "not constantly established" (*bu chang zhi* 不常置) (see, e.g. An Zuozhang and Xiong Tieji 1984-1985, 75). It is very possible, however, that an established *Tai wei* office within the hierarchy of court offices did not emerge until the late Western Han. As far as I know, for example, for most of the Western Han we do not see a transfer of the office from one person to a successor. Rather, we read only of one person being appointed *Taiwei* for a temporary period of time, and then that the office was "abolished" after the incumbent was promoted or died. Talk of the *Tai wei* office being "inconstant" is probably an interpretation based on the growing authority of the *San gong* 三公 model during the late Western Han, which held that this office *should* exist.

image 5.6 above, names of deceased or removed Supreme Commander incumbents are generally not recorded.[53]

Both right side up and upside down writing on the "Chronological Table" thus established a hierarchy of offices that clearly emphasized the higher position of the Chancellor: the "Position of Chancellor" row is above the rows for Generals and Imperial Counselors, while only the Chancellors are specifically named on the occasion of their death or conclusion of service, raised one level up (to the "Records of Major Events"), and written upside down. The special and distinctive treatment received by the Chancellor vis-à-vis the other officers thus reflected his higher status and his position as head of the bureaucracy and most important officer in the land. At the same time, the rhetorical thrust of the table rests on the interplay between the "Major Events" (*da shi*) listed in the top row and the appointment of key officers. This function is particularly evident in years when the "Records of Major Events" row records invasions by the Xiongnu. In such years or in the immediately following year, we read of the appointment of numerous generals, who led the military response to the Xiongnu attack.[54] Other columns invite more subtle connections. For example, included in the "Major Events" for 135 BCE was the death of Wudi's mother, Empress Dowager Dou 竇, while in the same column we read in the "Position of Minister" row that Tian Fen 田蚡 was appointed Chancellor.[55] The column thus hints at the disagreements between the Empress Dowager and Tian Fen that had earlier resulted in Tian's dismissal as Supreme Commander, a conflict that Sima Qian described in his "Account" (*lie zhuan* 列傳) of Tian Fen.[56]

The *Shiji* "Chronological Table" thus matches changes in the careers of individual officers to dynastic events deemed of particular significance and relevance for understanding these changes. We must emphasize, however, that this pattern becomes substantially altered in the later years of the table, which record much fewer "Major Events." From the year 91 to 20 BCE,[57] we read of only seven events, excluding the upside down notations of the Chancellors. With one exception, all of these recorded events fall within the reign of Xuandi.[58] On the other hand, the table continues to

---

[53] Yi Ping 1989, 362, wrote that the addition of Tian Fen's name was a "redundant phrase" (*zhui ci* 贅詞) that he could not fully explain. He disagreed, however, with Zhang Dake's 張大可 view that the notation of Tian Fen's named served to underscore the fact that the office of Supreme Commandant was never again re-established after Tian Fen left the office.

[54] See, for example, the columns for 158 BCE, the sixth year of the latter reign period (*houyuan* 後元) of Wendi (*Shiji* 22.1129) and 126-123 BCE, the third through sixth years of the Yuanshuo 元朔 reign period of Wudi (*Shiji* 22.1136).

[55] *Shiji* 22.1134.

[56] *Shiji* 107.2843.

[57] This is the year that many commentators, including Ban Gu, believe that Sima Qian stopped recorded events for the table. See *Shiji* 22.1142-43. Yi Ping 1989, 361, assumed that Sima Qian stopped at 91 BCE. It is probably impossible, however, to determine with any certainty when Sima stopped recording the table, and we certainly cannot assume that *everything* written before 91 BCE came from the brush of Sima Qian.

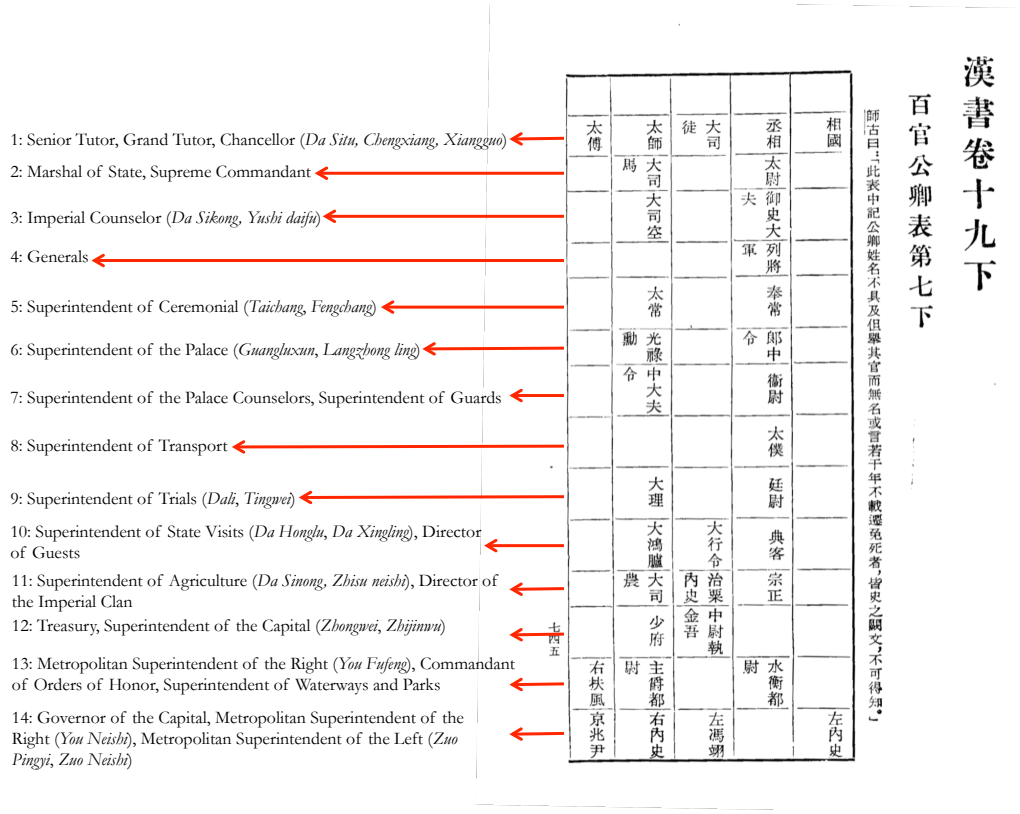
[58] The exception is an eclipse recorded in the "Major Events" row of the column for 42 BCE (*Shiji* 22.1152), during the reign of Yuandi. It is worth pointing out that except for the notation of the death of an empress and the installation of Empress Huo 霍后, the events given for Xuandi's reign are positive, perhaps causes for celebration, such as the naming of the imperial heir, trips to complete imperial sacrifices, and the discovery of precious treasures. The treatment of Empress Huo here is notable, since we read nothing else in the table of the disaster that befell her family after

note in regular fashion the appointment and dismissal of Chancellors, Generals, and Imperial Counselors. As noted above, however, starting from 51 BCE there is an additional change: in the "Position of Imperial Counselor" row we not only read that a given person is installed as Imperial Counselor but also are given the previous positions that the new Counselors held. Unlike the earlier years, then, the later years of the "Chronological Table" begin to trace the careers of office-holders in a manner seemingly independent of the "Major Events."

The Hanshu "Table of Officers and Ministers": From Officers to Offices

This pattern, seen in its nascent form in the *Shiji* "Chronological Table," is developed to a highly sophisticated degree in the *Hanshu* "Table of Officers and Ministers" (hereafter, "Table"). Most obviously, the *Hanshu* "Table" eliminates all references to dynastic events. Rather, as image 5.7 shows, we are given only a hierarchical arrangement of the highest officers at court.

Image 5.7 First Page of the "Table of Officers and Ministers" of the Hanshu



---

the powerful Huo Guang 霍光 died. Moreover, Empress Huo, along with Wei Zifu 衛子夫, are the only two empresses listed by name in the "Chronological Table." Wei Zifu, of course, gave birth to Liu Ju 劉據 (b. 129 BCE), Wudi's eldest son and heir apparent who became embroiled in the disastrous "witchcraft" incident of 91 BCE. The explicit naming of these two empresses in the "Chronological Table" would perhaps have signaled to readers these background political conflicts involving consort families, which are otherwise not discussed in the table.

As image 5.7 makes immediately apparent, the *Hanshu* "Table" includes considerably more officers than the "Chronological Table" of the *Shiji*. In addition to the Chancellor, Generals, and Imperial Counselor categories given in the "Chronological Table," the *Hanshu* "Table" lists all of the ministerial posts as well as the Governor of the Capital (*Jingzhaoyin* 京兆尹) and other officers in charge of administering the territory around Chang'an. Moreover, the *Hanshu* "Table" takes care to list in the same category all of the different titles used for the same office over the course of the Western Han. For example, we are given *Dianke* 典客 (Director of Guests) as well as *Da Xingling* 大行令 and *Da Honglu* 大鴻臚 (Superintendent of State Visits), which as we saw in Chapter 4 were the three different titles used for the same office over the course of the Western Han. As we discussed in Chapter 4, of course, significant changes in responsibilities over time distinguished these three titles. The *Hanshu* "Table" however, ignores these distinctions in favor of creating historical continuity for the different court posts over the course of the Western Han. Compared to the *Shiji* "Chronological Table," then, the *Hanshu* "Table" expanded the number of high court offices and emphasized that all of these offices existed and persisted from the very inception of the dynasty.

Just as importantly, the *Hanshu* "Table" significantly changed two of the categories found in the *Shiji* "Chronological Table." First, whereas the latter only detailed Chancellors in the top-ranked "Position of Chancellor" row, the *Hanshu* "Table" also included the Senior Tutor (*Taifu* 太傅), Grand Tutor (*Taishi* 太師), and Grand Protector (*Taibao* 太保) in this category and further noted the three titles for Chancellor: *Da Situ* 大司徒, *Chengxiang* 丞相, and *Xiangguo* 相國. Second, the *Hanshu* "Table" split out the Supreme Commandant (*Taiwei* 太尉) from the larger group of Generals (*Jiang* 將), which it placed beneath the Imperial Counselor. At the top of the hierarchy of the *Hanshu* "Table," then, was the storied "Executive Council" (*san gong* 三公),[59] comprised of the Chancellor, Supreme Commander, and Imperial Counselor. We already saw above that this notion of a tripartite council at the top of officialdom was already present in the *Shiji* "Chronological Table," since that text lent special weight to the Supreme Commander over the other Generals by noting a) the years that incumbents remained in the office and b) the years that the office was established (or re-established) and abolished. The *Hanshu*, however, clearly enshrined the rarified status of the Executive Council at the top. At the same time, the *Hanshu* "Table" added the three Tutor positions to the top slot with the Chancellor. The emergence of the "Executive Council" in the late Western Han and the addition of the position of tutor is a complicated topic; we will take up its emergence in texts below and its institutional realization during the late Western Han in Chapter 6. For now, it is important to note that the *Hanshu* "Table" picks up the notion of the "Executive Council" from the *Shiji* "Chronological Table" and makes it more explicit.

Another connection between the *Shiji* "Chronological Table" and *Hanshu* "Table" emerges when we look at the latter's descriptions of the careers followed by court officers. This topic is highly complicated, since the "Table" covers almost the entirety of the Western Han (206 BCE-5 CE) and mentions more than 500 different people.[60] Given the huge amount of information within

[59] Translation of *san gong* as "Executive Council" follows Giele 2006.

[60] I arrived at this number by counting every single name on the *Hanshu* "Table," being sure to count only once those officials who held multiple offices given on the "Table." My specific total was 508 people, though this figure can only be tentative, since there are many highly laconic entries that provide nothing but given names (*ming* 名) along with person's office title. For example, the "Table" notes only that a person or persons with the name Cheng 成 held the office of Governor of the Capital (*Jingzhaoyin*) in the years 73, 50, and 45 BCE (see *Hanshu* 19b.800, 19b.812, and 19b.815). We cannot tell if these three entries referred to the same Cheng or three different people all named

the "Table," it is hardly surprising that the format, terminology, and level of detail within the different entries are inconsistent. Even first time readers of the "Table" are immediately struck by the difference between entries at the beginning and those towards the end. Compared to the latter, the former are much more infrequent and laconic: the entries during the reigns of Wendi and Jingdi, for instance, are very short, often provide only the given names (*ming* 名) of the office-holders, and do not occur relatively infrequently. The entries for the later years of the Western Han, by contrast, almost always provide the full names of office-holders along with their previous posts. Some of the later posts for the highest officers (e.g., Chancellor, General) even record the gifts that they received upon retirement.[61] These differences between the beginning and end of the table perhaps reflect the more detailed and accurate records available to members of the Ban 班 family who compiled the table in the first decades of the Eastern Han.[62] They also reflect their perspective as compilers, since they must have been struck by the fact that certain years in the late Western Han saw tremendous turnover and changes in office-holders: the years 62-59 BCE, 20-21 BCE, 8-7 BCE, and 6-5 BCE, for example, saw every single high office change hands. By tracing the different offices that the people appointed in these years had previously held, the "Table" provides one way to understand the background behind the appointment of officers in these years.

As we saw above, the alter years of the "Chronological Table" of the *Shiji* noted the previous posts held by appointees to the position of Imperial Counselor. In doing so, it allowed readers to begin to trace the ascendance of incumbents up the ranks of officialdom. The *Hanshu* "Table" does the same thing for officers in all of the different categories and also uses terminology that is mostly or entirely absent from the *Shiji* "Chronological Table." Specifically, the *Hanshu* "Table" regularly notes when officers were "promoted" (*qian* 遷), "demoted" (*bian* 貶), or "dismissed" (*mian* 免), as well as when they died (*zu* 卒 or *hong* 薨).[63] The "Table" also describes when officers ran into legal

---

Cheng. There are also some instances of single-character names that could refer to the same person described in more detail elsewhere on the table. For example, two people named Chongguo 充國 held the offices of Superintendent of the Guards (*Weiwei* 衛尉) in 118 BCE and Director of the Treasury (*Shaofu* 少府) in 95 BCE (*Hanshu* 19b.776, 19b.787). We know they are different people because according to the "Table" the Superintendent of the Guards Chongguo was executed in 118 BCE. It is possible, however, that the Director of the Treasury Chongguo could have been the same Hu Chongguo 壺充國 who held the office of Grand Herald (*Da Honglu* 大鴻臚) from the year 104 BCE (*Hanshu* 19b.783). I tended to follow the lead of Loewe 2000, which did not assume that identical given names on the "Table" necessarily referred to the same person. Nonetheless, the problems discussed here make it impossible to determine a precise number of officers described on the "Table."

[61] See, e.g., the entries for 43 BCE (*Hanshu* 19a.817) and 30 BCE (*Hanshu* 19b.824) that note respectively the retirements of and gifts given to Chancellor Yu Dingguo 于定國 and Marshal of State Xu Jia 許嘉.

[62] On the composition of the *Hanshu* and its tables, see Hulsewé 1993, 129-30. These differences, of course, should also alert us to the very real possibility that portions of the table were added or emended even after Ban Zhao 班昭 completed the tables.

[63] The *Shiji* "Chronological Table" does contain these terms, but in a much more limited fashion. We read only twice in the entire "Chronological Table" that an officer was "promoted" (*qian*) (see *Shiji* 22.1121, 22.1131). The first is not even really a "promotion," since it refers only to the fact that in 198 the Chancellor Xiao He received the new title of Xiangguo 相國. The term "dismissed" (*mian*) is more frequently used, usually (12 out of 19 times) to refer to the dismissal of a Chancellor.

trouble that brought punishment, ranging from fines to removal from office to death.[64] We also regularly read the previous positions held by incumbents, the length of time that they held office, and if a given incumbent is holding the office in an "acting" (*shou* 守) capacity. As an illustration, the selections below comprise the appointments detailed in the "Table" for 80 BCE. For each year, they move from the lowest-ranked offices to those of the highest rank:

> 80 BCE (1st year of Yuanfeng 元鳳)
>
> 左馮翊賈勝胡，二年坐縱謀反者棄市。
> Gu Shenghu served as the Metropolitan Superintendent of the Left. In his second year he was convicted of releasing people who had plotted rebellion and was executed in the marketplace.
>
> 中郎將趙充國為水衡都尉，六年遷
> Zhao Chongguo, the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace, was made Superintendent of Waterways and Parks. In his sixth year he was promoted.
>
> 執金吾壺信。
> Hu Xin served as Superintendent of the Capital.
>
> 諫大夫杜延年為太僕，十五年免。
> Du Yannian, Advisory Council, was made Superintendent of Transport. In his fifteenth year he was dismissed.
>
> 光祿勳并右將軍

Interestingly, all dismissals in the "Chronological Table" are written upside down (see above). The word "demote" (*bian*) is entirely absent. The word *zu* for "death" is used for all officers, but usually *hong* is used only for the highest-ranked officers: Chancellors, Imperial Counselors, and Generals. There are a few exceptions: *hong* notes the death of one Director of the Imperial Clan (*Zongzheng* 宗正) and two Superintendents of Ceremonial (*Taichang* 太常). It would be interesting to delve into these cases to see if there is any pattern and identify whether or not there are any connections with terminology from the *Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), which also note the "death" (*hong*) of nobles.

[64] Usually, in cases of criminal activity, the "Table" says that an official "engaged in criminal activity," (*you zui* 有罪), was "imprisoned" (*xia yu* 下獄), or was "convicted" (*zuo* 坐) of breaking a law. The "Table" sometimes specifies the broken laws as "ordinances" (*ling* 令). Of the fifty-one total "convictions" (*zuo*) given in the "Table," twenty (almost 40%) were committed by Superintendents of Ceremonial (*Taichang* 太常 or *Fengchang* 奉常). These include instances of Superintendents being convicted of accepting non-legal tender coins (*Hanshu* 19b.778), presumably as part of the money payments that nobles and kings were required to give to maintain the sacrifices in the ancestral temples, and providing "scanty offerings" (*fa ci* 乏祠) for the sacrifices. I am not entirely sure how to interpret the relative prevalence of law breaking among the Superintendents of Ceremonial. At the very least, we can conclude that in the world of the "Table" the ritual regulations that the Superintendents were expected to uphold were particularly important and merited more detailed exposition than the crimes committed by other officers.

The position of Superintendent of the Palace was combined with the General of the Right.

光祿勳張安世為右將軍光祿勳，六年遷。
Zhang Anshi, the Superintendent of the Palace, was made General of the Right and Superintendent of the Palace. In his sixth year he was promoted.

九月庚午，右扶風王訴為御史大夫，三年遷。
In the ninth month on the day Gengwu, the Metropolitan Superintendent of the Right, Wang Su, was made Imperial Counselor. Three years later he was promoted.[65]

Such entries make for dry reading, which no doubt partially accounts for the fact that most scholars have focused on the first section of the *Hanshu* "Table" that describes the offices and largely ignored the actual table of offices that follows it. Note that not all of the entries listed in 80 BCE provide the previous office held by the new incumbents: specifically, we are not given the office held by Hu Xin prior to his appointment as Superintendent of the Capital. Usually, however, we do have the previous post, which along with the notion of "promotions" and "dismissals" allows us to trace the rise and fall of officers through the different levels of offices. In this vein, note the entry that describes how the Superintendent of the Palace (*Guangluxun* 光祿勳) was combined into the General of the Right (*You Jiangjun* 右將軍) position. We read the same information in the immediately following entry for Zhang Anshi, but the "Table" still takes care to underscore the fact of the Superintendent of the Palace in that office's own category. In effect, the "Table" thus provides us not just with a description of careers of officers but also a depiction of the histories of offices. The offices themselves exist independently of any individual incumbent, and the "Table" makes sure to emphasize this idea throughout. The fate of individual office-holders is less important than the fact that the offices were filled and the duties of those offices were performed. By noting criminal convictions and the resulting demotions or removals from office, the "Table" also subtly suggests that promotion was the result of successful fulfillment of duties and good behavior. The *Hanshu* "Table" thus quite consciously depicts the highest echelons of officialdom, which comprised the officer corps of the imperial court, as an autonomous institution with processes and norms that were apparently divorced from political events and required incumbents to adhere to standards inherent to each official post.

When we compare this vision of officialdom to our discussion in the previous section, however, we can see that the *Hanshu* "Table" was not describing the reality of official service but rather projecting a normative understanding of how officialdom should be organized and operate. Even if we reflect on the very subjects of the "Table" itself, we can see that it described a world that was exactly the opposite of its vision. Specifically, if we look closely at the 500 or so office-holders in the *Hanshu* "Table," the majority of them clearly did not get their positions and promotions solely because they were effective officials who fulfilled the duties of their offices.[66] Amongst the officials mentioned in the "Table," there is a conspicuous repetition of surnames from prominent families such as Du 杜, Ding 丁, Shi 史, and Wang 王, while some 15% of all of the officers listed on the

[65] *Hanshu* 19b.795.
[66] This is not to deny the fact that a few highly able officials here and there managed to gain recommendation and then rose through the ranks based on their performance. Such cases were the exception rather than the rule, however.

"Table" also held nobilities (*guo* 國).[67] The *Hanshu* "Table" thus subtly transforms an elite society comprised of wealthy families and high-ranked nobles into a hierarchical bureaucracy that followed rules and standards of performance. We will return in Chapter 6 to flesh out the political factors that motivated this rhetorical move, but first we turn to a series of poems in order to understand the relationship between the *Hanshu* "Table" and literary conventions that were emerging in the late Western Han.

A Literary Articulation of Norms and Duties: The *Bai guan zhen*

The principles embodied in the *Hanshu* "Table" were hardly new. After all, several early texts had advanced the idea that officialdom should be an autonomous institution comprised of hierarchically arranged offices that existed independent of both political events and the backgrounds and personal networks of individual incumbents, who were promoted and demoted based on their qualifications. Discussion of the courts of legendary sage rulers at times took on this theme: one of the more famous versions comes in the "Shun dian 舜典" chapter of the *Shangshu* , but we see it reiterated in many other texts.[68] Such statements, however, do not mean that the ideas behind them were widely practice and enjoyed institutional support. Indeed, as we already noted at the beginning of this chapter, the available evidence suggests that Western Han officialdom was no hierarchical and "meritocratic" bureaucracy. How, then, do we explain the vision of officialdom seen in the *Hanshu* "Table"? The presence on the "Table" of titles such as *Da Sima* and *Da Sikong* suggest the influence of classicizing models of officialdom, since those same titles are also found in discussions of the government in the *Shangshu* and *Zhouli* 周禮. As we will see in the next chapter, learned officials schooled in such classical texts offered their own proposals to reform court offices following purportedly classical models. The remainder of this chapter, however, will argue that discussions of officialdom in classical texts offered more than specific titles and duties. Rather, they offered a whole mode of government service in which officials adopted the prescribed forms and norms of offices that endured beyond the tenures of specific office-holders.

This point finds its most dramatic illustration via close analysis of a series of poems attributed to Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), the so-called "Admonitions of the Many Offices" (*Bai guan zhen* 百官箴). The poems have unfortunately been almost entirely ignored in the secondary scholarship, no doubt because their dating and authorship present difficult, perhaps

[67] It is important to emphasize that a larger number of the entries in the "Table," particularly those that refer only to the given names (*ming*) of a particular office-holder, refer to people who are otherwise unknown.

[68] On tensions within pre-imperial texts between the ideal of rule by family line on the one hand and merit on the other, see Allan 1981. For a quite different take on the problem, focusing in particular on the relationship between self-cultivation and action as a "minister" (*chen* 臣), see Roberts 2013. We perhaps should not marvel too much at the prevalence in extant early Chinese texts of calls for clearly defined duties and a clear hierarchy. Almost all of our extant early texts were written under the sponsorship of a ruler or to persuade a ruler. Given this audience, we probably cannot expect a radically different message. A thorough study of the relationship between statements in pre-imperial philosophical texts and the institutions and literary practices of Western Han officialdom would take us too far afield from the subject at hand.

unsolvable problems.[69] The "Admonitions" were transmitted via Tang 唐 and Song 宋 compendia or in scattered quotes from commentaries, and were only gathered together when Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762-1843) compiled his collection of prose writings from Qin and Han.[70] Important questions about the authenticity of the poems thus remain, and stark differences between the different versions of the poems transmitted via the compendia can make decisions on an individual reading of a character or line maddeningly difficult. Two descriptions of the compositions of the admonitions in the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu* show that even if Yang Xiong likely did compose some admonitions, he could not have been the sole author of all the admonitions assembled by Yan Kejun.[71] Rather, important scholars from the Eastern Han probably added to and supplemented his admonitions, establishing the "Admonitions of the Many Offices" as a poetic subgenre that persisted for centuries. Our analysis of the admonitions here, however, does not require Yang Xiong to have been the sole author. If anything, the multiple authors of the admonitions testify not only to the sterling reputation of Yang Xiong as a classicist master worthy of emulation but also to the possibility that the vision of officialdom articulated within the admonitions was compelling to learned officials at the imperial courts of both the late Western Han and Eastern Han. A close analysis of the poems thus affords us an opportunity to understand a mode of thinking about high offices that gained increasing credence amongst classicizing officials and exegetes during these periods.

---

[69] I further suspect that many people find the verses boring and not worth reading. While I will not attempt a full-scale defense of the literary merit of the "Admonitions," I note here only that their emergence as a genre in the late Western Han and Eastern Han attests to the fact that the verses struck a chord amongst a large group of highly learned and sophisticated officials. Via close readings of select "Admonitions" and elucidating connections between the verses and the *Hanshu* "Table," the discussion here will hopefully help explain why the "Admonitions" proved to be a compelling genre for many officers.

[70] Yan Kejun identified twenty different "Admonitions" in received texts. These include admonitions from directors of ministries that are also detailed in the "Table of Offices and Ministers" of the *Hanshu*, such as the "Admonition of the Superintendent of Agriculture" (*Da sinong zhen* 大司農箴) and "Admonition of the Grand Herald" (*Da honglu zhen* 大鴻臚箴). They also include admonitions from other officers that are not in the "Table," including an "Admonition of the Prefect of Shanglin Park" (*Shanglin yuan ling zhen* 上林苑令箴) and "Admonition of the Court Architect" (*Jiangzuo daifu zhen* 將作大夫箴). These differences between the officials detailed in the *Shiji* "Chronological Table," the *Hanshu* "Table," and the "Admonitions" provide a great illustration of the fact that learned officials in the late Western Han started to discuss different models of the court, populating it with different groupings of officers.

[71] The *Hanshu* "Account" (*Zhuan*) of Yang Xiong, in a passage detailing Yang's motivations for composing different works, states that he composed "admonitions of the provinces" (*zhou zhen* 州箴) (*Hanshu* 87.3583). The "Yi wen zhi" 藝文志 of the *Hanshu* includes "Admonitions" (*zhen*) in two *pian* amongst the works of Yang Xiong (*Hanshu* 30.1727). The *Hou Hanshu*, meanwhile, records a statement by Hu Guang 胡廣 (91-172 CE) to the effect that Yang Xiong composed (*zuo* 作) twelve admonitions of the provinces and twenty-five admonitions of the offices. Nine of these admonitions became "lost or fragmented" (*wang que* 亡闕), so Cui Yin 崔駰, his son Cui Yuan 崔瑗, and Liu Taotu 劉騊駼 wrote "supplements" (*bu* 補) in sixteen *pian* and Hu Guang wrote four more *pian* (as is common, the relationship here between individual compositions and *pian* is unclear).

In his "Account" in the *Hanshu*, Yang Xiong wrote that, "among admonitions, none were finer than the 'Admonition from the Overseer of Hunts'" (箴莫善於虞箴).[72] A poem, or perhaps a portion of a poem included in the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 is also entitled "Admonition from the Overseer of Hunts" (*Yu ren zhi zhen* 虞人之箴). The admonition is found quoted in a long speech to Lord Dao of Jin given by Wei Jiang 魏莊, in which Wei Jiang advises Dao not to not attack the Rong 戎.[73] Wei Jiang first describes the example of the legendary Xia ruler Yi 羿, deceived and then ousted due to his excessive indulgence in hunts, before noting that an ancient Zhou official had ordered officers to submit "admonitions" (*zhen*) to the king to illustrate the ruler's faults. Wei Jiang then recites the "Admonition from the Overseer of the Hunts," which mentions the fate of the Xia ruler:[74]

芒芒禹迹，	Vast and far-reaching were Yu's tracks!
畫為九州，	He demarcated the nine provinces,
經啟九道。	And laid out and opened up the nine paths.
民有寢廟，	People had their chambers of rest and shrines,
獸有茂草；	While beasts had their luxurious grasses.
各有攸處，	Each had their proper abodes,
德用不擾。	And their qualities and functions were kept separate.
在帝夷羿，	As ruler, Yi of Yi
冒于原獸，	Rushed out to the beasts of the plains
忘其國恤，	Forgetting the concerns of state,
而思其麀牡。	And thinking only of does and stags.
武不可重，	Martial drills cannot be frequent,
用不恢于夏家。	For from them the house of Xia would not recover.[75]
獸臣司原，	The manager of beasts, in charge of the plains,
敢告僕夫。	Dares to notify my lord's servant.[76]

The key moment comes in the final two lines of the poem, when the overseer of hunts (or "manager of beasts") concludes by summarizing his duties as being "in charge of the plains" (司原) and stating that he "dares to notify" (敢告) the foregoing message to an officer termed *pu fu* 僕夫. These lines establish the authority of the remonstrator, since they show him to be in charge of the arena (here, hunting) within which the ruler is misbehaving even while he maintains decorum by criticizing the ruler only indirectly through his officer.[77] The *Zuozhuan* "Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts" is

[72] *Hanshu* 87.3583.
[73] *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang, 4.7
[74] The "Admonition of the Overseer of the Hunts" might have been part of a collection of ancient Zhou admonitions, but the *Zuozhuan* text is slightly unclear on this point. My translation here follows, with minor modification, that of Durrant, Li, and Schabert (forthcoming).
[75] Durrant, et. al. translated this line as "the Xia patrimony abjured greatness."
[76] *Zuozhuan,* Duke Xiang, 4.7 (*ZZ* B9.4.7/233/10-13).
[77] This was the interpretation that Du You offered in his commentary to the *Zuozhuan*: "In reporting to the attendant, [the overseer of hunts] did not dare to admonish those of exalted rank" (告僕夫，不敢斥尊).

thus a poetic form of remonstration that consciously mimics or at least draws upon the conventions that guided communication between rulers and officials.[78]

We see a subtle but significant change in the classicizing "Admonitions of the Many Offices." A full study of these admonitions must remain outside of our discussion here. A close look at just one, however, that of the "Master of Works" (*Si kong* 司空), demonstrates the ingenious manner in which they interweaved classical allusions relevant to the duties of the official (in this case, the Master of Works) in order to warn both rulers *and* officials not to stray from the path of moral and virtuous rule.

司空箴	Admonition of the Master of Works
普彼坤靈，	Spreading and blanketing the earthly numina of Kun,[79]
侔天作則。	In according with Heaven there arose principles.[80]

[78] The phrase *gan gao* 敢告 is found throughout the received literature, though it is especially common in the *Zuozhuan*, where on several occasions it closes official statements (sometimes termed *gao* 告) submitted by officials to rulers. The *Yili* 儀禮 describes the phrase being used by people in formal gift exchanges during wedding ceremonies. The phrase is found but rarely in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. The latter, however, contains a memorial submitted by the Chancellor Wang Jia 王嘉 in 7 BCE that includes a description of how the phrase was used in official documents (see *Hanshu* (86.3491):

> 故事，尚書希下章，為煩擾百姓，證驗繫治，或死獄中，章文必有敢告之字乃下。
> According to precedent, the Secretariat would rarely send down petitions (*zhang* 章) [for a criminal investigation] because they caused such commotion amongst the populace and in the course of verifying [the accusations] and punishing [the accused], some people would end up dying in prison. The text of the petition had to have the phrase "I dare to report this matter" before it could be sent down for investigation.

In Han dynasty administrative language, then, "dare to report" (*gan gao*) helped verify the authenticity of an official document or accusations within a document, perhaps because the phrase signified that the person who submitted the document guaranteed the veracity of his statements. As Yan Shigu stated in his commentary to this passage, use of *gan gao* "prevented people from slandering each other" (絕其相誣也). For "petitions" (*zhang*), see Giele 2006, 107 and *passim*.

[79] *Kun* (Field) is Hexagram 2 from the *Changes* (*Yijing* 易經). The term *kun ling* 坤靈 is also found in the "Western Capital Rhapsody" (*Xi du fu* 西都賦) by Ban Gu 班固 (Ca. 32-92):

其宮室也	The palaces and chambers of the capital,
體象乎天地	Embody the form of Heaven and Earth,
經緯乎陰陽。	And take their warp and weft from Yin and Tang.
據坤靈之正位，	They are rooted in the aligned position of Kun's earthly numina,
倣太紫之圓方。	And imitate the round and square of the Tai and Zi constellations.

According to Knechtges, *kun ling* has a "geomantic flavor and may refer to the topographical configuration of the land" (Knechtges 1982, 116n.142).

分制五服，	He divided and administered the five nested zones,
畫為萬國。	Demarcating them into myriad kingdoms.[81]
乃立地官，	Only then did he establish Earthly Offices,[82]
空惟是職。	And works were their duties.[83]
茫茫不恢，	Vast and wide were the Nine Provinces,
都鄙盈區。	While the capital estates filled their spaces.[84]
綱以群牧，	The leading lines were set by the many shepherds,
綴以方候。	And then stitched together by the regional lords.[85]
烈烈雋乂，	Magnificent were the talented and worthy men,
翼翼王臣。	Protective and supportive were the royal ministers.
臣當其官，	The ministers matched their offices,
官當其臣。	And offices matched their ministers.
九一之政，	The one-ninth tax was put into practice,[86]

---

[80] This first couplet evokes cosmic forces that inscribed patterns on the land. Implied is the idea that the Master of Works followed cosmically endowed patterns when he divided up the land and provided them with systems of administration, described in the immediately following couplet.

[81] The "five nested zones" (*wu fu* 五服) is a reference to the work of Yu 禹 as described in the "Yu gong" 禹貢 chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書. The final section of "Yu gong" describes how Yu divided the earth into five nested zones, each populated by separate groups holding different ranks and owing various tax and tribute obligations to the ruler at the center. Within each of these zones, there were multiple rulers presiding over their territories, hence the description of "myriad kingdoms." The "Yu gong" does not say that Yu was Master of Works. That title is attached to Yu only in the "Shun dian" 舜典 chapter of the *Shangshu* has Shun appointing a series of court officers after he succeeds to the throne of Lord Yao 堯典.

[82] The "Earthly Offices" (*di guan* 地官) comprise a section of the *Zhouli* 周禮, though we probably cannot assume that the admonition here specifically refers to the text.

[83] An alternative translation: "Only then did he establish the Earthly Officers / and the Master of Works had them as his duties." In either case, the point appears to be that the Master of Works appointed the administrative officials and was responsible for overseeing them.

[84] The *Zhouli* includes a description of the administration of the *du bi* 都鄙. In his commentary to the passage, Zheng Xuan wrote: "*Bi* refers to a residence in the capital...The capital residences are the appanages of the ministers and the estates of the royal sons" (都之所居曰鄙...都鄙公卿大夫之采邑，王子弟所食邑).

[85] The "shepherds" (*mu* 牧) refers to officers from the central government responsible for the administration and surveillance of delineated geographic areas, while the "regional lords" (*fang hou* 方侯) probably refers to local nobles who had been given control of specific realms. The couplet evokes a passage from the "Tian guan" 天官 section of the *Zhouli*, which describes how the Grand Executive (*Da zai* 大宰) "has nine tasks for uniting and joining the realms" (以九兩繫邦國之名) (*ZL* 1.1/5/28). As it continues: "The first of these is shepherding, which administers the people according to territory" (名一曰牧以地得民) (*ZL* 1.1/6/1).

[86] The "one-ninth tax" is a reference to the "well-field" (*jingtian* 井田) system, associated in the *Mengzi* with the administrative practices of the Zhou, which reserved as tax the produce from one

七賦以均。　　And the seven resources were evenly distributed across the realm.[87]

昔在季葉，　　In previous ages of decline,
班祿遺賢。　　Ranked salaries bypassed worthy men.
掊克充朝，　　The corrupt filled the court,
而象恭滔天。　　Outwardly respectful, they offended Heaven.[88]
匪人斯力，　　The wrong people asserted power,[89]
匪政斯敕。　　And the wrong policies were issued.
流貨市寵，　　Flows of money purchased favor,
而苞苴是鬻。　　And reed-wrapped gifts sealed the sales.[90]
王路斯荒，　　With the royal route this choked and overgrown,
孰不傾覆？　　What ruler would not topple over?
空臣司土，　　The Master of Works is in charge of the land.
敢告在側。　　He dares to report to those at your side.

The other admonitions assembled by Yan Kejun follow a similar format. The beginning of the poems outlines the origins of the office in question in high antiquity, the nature of its duties, and the idyllic state of order that resulted when those duties were perfectly enacted. The second halves of the poems, meanwhile, detail the decline of the office and the abandonment of its duties, with the resulting collapse of governance.

Most importantly, each of the admonitions concludes by following the exact same pattern seen in the "Admonition from the Overseer of Hunts" and the "Admonition of the Master of Works": the officer summarizes the nature of his duties and then "dares to report" (*gan gao*) to an assisting officer, not to the ruler directly. In contrast to the "Admonition from the Overseer of Hunts," however, the individual officers who speak through the "Admonitions of the Many offices"

---

field out of a total plot divided into nine fields. The system is mentioned in *Mengzi* 3A when an envoy from Duke Wen of Teng 滕文公 asks about the system. Mengzi offers: "I suggest that in the country the tax should be one in nine, using the *zhu* tax" (請野九一而助). See *Mencius*, trans. D.C. Lau (London: Penguin, 1970), 99.

[87] The "seven resources" (*qi fu* 七賦) is mentioned in Yang Xiong's *Fayan*. Commentators such as Li Gui 李軌 (fl. 335 CE) have glossed it as the five grains along with silk and hemp.

[88] The phrase is a direct quote from the *Shangshu* chapter "Yao dian" 堯典: "The Lord Yao said: "Huh! He speaks well, if glibly, but then acts evilly. Though outwardly respectful, he offends Heaven." (帝曰: 吁！靜言庸違，象恭滔天) (*SS* 1/1/16; Legge vol. 3, 24).

[89] Lin Zhen'ai 2001, 295-96, n.8 glosses *fei ren* 匪人 as "people with improper behavior." He quotes Wang Bi's 王弼 (226-249) commentary to the third line statement of Hexagram 8 (Bi 比, "Closeness") of the *Changes*, which says "Here one joins in Closeness but not with his own people" (比之匪人). Wang Bi's commentary: "Of all those that this one can share Closeness with, none are its own people. This is why the text says: 'Here one joins in Closeness but not with his own people.'" (所與比者，皆非己親，故曰皆匪人). Translation follows Lynn 1994, 187.

[90] The term *baoju* 苞苴 appears in several pre-imperial and early imperial texts, with commentators in some cases understanding it as a reed wrapping that covered fish or meat. In other texts, the term means a gift or bribe (e.g. *Xunzi*, "Da lüe" 大略 chapter).

are not just "daring to report" on the behavior of the ruler. They are also reporting on their *own* behavior as officers. As the "Admonitions" have it, declines in governance are due as much to the negligent acts of officers as to the actions of rulers. Usually, in order to explain this phenomenon, the "Admonitions" argue that offices were not filled with the appropriate people, and thus the duties of the officers were not carried out. This rhetoric is best seen in the "Admonition of the Superintendent of the Guards" (*Weiwei zhen* 衛尉箴):[91]

維昔庶僚，	In past times when guards
官得其人。	Were people who fit their offices,
荷戈而歌，	With halberds in hand they would sing out,
中外以堅。	And interior and exterior held strong.
齊桓怵惕，	Lord Huan of Qi was apprehensive,
宿衛不敕。	So his camp guards were not put in order.[92]
門非其人，	When gates are not manned by the right people,
戶廢其職。	Households abandon their duties.[93]
曹子摽劍，	Cao Mo brandished his sword,
遂成其詐。	And thus succeeded in his scheme.[94]
軻挾匕首，	Jing Ke grasped the head of his dagger

[91] The passage quoted here does not include the first six couplets from the "Admonition of the Superintendent of the Guards."

[92] The "Admonition" alludes here to the treaty negotiations between Lord Huan and Cao Mo 曹沫 of Lu 魯, during which Cao managed to detain Lord Huan and demand back territory that Huan had seized. Zhang Zhenze 1993, 368 n.7 argued that a negative *wu* 無 should be added before *shu ti* 怵惕 ("apprehensive"), citing in support a passage from the *Guanzi* 管子, which reads that after Lord Huan eliminated the "tyrannical" (*wu dao*) and saved the Zhou ruling line, "martial matters were established" (*wu shi li* 武事立). However, when he "set the three forms of armor, arrayed the five weapons, and donned his court robes to cross the Yellow River, he felt no apprehension. This was because civil affairs had won out" (定三革，偃五兵，朝服以濟河而無怵惕焉，文事勝也) (*GZ* 8.2/65/8-9). It seems to me, however, the point of this passage is actually to emphasize that Lord Huan's guards should have been apprehensive, not Lord Huan himself. That Lord Huan was apprehensive indicated that he was acting the palace guard, when in fact he should have let the guards do their job and maintain vigilance while he attended to matters of state and war.

[93] A more precise translation would render *hu* 戶 as "door," not "household," particularly since the "household" meaning of *hu* is found primarily in legal texts. In other "Admonitions" about guard officers, however, we find references to the larger disorder that results from the failure of guards to regulate their gates and doors. The "Admonition of the Superintendent of the Palace" (*Guangluxun zhen* 光祿勳箴), for instance, states that during the reigns of Jie 桀 and Zhou 紂, when the palace doors were not guarded properly and anybody could gain entry, the courts of these ancient, legendary evil rulers become dens of wanton indulgence that entirely neglected administrative and ritual duties. The parallel usage of *hu* here with "gate" (*men*) plays upon the double meaning of the word *hu* and evokes a similar resonance between properly ordered gates and properly ordered interior spaces.

[94] See n.92 above.

而衛人不寤。　And the guards did not notice him.
二世妄宿，　The Second Emperor was careless with his lodgings,
敗於望夷。　And so met his end at Wangyi Palace.[95]
閻樂矯詔，　When Yan Le fabricated the imperial order,
戟者不推。　Those who held halberds did not prevent him.[96]
尉臣司衛，　The Superintendent of Guards commands the guards,
敢告執維。　I dare to report to the one holding to the regulations.[97]

Each of the historical examples given in this "Admonition" emphasize the disorder that occurred when guards did not fulfill their duties.[98] The specific reasons for their failure are left unstated beyond the fact that "offices had not obtained the right people" (官非其人) and "gates were not manned by the right people" (門非其人). In the world of the "Admonitions," it is not necessarily the case that the offices were completely inflexible forms that could accommodate no variation in historical circumstance or the individual characteristics of a given incumbent. After all, the "Admonition of the Master of Works" above also stated that in ancient times, "The ministers matched their offices / And offices matched their ministers" (臣當其官，官當其臣). In the ideal bureaucratic order, then, the line between "office" and "officer" completely dissolved, with the norms and duties of the former using seamlessly with the particular competencies of the latter.

The poetic voice of the "Admonitions" underscores this point. In reporting to the ruler on the performance of historic holders of their office, the voices behind the "Admonitions" effectively invoke normative standards and duties inherent to each of the offices, irrespective of the different incumbents. At the same time, they demonstrate their own internalization of those standards, since they perfectly communicate the cosmic and historical origins of their own offices and the historical instances when other less perfect office-holders failed to measure up to the standards of the office and fulfill its duties. The "Admonitions" are thus poetic vessels that use literary voice to underscore an ideal of officialdom hinted at within the *Hanshu* "Table": court offices are forms with defined duties that persist independent of historical changes, political turmoil, different rulers, and even individual office holders themselves.

---

[95] The Second Emperor committed suicide at Wangyi Palace after soldiers under Zhao Gao and his son-in-law Yan Le's 閻樂 command infiltrated the palace and executed the Superintendent of Guards. See *Shiji* 6.274

[96] According to the *Shiji*, the Second Emperor's Superintendent of the Palace (*Langzhong ling* 郎中令), acting in consort with Zhao Gao and Yan Le, falsely claimed that there was a large disturbance that required the intervention of Yan Le, who at the time served as Prefect (*ling*) of Xianyang. When Yan Le arrived at the palace gates with thousands of troops they were allowed in, at which point Yan Le promptly bound and executed the Second Emperor's Superintendent of Guards (*Shiji* 6.274).

[97] Lin Zhen'ai says that this phrase should be glossed as *zhi gang* 執綱 ("holding to the regulations").

[98] We should also note that by identifying historical instances of failure by officers and locating the origins of the office in high antiquity or cosmic patterns, the "Admonitions" cast each court office as defined institutions that existed from the very establishment of political order on down over the centuries. This move also recalls the historicizing pattern of the *Hanshu* "Table," whose very structure asserted that upon the founding of the Western Han the imperial court had a complement of court offices whose boundaries and duties were already defined.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced two notions of official service, the first apparently prevalent throughout all levels of officialdom and a second that became more systematically articulated at the imperial court starting in the late Western Han. As we saw, the daybooks and greeting tablets betray little interest in or ruminations upon the nature of the bureaucratic structure, levels of bureaucratic hierarchy, or divisions between offices. Rather, they evince a primary concern with the means by which officers could utilize their positions for personal and familial benefit. Such concerns did not lie outside their day-to-day practice as officials, since the letter and greeting tablets we examined showed that "personal" activities drew upon the same administrative practice and communication channels as official actions such as the annual submission of accounts. My analysis here in no way attempts to deny the existence of a bureaucratic hierarchy or the division of responsibilities among officers.[99] Rather, it emphasizes only that current evidence suggests that this is not how most officers typically imagined the government and their own service as government officers.

Turning to the *Shiji* "Chronological Table," we saw that this table emphasized connections between dynastic events and the fate of individual officers, though portions of the table that were completed in the late Western Han began to decouple the latter from the former. The *Hanshu* "Table," meanwhile, further developed this division between dynastic events and offices. It eliminated reference to historical events and instead depicted officialdom as an autonomous institution, with promotions and demotions occurring independent of the vicissitudes of court politics. My analysis of the "Admonitions of the Many Offices" demonstrated how this vision of officialdom received poetic expression at the imperial court. In short, the late Western Han saw the emergence at the imperial court of concerted efforts in both administrative practice (the Tables) and literary production (the "Admonitions") to cast officialdom as an autonomous institution comprised of hierarchically arranged offices with well-defined duties. This development was not merely a reliance on classical texts that invoked ancient practices (though we did see this move in the "Admonitions"). Rather, it was also a matter of creating new genres and conventions within administrative and literary texts that promoted the idea that court offices were autonomous forms that could not be altered easily.[100] Our discussion here, however, does not really explain why this vision of officialdom, which was never fully implemented in terms of actual practice, become so attractive at the late Western Han imperial court. Our analysis of changes in court institutions and political troubles in late Western Han in the next and final chapter will offer one potential explanation.

---

[99] In this vein, we might note that the early Western Han legal texts excavated from Zhangjiashan included a "Statute on Salary Ranks" (*Zhilü* 秩律) that detailed all of the different salary ranks held by officers from the Chancellor on down to county-level officials. A defined structure of officialdom thus undeniably existed, but I am interested in understanding how or whether that structure informed discussions and depictions of officialdom and the imperial court.

[100] Taken together, then, the tables and the "Admonitions" demonstrate how classicizing rhetoric did not just constitute a reiteration of old forms and a "return" to precedent, but actually entailed the creation of whole new modes of administrative and literary practice.

Chapter 6

Transforming the late Western Han Imperial Court: The Politics of Rank and Duty in Institutional Change

In the middle period of his reign, Wudi appointed a group of officials to advisory posts in the central government. In the biography of one of these advisors, the *Hanshu* took pains to emphasize that they were closely allied to Wudi, with the emperor using them at court to advance opinions supporting his own policy positions:

> 擢助為中大夫。後得朱買臣、吾丘壽王、司馬相如、主父偃、徐樂、嚴安、東方朔、枚皋、膠倉、終軍、嚴蔥奇等，並在左右。是時征代四夷，開置邊郡，軍旅數發，內改制度，朝廷多事，婁舉賢良文學之士。
>
> 公孫弘起徒步，數年至丞相，開東閣，延賢人與謀議，朝覲奏事，因言國家便宜。上令助等與大臣辯論，中外相應以義理之文，大臣數詘。
>
> The emperor appointed Yan Zhu as Palace Advisor (*Zhong Daifu*). Later he appointed Zhu Maichen, Wuqiu Shouwang, Sima Xiangru, Zhufu Yan, Xu Le, Yan An, Dongfang Shuo, Mei Gao, Jiao Cang, Zhong Jun, and Yan Congqi. They were all installed at the side of the emperor. During this period, the emperor sent reprisal attacks against foreign groups, established commanderies in border regions, frequently dispatched military expeditions, and in the interior changed administrative measures. The court administered an increasing number of responsibilities and there were frequent recommendations of candidates who were "able and virtuous" or "cultivated in learning."
>
> Gongsun Hong had recommended commoners for office. When he reached the high position of Chancellor, he established a chamber on the eastern side [of his bureau] and welcomed in worthy men with whom he would make plans and debate. When he was at court audiences and submitted memorials on official business, he would use the opportunity to speak of what was expedient and proper for the imperial household. The emperor ordered Yan Zhu and others to debate with the great ministers. Inner and outer responded to each other with proper and well-reasoned writings, but the great ministers often lost out.[1]

The passage depicts a power struggle between the Chancellor Gongsun Hong and the emperor. The conflicts played out in debates at court, with the emperor's position, as expressed by his clients, usually prevailing. The impression that the passage imparts is one of partisan (if not bitter) conflict at court, conflict that the emperor engaged in by proxy through the officials he had installed as personal advisors.

The key phrase in this passage, one that has long attracted the attention of scholars, comes toward the end, where we read that "inner and outer responded to each other" (中外相應). "Inner" appears to refer to the emperor and his coterie of officials, while "outer" points to Gongsun Hong and the "great ministers."[2] For decades, scholars have interpreted this statement as an indication that Wudi's reign saw the development of an "inner court" filled with client-officials who had

[1] *Hanshu* 64.2775.

[2] Gongsun Hong's biography describes one incident in which the emperor orders Zhu Maichen to discredit Gongsun Hong's objections against establishing the border commandery of Shuofang 朔方 (*Hanshu* 58.2619).

relatively unrestrained access to the emperor, while the Chancellor, Imperial Counsellor, and the heads of the major ministries in the capital were relegated to an "outer court."[3] Scholars such as Hans Bielenstein and Liu Pak-yuen have disputed this thesis,[4] but it continues to resurface. Mark Edward Lewis, for instance, advanced a particularly strong articulation of the inner-outer court model in order to cast as "wrong" all attempts to raise the profile and power of the bureaucracy and thus counteract the "cliché" of "oriental despotism." According to Lewis, the "bureaucracy" never enjoyed that much sway:

> The clearest demonstration of this is a pattern in which policy-making power shifted from the formal bureaucracy to whatever group of people – largely eunuchs or imperial affines (relatives by marriage) – surrounded the emperor's person. This shift of power from "outer" court to "inner" court was institutionalized by the reign of Emperor Wu, and was repeated throughout early imperial and medieval China, when emperors were less autocratic than in late imperial China. The formal bureaucracy had no effective base of independent power. Far from developing the power to check the emperor or significantly affect policy, the bureaucrats of early imperial China sank into impotence, serving only to execute policies formulated by others.[5]

In this passage, Lewis articulated the most strident form of the "inner-outer" model, which held that the inner court was responsible for implementing the orders that resulted from policy-making discussions in the inner court.

Careful consideration of the above *Hanshu* passage alone, however, shows that the evidence does not support such a strong model opposing a singular "inner court" to an undifferentiated "bureaucracy." Take, for example, the curious actions of Gongsun Hong described in this passage. When he became Chancellor, we read, Gongsun "set up a chamber on the eastern side," presumably the eastern side of the Chancellery. A similar statement appears in the *Hanshu* "Account" of Gongsun Hong. One commentator to that text interpreted Gongsun's remodeling project as a way for him to afford entry to his own clients, separate from the regular clerks and subordinate officers

---

[3] The "inner court vs. outer court" understanding of early imperial politics is one of the standard models in the scholarly literature. For early articulations, see Lao Gan 1948; Wang Yu-ch'üan 1949; and Nishijima Sadao 1965. Japanese scholars in particular continue to debate the role of the inner court in Han politics. See, e.g., Tomita Kenshi 2005 and Fukunaga Yoshitaka 2011. The basic idea holds that officials with direct access to the Forbidden Zones (*jinzhong* 禁中) of the emperor (access often endowed through supernumerary titles such as *jishizhong* 給事中) were the key policy makers at court. The emblematic institution of the inner court was the Secretariat (*Shangshu* 尚書), a document bureau responsible for sending memorials and petitions to the emperor and court officials for debate and ultimately a policy decision, which the Secretariat would then send down to relevant officers as an edict or order from the emperor to be implemented. This arrangement, which began to form during the reign of Wudi, established a buffer between the emperor and the Chancellor, who was head of the bureaucracy. In contrast to early Western Han, then, the Chancellors and ministers enjoyed relatively infrequent contact with the emperor, who was attended more regularly by officers of his Inner Court. By late Western Han, the director of the Secretariat was regularly placed "in charge of government" (*zhi zheng* 執政), thus further superseding the role and power of the Chancellor. For a concise summary, see also Loewe 1974, 313-14.

[4] Bielenstein 1980; Liu Pak-yuen 1983.

[5] Lewis 2007, 63-4.

of the Chancellery who entered through the main gate of the courtyard.[6] Indeed, the "Account" of Gongsun Hong describes the steps he took to amass his own coterie of supporters. We read, for example, that the Chancellor built a "guest lodge" (*ke guan* 客館) after he became an administrator. Applying the terminology of "inner" and "outer" to the passage quoted above thus raises contradictions. After all, even if the "inner court" of the emperor was a mass of client officials, then, so was the "outer court," at least during the tenure of Gongsun Hong.[7] This understanding of official service is precisely the picture that we traced in Chapter 5. Such descriptions thus not only contract Lewis's characterizations of the bureaucracy as haplessly marked by "impotence," but also confirm the importance of personal networks and patron-client relations at the imperial court that we have already emphasized. At least according to the *Hanshu*, the emperor and Chancellor alike attempted to gain clients that could provide them with support and advice. Membership in an "inner" or "outer" group of officials was just as much a function of relationships and alliances with powerful people than it was a specific orientation vis-à-vis the imperial court or even the emperor himself.

And yet, in rejecting the "inner vs. outer" dichotomy and searching for an alternative understanding of early imperial court politics, neither can we conclude that a free-for-all morass of alliances based on "factions" (*dang* 黨) came to dominate courtly politics during the Western Han in particular and early imperial China in general. It is true that several families came to prominence at court, monopolizing some offices and commanding sufficient prestige to wield power and disburse privileges to potential clients. For example, the Huo 霍 family after Wudi's death and during the reign of Zhaodi, the Shi 史 and Xu 許 families during the reign of Xuandi, and most famously of all the Wang 王 family during the reign of Chengdi, all managed to achieve considerable institutional power at court that they could use to their advantage.[8]

The dynamics governing the rise and fall of these different families were not the same, however, and the strategies they employed were not necessarily comparable.[9] Moreover, over-reliance on this family-factional model of late Western Han politics tends to ignore the institutional context at the imperial court, the critical role of rank, and the importance of normative concepts about official duties and how an ideal court 'should" be organized and managed. We have already

---

[6] *Hanshu* 58.2621. In offering this interpretation, Yan Shigu glossed *ge* as *he* 閤 ("small side door").

[7] We learn later in Gongsun Hong's "Account" that after the Chancellor's death the "guest lodge" was abandoned. Moreover, according to the "Account," subsequent Chancellors during the reign of Wudi had less illustrious tenures in office than that of Gongsun, with several even being executed (*Hanshu* 58.2623).

[8] The family-faction narrative of Western Han courtly politics can be traced all the way back to the *Hanshu*. The appraisal to the annals of Chengdi, for example, argued that the conditions for Wang Mang's ascension to the throne as emperor of the Xin Dynasty were set years before, when the Wang family managed to arrogate control of the government. See *Hanshu* 9.???? The same was true of some powerful individuals who managed to wield significant influence at court and gain a group of allies (Shi Xian 石顯 during the reign of Yuandi is a prominent example). As we have already emphasized previously, even from the beginning of the Western Han we have evidence for factional politics based on connections of family and friendship. There is no reason to assume that the late Western Han was *particularly* "worse" in this regard than early periods of the dynasty, even if the *Hanshu* argued that the influence of *waiqi* families and their clients proved was especially corrosive in the late Western Han.

[9] Liu Pak-yuen 1983 and Kamiya Masakazu 2009 emphasized this point from different perspectives.

traced in Chapter 5 the emergence of different models of the imperial court in administrative and literary texts that emphasized court offices as autonomous institutions with clearly defined duties. In this chapter, we will analyze the politics of reforming high court offices in 8 BCE in order to understand how this model of the court might have been attractive in the context of late Western Han court politics. Struggles to define duty, rank, and alliance drove courtly politics and institutional change in the late Western Han, in the context of growing tensions between the emperor and the consort families (*waiqi* 外戚, or Lewis's "imperial affines"), particularly the Wang family, and some high officials. Part One outlines these policy changes, as well as their institutional background: shifts in ranks and duties during Western Han had increased the complexity of the bureaucratic structure, divorcing official ranks to some degree from actual powers. The emperor sought to consolidate and uphold his power with the new policies that aimed to reorganize ranks to reflect the powers that his highest officers were supposed to command; he hoped thereby to establish the position of his own capital officials as the most senior in the administrative hierarchy, and above all assert his own status as the presiding executive at the apex of the entire bureaucratic structure.

Part Two asks, Why did the emperor, in correlating ranks with duties, follow this particular arrangement when trying to consolidate power? By 8 BCE the emperor and key advisors believed the Wang family to be their main obstacle to resetting the balance of power. Together the Wang nobles constituted one of the most formidable families in Chang'an, and control of certain court offices by senior men in their clan endowed the family with a strong institutional position that allowed it to forge an advantageous network of patronage-based alliances. Proponents of the policy changes, not coincidentally, were relative outsiders to the capital who had no familial connections to the emperor. Their reforms insisted upon correlating rank strictly with responsibilities, implicitly downgrading the role of court patronage. This position undoubtedly attracted the emperor eager to diminish the Wang family's supremacy. Part Two further investigates the motives of the officials who first proposed the reforms, offering an analysis of their memorials recorded in the *Hanshu* that shows that reform proponents sought to stigmatize all alliances formed outside of the clear rank-and-duty hierarchy they intended to establish, particularly alliances with the Wang family.

The approach taken here differs somewhat from the previous chapters, which have presented much broader overviews of changing practices at and understandings of the court. Here, we focus on a much more specific moment: the later years of Chengdi's reign in the late Western Han. This shift in temporal scope allows us to closely examine a) the complex interplay between the finely graded system of ranks that organized the entire bureaucracy on the one hand and the family-based alliances that allowed officials to gain advancement outside of the rank hierarchy on the other, and b) the emergence in the late Western Han of a model casting the imperial court as a distinct institution of incomparable status, presided over by the emperor, that commanded a uniformly ranked body of subordinate ministries and administrative units. We must emphasize here the equal importance of uniformity of rank to the high status of the imperial court, since we have already noted at several junctures in this dissertation that emperors and high officials from the early Western Han took pains to assert the preeminence of the court over rival power centers (especially the kingdoms). As we will see, however, in 8 BCE the emperor, Chengdi, actually raised the status of the kingdoms in order to accord with a vision, apparently shared by some officials, of a court that ruled over a realm whose units and officers were ranked in a standardized manner.[10] Far from a divide between the "inner court" and the "bureaucracy," then, the politics and guiding concepts that

[10] We might note that this understanding of the court appears similar to the one articulated by Yu Dingguo and Huang Ba, who in the debate about the 51 BCE court audience argued that the *shanyu* should be given a court position below the kings. See Chapter 4.

marked debate over the 8 BCE reforms demonstrate that late Western Han politics saw the self-conscious and institutionally realized vision of a rarefied imperial court that was set apart and distinct from the rest of the empire.

Court Reform, Duty, and Rank in the Reign of Chengdi

The reforms that Chengdi approved in 8 BCE specified a new hierarchy for the highest officials in the empire, mostly by adjusting their ranks:[11]

1) The Three Lords of the Executive Council
   Chengdi established an Executive Council (*San gong* 三公) composed of three offices at the equal rank of 10,000 bushels each: Chancellor (*Chengxiang* 丞相), Imperial Counsellor (*Da sikong* 大司空), and Marshal of State (*Da sima* 大司馬).[12] Prior to this reform, the Chancellor had been the head of administration and the highest-ranking officer in the bureaucracy, followed by his assistant, the Imperial Counsellor (called *Yushi dafu* 御史大夫).[13] Also, before 8 BCE, the Marshal of State had an ambiguous position in the regular bureaucracy, since his was only an adjunct title that did not provide the usual ribbons and seals of office, even if the office was typically held by the most powerful generals or officials at court, who often controlled important administrative and consultative functions.

2) The Inspectorate

[11] For translations of the reform proposals, see Appendix 4. Though all of the 8 BCE reforms were proposed and approved as a unit (see below), scholars have typically treated them separately. The literature is extensive. Most work addresses the Executive Council (*San gong*) reform, whose institution some earlier scholars characterize as a further step toward marginalizing bureaucrats and establishing authoritarian rule. See e.g., Xu Fuguan 2001 [1978], 151-55, refuted by Zhu Zongbin 1990, 55-61. Others have cast the Executive Council reforms as part of a larger struggle between the "inner court" and "outer court," with Chengdi firmly supporting the latter in 8 BCE. The idea runs through much of the literature, but for an early example, see Yoshinami Takashi 1968. the Inspectorate reforms, see de Crespigny 2007. The kingdom administration reforms have received less attention, but see Kamada Shigeo 1962, 162-63; Kamiya Masakazu 1974.

[12] Translations of most titles follow Michael Loewe 2000, 756-68. Note that Loewe uses "Imperial Counsellor" for both *Yushi dafu* and *Da sikong*, and has recently suggested replacing titles he translated as "Superintendent" with "Commissioner" (personal communication, 8/7/2011). Use of "Executive Council" for *Sangong* follows Giele 2006.

[13] The *Hanshu* "Table of Officers and High Ministers" does not give the ranks for the Chancellor or the Imperial Counsellor (*Hanshu* 19a.724-25), prompting Bielenstein 1980, 7, to state that the ranks of these officials were unknown. Fortunately, the "Statute on Salary Grades" (*Zhi lü*), one of the legal documents excavated at Zhangjiashan, showed that the Imperial Counsellor held the rank of 2,000 bushels; the statute, however, did not specify a salary grade for the Chancellor (*Er nian lü ling*, "Zhi lü," strip 440). See Peng Hao, Chen Wei, and Kudō Motoo 2007, 258. However, the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* clearly state that the Chancellor headed the government and ranked higher than the Imperial Counsellor, who was his second-in-command. Moreover, from early Western Han Chancellors commonly served first as Imperial Counsellors. See the list of Chancellors in An Zuozhang and Xiong Tieji 2006 [1984-5], 26-29.

Chengdi approved a proposal to replace Regional Inspectors (*Cishi* 刺史) at 600 bushels with Provincial Shepherds (*Zhoumu* 州牧) at fully (*zhen*) 2,000 bushels, the same rank as the Nine Ministers (*Jiu qing* 九卿) who directed the government ministries.[14] Wudi had established the Inspectorate in 106 BCE.[15] Inspectors were to monitor and report on the top regional officers, the commandery Governors (*Taishou* 太守) and kingdom Ministers (*Xiang* 相). They were also to identify promising local candidates for office.[16]

3) Administration of the Commanderies and Kingdoms
Chengdi reset the salary grade of all Governors at 2,000 bushels,[17] and then approved a proposal to set the rank of the kingdom Ministers at that same grade. Going beyond the reformers' suggestions in their proposal, he eliminated the Metropolitan Commissioners (*Neishi* 內史) appointed by the court to the kingdoms, and replaced them with the Commissioners from the Capital (*Zhongwei* 中尉), who were made equal in salary-rank to their counterparts in the commanderies, the Commandants (*Duwei* 都尉), at a rank "equivalent to" (*bi* 比) 2,000 bushels.[18]

The foregoing reforms of 8 BCE, including Chengdi's decision to establish the three offices of the Executive Council at the new and equal rank of 10,000 bushels were not Chengdi's first efforts to adjust the rank scale: in 23 BCE, he had eliminated the grades of 800 and 500 bushels.[19] Nor was Chengdi the first emperor to alter the system of bureaucratic ranks, as we see from the early Western Han "Statute on Salary Rank" (*Zhi lü* 秩律), excavated from tomb 247 at Zhangjiashan 張家山.[20] That statute's list of positions by salary ranks across the bureaucracy allows

[14] Note, however, the statement by Zhu Bo (6 BCE) to the effect that Provincial Shepherds were still considered one slight step below the Ministers, despite their identical rank (*Hanshu* 83.3406). See also n.55 below.
[15] *Hanshu* 6.197.
[16] For a description and analysis of the duties of the Inspectors, see Rafe de Crespigny 2007.
[17] Evidence for this change is fragmentary but convincing. The *Hanshu* states that in 37 BCE Yuandi (r. 48-33 BC) increased the grades of Governors of "large commanderies" (*da jun* 大郡), defined as having more than 120,000 registered households (*Hanshu* 9.294). According to the *Han jiu yi*, in 8 BCE the grades of these governors were reduced to 2,000 bushels, effectively reversing the policy of 37 BCE by lowering the rank of large commandery governors to that of all other governors. See *Han jiu yi*, *juan* 2, in *Han guan liu zhong*, compiled by Sun Xingyan (1753-1818), in Sun Xingyan and Zhou Tianyou 2008 [1990], 82. Bielenstein 1980, 187 n. 12, wrote that Yuandi had increased the rank to "fully" 2,000 bushels, since "fully" 2,000 bushels was higher than 2,000 bushels.
[18] For the rank of the Commandants, see *Hanshu* 19a.742. In 37 BCE, Commandants of large commanderies, like their immediate superiors, the Governors (see n.17 above), received an increase in salary grade to 2,000 bushels (*Hanshu* 9.294). Unfortunately, we have no record that the rank of Commandant in the large commanderies was reduced in 8 BCE. Nevertheless, Bielenstein 1980, 183 n. 26, speculated that the order of 37 BCE "may have been rescinded in 8 BCE." He is likely correct, since the thrust of Chengdi's policy was to equalize the ranks of all local administrators and make them consistent with a system in which capital officers were highest in rank (see below).
[19] *Hanshu* 10.312.
[20] This tomb was sealed in 186 BCE. See "Er nian lü ling," strips 441-72. See Peng Hao, Chen Wei, and Kudō Motoo 2007, 257-95.

comparison of the early Han ranks to the late Western and Eastern Han ranks outlined in several received texts. Table 1 lists three salary-rank scales, from the Zhangjiashan statute (presumably in use ca. 186 BC), from 23 BCE (after which Chengdi abolished the two grades of 800 and 500 bushels) and from 8 BCE, after Chengdi implemented the reforms considered here.[21]

Table 6.1 Salary Grades in Western Han

186 BC	23 BC	8 BC
		10,000 *shi* 萬石
2000 *shi* 二千石	Fully 2000 *shi* 真二千石 Palace 2000 *shi* 中二千石 2000 *shi* 二千石 Equivalent to 2000 *shi* 比二千石	Fully 2000 *shi* 真二千石 Palace 2000 *shi* 中二千石 2000 *shi* 二千石 Equivalent to 2000 *shi* 比二千石
1000 *shi* 千石	1000 *shi* 千 Equivalent to 1000 *shi* 比千石	1000 *shi* 千石 Equivalent to 1000 *shi* 比千石
800 *shi* 八百石	800 *shi* 八百石 Equivalent to 800 *shi* 比八百石	
600 *shi* 六百石	600 *shi* 六百石 Equivalent to 600 *shi* 比六百石	600 *shi* 六百石 Equivalent to 600 *shi* 比六百石
500 *shi* 五百石	500 *shi* 五百石 Equivalent to 500 *shi* 比五百石	
400 *shi* 四百石	400 *shi* 四百石 Equivalent to 400 *shi* 比四百石	400 *shi* 四百石 Equivalent to 400 *shi* 比四百石
300 *shi* 三百石	300 *shi* 三百石 Equivalent to 300 *shi* 比三百石	300 *shi* 三百石 Equivalent to 300 *shi* 比三百石
250 *shi* 二百五十石		
200 *shi* 二百石	200 *shi* 二百石 Equivalent to 200 *shi* 比二百石	200 *shi* 二百石 Equivalent to 200 *shi* 比二百石
160 *shi* 一百六十石		
120 *shi* 一百二十石		
	100 *shi* 百石 Equivalent to 100 *shi* 比百石	100 *shi* 百石 Equivalent to 100 *shi* 比百石

[21] For the ranks of 186 BCE and 23 BCE, see Yan Buke 2009, 89-90. For those of 8 BCE, see Bielenstein 1980, 4, and Fukui Shigemasa 1988, 280.

Two points bear emphasis. First, as Table 6.1 makes clear, between 183 and 23 BCE as many as three different salary grades could evolve within any single official rank: "equivalent" (*bi*) grades (which might appear in any rank), and the "fully" (*zhen*) and "palace" (*zhong*) grades (which appear only at the level of the highly ranked at 2,000 bushels).[22] Since the grades provided the framework for gauging protocols between officials of the same ranks, the gradual proliferation of these grades within ranks created potential confusion within the bureaucracy. As the table illustrates, the grades were still contained within the regular bureaucratic hierarchy. We know, for example, that in theory officials ranked at "fully" 2,000 bushels ranked higher than those at 2,000 bushels only. Nevertheless, as Part Three will demonstrate, these theoretical gradations by no means prevented conflicts over status and authority among officials in late Western Han, particularly when coupled with questions about jurisdictional duties.

Second, the reforms in both 23 BCE and in 8 BCE created wider gaps in the salary scale, gaps that better reflected the disbursal of privileges and benefits to the officials concerned, as well as their differences in status. One key gap divided lower positions from those at 600 bushels or 1,000 bushels; officials at this higher level included county magistracies, as well as officers in the capital such as Assistants (*Cheng*) or senior officers (*zhang shi*) in the ministries, and some of the senior Gentlemen (*lang*) who supervised and guarded the imperial palaces.[23] A second key jump in rank led to the most senior posts in the empire at 2,000 bushels, which included ministerial positions and governorships. In addition to increased status, these 2,000 bushel positions brought larger imperial gifts of cash and goods, regular bestowals of orders of honor (*jue*), and special legal and tax treatment.[24] Chengdi's reforms in 23 BCE created an entirely new divide between officials ranked at 400 and 600 bushels, thus highlighting the higher status accorded officials ranked at 600 and 1,000 bushels.[25] Meanwhile, the decision to establish the 10,000-bushel rank for the three members of the Executive Council asserted unequivocally that these three officers outranked all other officials at 2,000 bushels in status and in privilege.

---

[22] Yan Buke 2009, 370-468, argued persuasively that the "equivalent" ranks absorbed the emperor's household officials and attendants into the official bureaucratic hierarchy. (The Zhangjiashan texts and some early edicts term these officials "servants of the emperor" [*huan huangdi zhe* 宦皇帝者] or some variation thereof). As Yan noted, most of the subordinates of the Commissioner of the Palace (*Guangluxun*), who was responsible for the emperor's security and various household and advisory duties, held equivalent ranks. The "equivalent" ranks were in use by the mid-Western Han, during the reign of Wudi.

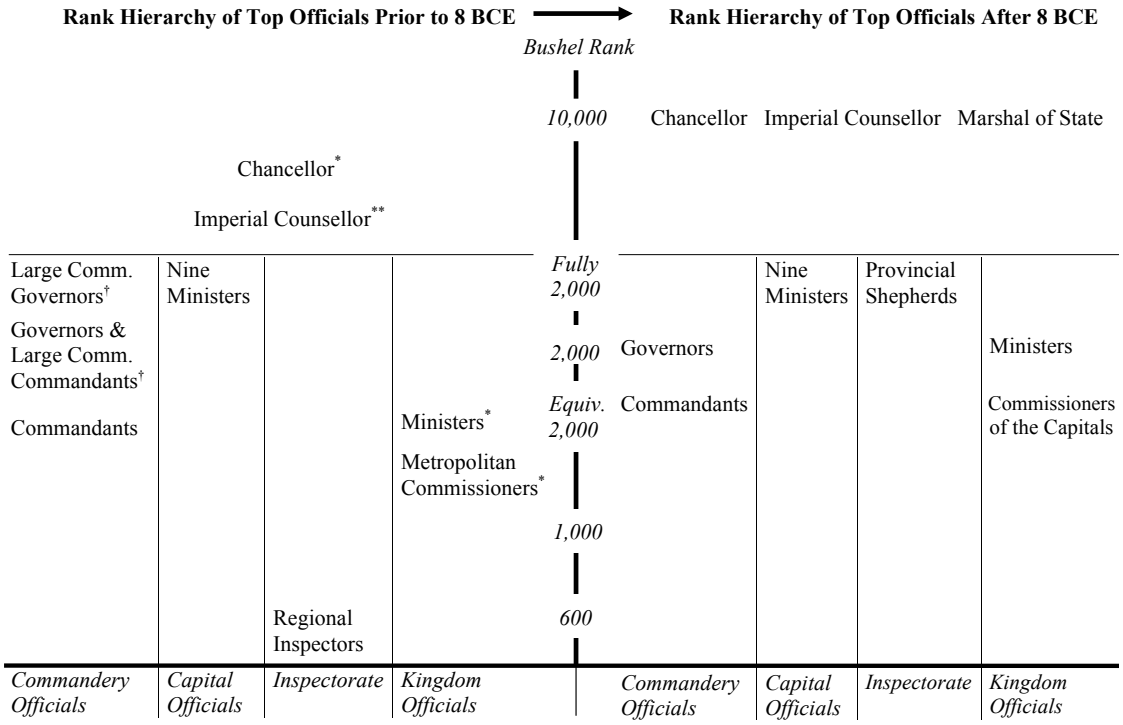
[23] The 600 and 1,000 bushels positions were conceived as one unit for purposes of privileges and benefits. According to *Hanshu* 19a.743, the 2,000-bushel officials received silver seals and green ribbons, whereas positions of 600 bushels "and above" received bronze seals and black ribbons. Fukui Shigemasa 1988, 281-83, marshaled the evidence from imperial edicts to demonstrate that many officials ranked at 600 and 1,000 bushels received the same sort and type of gifts and privileges, which usually did not compare with the largesse enjoyed by those ranked at 2,000 bushels or above.

[24] Fukui Shigemasa 1988, 279-302; Loewe 2010, 310-311. Note that officials at 2,000 bushels had the particular privilege of recommending candidates for office. Those who had served at that rank for three years or more could sponsor (*ren* 任) a son or brother as a Courtier (*lang*), allowing them to serve as the emperor's escort or guard in the imperial palaces at Chang'an. See Loewe 2004, 131-34.

[25] Chengdi's motivation for eliminating the rank of 800 bushels in 23 BCE is less obvious. Undoubtedly the most important 800-bushel position at court was Advisory Counsellor (*Jian dafu*), whose duties are ill understood. The evidence at hand indicates that after 23 BC the Advisory Counsellor was ranked at "equivalent" to 600 bushels. See Bielenstein 1980, 26.

The reforms of 8 BCE allowed Chengdi to regularize the rank hierarchy, reduce potential conflicts among his officers, and above all concentrate his power, since the reforms asserted his own status as titular head of the government. Table 14.2 contrasts this new 8 BCE structure with the prior hierarchy:[26]

Table 6.2 Rank Hierarchy Before and After the 8 BCE Reforms



Meaning of superscript symbols:
*Rank unknown
** Fully 2,000 bushels, but second after Chancellor
† Large commanderies had 120,000 or more registered households

Implicitly, the 8 BCE reforms asserted several principles. First, all of the highest officials in the capital, inspectorate, commanderies, and kingdoms were to enjoy the same rank of 2,000 bushels, not to mention the privileges and status commensurate with this rank (as noted above). Second, both the Nine Ministers based in the capital and the Provincial Shepherds, who reported regularly to the capital, were to enjoy a grade of "fully" 2,000 bushels that put them at a rank slightly higher than

[26] As the table indicates, we do not know the salary ranks of the Chancellor and the kingdom officials prior to 8 BCE. For the Chancellor, see n. 8 above. For the kingdom administrators, we know only that in 46 BCE Yuandi lowered the ranks of the kingdom Ministers to below that of the Governors (*Hanshu* 9.283). Kamiya Masakazu 1974, 25, asserted that the kingdom Ministers and commissioners were demoted from "fully" (*zhen*) 2,000 bushels to 2,000 bushels.

that of the Governors of the commanderies and the kingdom Ministers, who were all henceforth to have the same grades.[27] In doing so, the reforms effectively declared that the kingdoms were entirely equal in status to the commanderies, an important change in local administrative policy. Chengdi thus reversed a policy trend going back to the reign of Jingdi (r. 156-141 BCE) that had steadily reduced the power and status of the kingdoms vis-à-vis both the central government and the commanderies (see Introduction and Chapter 3). Finally, the three members of the Executive Council saw their ranks rise to 10,000 bushels, which better reflected the status of the Council as the highest administrative body in the government. Styling himself the chief executive of the Executive Council, the emperor, of course, indisputably became the highest power in the hierarchy. Through these reforms, then, Chengdi asserted that he alone ultimately presided over a regular hierarchical system which rose at stepped intervals from regional government to the capital and inspectorate offices, then to the highest administrators in the realm, and ultimately to the emperor himself. Within a year of Chengdi's death, his successor was persuaded to rescind the reforms instituting the Executive Council and Inspectorate reforms, but within the space of four years, in 2 BCE, the same emperor reinstituted Chengdi's basic model. That model then remained in place throughout Eastern Han.[28]

The Reforms and Political Alliances

Why would Chengdi, in order to concentrate his power, have redefined the correlations between ranks and duties and reformulated the bureaucratic hierarchy in this particular manner? Even if Chengdi's position as emperor theoretically endowed him with unmatched status, in reality the Wang family related to Chengdi's mother, and especially her senior male relatives, oversaw many, if not most, of the day-to-day aspects of the administration. Chengdi naturally sought ways to curb their power.[29] Reform proponents argued that the 8 BCE reforms would create a unified bureaucratic hierarchy, protected from complications caused by officials wielding powers that they

---

[27] As de Crespigny 2007, 57-61, noted, during the time of Yuandi, subordinate officers had been established in the Inspectorate provinces. By raising the Inspectors to the rank of "fully" 2,000 bushels, Chengdi helped complete a process by which the Inspectors became more fully integrated as regular officers in the highest levels of the bureaucracy, assuming an institutional identity that was quite different from their initial role as imperial envoys.

[28] In 6 BCE, the newly enthroned Aidi (r. 7-1 BCE), on the advice of his Chancellor Zhu Bo, rescinded the reforms of the Executive Council and the Inspectorate, re-instituting the previous structure with the Chancellor as the chief administrator and the Regional Inspectors at 600 bushels. The reforms of regional administration were retained, however, and in 2 BCE Aidi reversed his position and reinstated Chengdi's reforms.

[29] The relationship between Chengdi and the Wang family was complex, and a full discussion must remain outside the bounds of this chapter. Chengdi was in a difficult position. He was expected to accord his mother proper respect, and indeed must have felt a close affinity with her and her brother, Wang Feng (d. 22 BCE), since according to the *Hanshu* the trio were "united in their worry and fear" when Chengdi's father, Yuandi, considered removing Chengdi as heir (*Hanshu* 96.4016-17). At the same time, as emperor he recognized the danger that the Wang family posed, and actively sought avenues through which to control its influence. See, e.g., the example of Wang Zhang (no relation). Early in his reign Chengdi had met privately with Wang Zhang to discuss Wang Feng's removal, but ultimately the emperor imprisoned Wang Zhang after Wang Feng found out about their discussions (*Hanshu* 96.4020-23).

deemed informal and illegitimate. The two friends and colleagues who jointly proposed the 8 BC reforms, Chancellor Zhai Fangjin 翟方進 (d. 7 BCE) and He Wu 何武 (d. 3 CE), the newly appointed Imperial Counsellor, each emphasized the importance of clearly defined official duties and powers within a bureaucratic hierarchy that allowed for no informal influence.[30] By carefully delineating the "discrete responsibilities" (*fen zhi*) of the highest officers of the land, their reforms were designed to obviate situations where "authority would be severed from official position."[31] Such statements implied that nobody, not even members of the Wang consort family, should be able to encroach upon the emperor's rightful position at the apex of the bureaucracy.

The Wang family's hand in recommendations and appointments to offices must have made these principles of clearly defined duty and rank attractive to the emperor. The senior members of the Wang family were extremely powerful in Chang'an. Close kinship ties to the empress dowager had endowed them with high rank and position. They could thus recommend a great many candidates for higher office, which, in turn, strengthened their network of alliances.[32] This was particularly true for Chengdi's maternal male relatives, four of whom were designated Marshal of State (*Da Sima* 大司馬) while Chengdi was on the throne; together these four relatives asserted their authority for most of the emperor's reign. We read in the *Hanshu* that Wang Feng 王鳳 (d. 22 BCE), for example, Chengdi's oldest uncle and the first Wang Marshal of State, had duly sought out worthy officials to assist him.[33] As was already suggested in the opening section of this chapter, the Wang family was not the first Western Han noble family that consolidated power by filling positions with family members and allies.[34] Kamiya Masakazu 紙屋正和, however, has recently argued that the Wang men were distinctive in that they commonly recommended and promoted officials into regional administrative posts, including posts as Regional Inspector, Governor, and kingdom Minister. Some of these officials eventually achieved posts at 2,000 bushels in Chang'an.[35] Such

---

[30] App. 1 provides translations of the three reform proposals. See *Hanshu* 86.3481 for He Wu and Zhai Fangjin's friendship. Wu and Fangjin jointly proposed each of the reforms in quick succession. They thus must have put forth the proposals with a shared understanding of the institutional problems that needed to be addressed, as well as the ideal structure of governance that they hoped to realize.

[31] The statement is found in He and Zhai's proposals; see App. 1. He Wu and Zhai Fangjin were hardly the first to identify "discrete responsibilities" as keys to enlightened governance. Sima Tan (d. 110 BCE) in his essay "Yao zhi 要指" (Essential Tenets), praised the "legal specialists" (*fajia* 法家), who "clearly divided responsibilities (*fen zhi* 分職) to prevent officials from encroaching on each other" (*Shiji* 130.3291). Wu and Fangjin used strikingly similar language in their proposals.

[32] Over the course of the Western Han, several systems had been established for identifying and promoting worthy candidates for office. Governors, kingdom Ministers, the Nine Ministers in the capital, and Regional Inspectors were all required to make such recommendations. Evaluating and recommending officials thus came to be a key responsibility and privilege of high office. See Fukui Shigemasa 1988; Loewe 2004; de Crespigny 2007.

[33] *Hanshu* 60.2667.

[34] In early Western Han, members of the Lü family accumulated noble titles and nearly toppled the government. After the death of Wudi, the Huo family monopolized high offices, prompting Ban Gu to write famously that the family "took root in and occupied the court" (*Hanshu* 68.2948).

[35] Kamiya Masakazu 2009, 322-25. This strategy was in contrast, Kamiya argues, to the approach of the Huo family during Zhaodi's reign and Shi Xian during Yuandi's reign, since both the Huo family and Shi Xian almost exclusively appointed supporters to positions at court. Kamiya details the career paths of eight officials specifically connected to recommendations from Wang family

appointments provided the Wang family with a network of relationships that extended across the realm, serving to consolidate the stranglehold on power the family would soon exert.

On the other hand, the Wang family appears to have acquired such dominance that even some of the people they recommended and appointed expressed reservations about their power. In the most extreme case, an official recommended by Wang Feng urged Chengdi to sack his patron.[36] We also read of divisions within the Wang family itself over recommendations.[37] Such fissures are perhaps to be expected,[38] but they also reflect a Wang family so confident in its hold on power that it did not need to maintain a constant, united front against potential rivals; after all, its members could close ranks and act as one whenever threatened.[39] The institutional positions held by the senior members of the Wang family necessarily gave them a particularly strong voice in decisions at court. Wang supremacy must have seemed a *fait accompli* to most in high office: the family's position had to be dealt with delicately and strategically.[40]

The challenge for the emperor and others who wanted to wrest power from the Wang family was to construct alternative alliances and power relationships. Zhai Fangjin and He Wu clearly fit the bill for Chengdi, or at least that is the picture we have from the *Hanshu*. The *Hanshu* casts both as outsiders to Chang'an, with Zhai hailing from Runan 汝南 commandery and He hailing from Shu 蜀.[41] Both officials, after gaining recommendations, had advanced to the highest levels of the bureaucracy. Zhai Fangjin and He Wu were famous for their erudition in classical texts, consistent

---

members and who served in regional administrative posts before achieving 2,000-bushel positions. To take one example, Wang Feng initially installed Xiao Yu 蕭育 as a subordinate in his own bureau, after which Xiao moved through various local and regional administrative positions, including Prefect of Maoling, Colonel of Internal Security, Regional Inspector of Jizhou 冀州, Regional Inspector of Qingzhou 青州, and Governor of Taishan (*Hanshu* 78.3289). Kamiya misses the example of He Wu, who was recommended by Wang Yin 王音 to be Advisory Counsellor (*Jian dafu*), and then appointed to be Regional Inspector of Yangzhou 揚州 (*Hanshu* 86.3482). He Wu, of course, eventually rose to become Imperial Counsellor.

[36] The official in question was Wang Zhang 王章 (no relation to the empress dowager's family). As the *Hanshu*'s description of this incident reveals, alliances must have been a commonly expected result of recommendations: "At this time the emperor's uncle, the Grand General Wang Feng, controlled the government. Even though Feng had recommended Wang Zhang, Zhang objected to Feng's monopoly of power and did not form close attachments with him" (*Hanshu* 76.3238).

[37] The example of Chen Tang, a military hero, is a case in point. Wang Feng and Wang Yin greatly esteemed Tang, but their younger brother, Wang Shang, despised him and had him exiled upon assuming the title of Marshal of State (*Hanshu* 84.3418).

[38] In a related vein, Hölkeskamp 2010, 30-39, emphasized that patron-client alliances in the late Roman republic were prone to fracture and required continual renewal and reaffirmation.

[39] E.g., after the Emperor's uncles Wang Shang, Wang Li, and Wang Gen were detained for their excessively lavish lifestyles, they collectively appealed to the empress dowager for support, and their eldest brother, Wang Yin, managed a successful appeal for clemency (*Hanshu* 98.4025).

[40] Gu Yong (d. ca. 8 BCE) is an instructive example in this regard, since according to the *Hanshu* he actively attempted to curry favor with Wang Feng (*Hanshu* 85.3451-54) and later enjoyed good relations with Wang Tan. But, when Tan was passed up to succeed Wang Feng as Marshal of State and director of the government in favor of Wang Yin, Gu Yong's stock took a tumble. Tan and Yin grew apart, and the latter directed some of his ire against Gu Yong (*Hanshu* 85.3455-56).

[41] *Hanshu* 86.3481; 84.3411.

adherence to rules and regulations, and fair and honest governing practices.[42] He Wu even won renown by refusing to protect a member of his own family from legal prosecution,[43] while Zhai Fangjin earned a reputation for acting against the powerful families in the Chang'an area who had engaged in profiteering.[44] In sum, the *Hanshu* paints He Wu and Zhai Fangjin as Chang'an outsiders and sticklers for the law — officials whose competence, honesty, and classical erudition won the admiration of many at court. The recommendations that spurred their advancement, and the privileges and power that they had accumulated, we are led to believe, were entirely proper.

Even so, as Zhai and He rose up the bureaucratic ranks, they were hardly immune to charges of favoritism or cliquish behavior. Indeed, such charges were commonly traded between different factions, even while all condemned factional politics. He Wu, we read, took pleasure in raising up worthy candidates, even though he claimed to despise cliques (*pengdang*), and took pains to double-check the advice of both government officials and classicist experts (*ru* 儒) alike.[45] Zhai Fangjin shared He Wu's interest in identifying worthy candidates. Nonetheless, in a bitter memorial submitted after Zhai's death, Du Ye (d. 2 CE) accused Zhai of various improprieties, including promoting the careers of several unworthy officials, who had "only to attach themselves to Zhai Fangjin, and thus receive exalted offices."[46] Not coincidentally, Du Ye was a native of Duling, one of the imperial mausoleum towns, scion of a powerful noble family that had maintained a prominent position in the capital for over a century, and nephew of Du Qin (fl. 33-22 BCE), Wang Feng's closest advisor. Naturally Du Ye hated Zhai, since Zhai had so zealously prosecuted Chang'an's noble families. These difficulties that He Wu and Zhai Fangjin experienced in negotiating the politics of alliances were hardly novel. Indeed, the Wang family itself was particularly vulnerable to charges of favoritism and cliquish behavior, though such charges tended to be swiftly punished on the rare occasions that they surfaced.[47]

Chengdi thus faced a number of obstacles when instituting the 8 BCE reforms. On the one hand, he had to craft a new bureaucratic structure that effectively sidelined the Wang family. But in order to do so, he had to ally himself with officials whose political connections were both sufficiently robust to counter the Wang family's network of alliances, and yet untainted by accusations of favoritism and cliquishness (to the degree that this was possible). Tracing the proposal and enactment of the reforms allows us to see these considerations in action. Some time between 10 and 8 BCE, He Wu circulated the initial proposal (*jian* 建) for establishing the Executive

---

[42] Both Zhai Fangjin and He Wu studied under Academicians (*Boshi*) in Chang'an, with Fangjin mastering the *Zuo* commentaries to the *Annals* (*Chunqiu*), and Wu, the *Changes* (*Yi*). Zhai Fangjin gained notice for scrupulously adhering to the statutes as Regional Inspector; Wu in the saw office was punctilious in preparing his reports. Moreover, Wu decided impartially the case against Dai Sheng 戴生, reversing his death sentence, even though Sheng had previously criticized He Wu at court. For Zhai Fangjin, see *Hanshu* 84.8412, 99.3618; for He Wu, see *Hanshu* 86.3481-82.

[43] *Hanshu* 86.3482.

[44] *Hanshu* 84.3416. The construction of Chengdi's mausoleum at Changling had provided opportunities for speculation and graft amongst the rich and powerful families of Chang'an.

[45] *Hanshu* 86.3485.

[46] *Hanshu* 60.2679.

[47] The only explicit example I have found comes from Wang Zhang (no relation; see n.36 above), who died in prison after he submitted a statement to Chengdi urging the emperor to get rid of Wang Feng. The statement included an accusation that Feng had installed his wife's younger sister, previously married to a man of low status, in the palace on the pretext that she would be able to bear Chengdi a son, when in fact Feng was acting purely to secure his own interests (*Hanshu* 98.4023).

Council.[48] The emperor implemented it after gaining the approval of his close confidante and former tutor Zhang Yu 張禹 (d. 5 BCE), who had at best a tenuous relationship with the Wang family: for some time he had been in outright conflict with Wang Gen 王根, then the Marshal of State.[49] After approving the Executive Council reform, Chengdi kept He Wu in the newly renamed position of Imperial Counsellor (*Da Sikong*) and Zhai Fangjin remained Chancellor. Chengdi allowed Wang Gen to keep the title of Marshal of State and thus become a member of the Council, but took away his position as General of Cavalry on the Alert (*Piaoji jiangjun*). Moreover, for the first time Gen received the regular ribbons and seals of office; both items, in theory, marked Gen's new status as a government functionary, implying his subordination to the emperor.[50] The reforms thus placed Wang Gen at the same rank as Zhai Fangjin and He Wu in the Executive Council; Gen suddenly found himself and, by extension, the Wang family that he led, in a new institutional arrangement designed to underscore his inferior status vis-à-vis the emperor.

The other reforms only further sidelined the Wang men. By late Western Han, many court officers had previous experience in regional posts; almost all of Chengdi's highest officials had served as Regional Inspectors, Governors, or kingdom Ministers. The Wang family certainly did not monopolize control over disbursal of these posts to the exclusion of others, but, as noted above, they had proven adept at moving officials through regional offices before bringing them to serve in 2,000-bushels posts in Chang'an. The 8 BC reforms disrupted that path.[51] As Zhu Bo later noted when he urged Aidi to rescind the 8 BCE reforms, Zhai Fangjin had ensured that the new Provincial Shepherds were ranked immediately below the Nine Ministers, virtually ensuring that those Shepherds whose abilities were ranked at the highest level (*gaodi*) would be promoted to fill empty ministerial positions.[52] The Executive Council and Chengdi would have been able to oversee the assessment of the Provincial Shepherds, more closely monitoring who was placed in ministerial

---

[48] The *Hanshu* says that He Wu submitted the Executive Council proposal while he was still serving as Commissioner of Trials (*Tingwei*) from 10 to 8 BCE. After Zhang Yu agreed that the reform should be enacted, Chengdi established the Executive Council in the fourth month of the first year of Suihe. He Wu was no longer the Commissioner of Trials, having been appointed Imperial Counsellor two months prior; his title was simply changed to *Da Sikong* (*Hanshu* 83.3404-05).

[49] Wang Gen had previously criticized Zhang Yu for requesting burial land near Pingling, Zhaodi's (r. 86-74 BCE) mausoleum. Chengdi ignored Gen's concerns, but thereafter Wang Gen persistently criticized and slandered Zhang (*Hanshu* 81.3350). Given the bad blood between Zhang Yu and Wang Gen, Zhang possibly saw the Executive Council reforms as an opportunity to neutralize Gen in a manner that left Zhang's hands relatively clean. Indeed, we are told that Zhang so feared his sons would be harmed by Wang Gen that he put in a good word for the Wang family to the emperor when other officials had blamed them for a series of portents (*Hanshu* 81.3351). The timing of these incidents is unclear, but the *Hanshu* dates the portents in question to the Yongshi (16-12 BC) and Yuanyan (12-8 BC) reign periods, which means Zhang put in that good word about the same time that he lent his support to the 8 BCE reforms. Zhang thus appears to have been simultaneously working defense and offense, acting cautiously and supportively towards members of the Wang family when necessary but exploiting opportunities to take them down when possible.

[50] *Hanshu* 83.3405.

[51] According to Kamiya Masakazu 2009, 311, between 8 BCE and 6 BCE, when Aidi rescinded the 8 BCE reforms of the Executive Council and the Inspectorate, no Governor or kingdom Minister managed to achieve a 2,000-bushel post in Chang'an, suggesting that the emperor and Executive Council could more effectively control who was placed in ministerial positions at the capital.

[52] *Hanshu* 83.3406.

positions. Governors and Kingdom Ministers, now ranked lower than the Shepherds, had been cut out of the promotional loop. Wang Gen could thus no longer utilize the promotional paths that his brothers had used to their advantage.[53] Not surprisingly, no record describes the emperor consulting Wang Gen as he implemented the reforms.[54] But Chengdi had to move discreetly, since critics, some of whom might have been allied with Wang family members, argued that the reforms were little more than archaizing name changes that would have little practical effect.[55]

Why would He Wu and Zhai Fangjin, for their part, propose these reforms? What frustrations had these officials encountered in navigating through the world of the late Western Han imperial court, and how did the reforms propose to address them? As noted above, during and after the reign of Wudi the emergence of up to four grades (e.g. "equivalent," "palace," etc.) of a given rank had tended to create confusion – potentially explosive confusion – in matters of protocol and jurisdiction by muddying the direct chain of command binding superior to subordinate.[56] One example of just such a dispute affected Zhai Fangjin's own career. It illustrates how officials tended to invoke claims of duty and rank when criticizing unofficial alliances forged outside the bureaucratic hierarchy, which the "illegitimate" patron-client relations within the Wang family

---

[53] Note, as well, that in 8 BCE Wujiang Long 毋將隆 was appointed to be Provincial Shepherd of Jizhou. Wujiang had initially received a post as Advisory Council under Wang Yin's sponsorship, but after he submitted a memorial requesting Chengdi to move Liu Xin (the future Aidi) to Chang'an, he was promoted to the newly created post of Provincial Shepherd (see *Hanshu* 77.3263-4). The promotion shifted a potential client of the Wang family to the direct oversight and evaluation of the emperor and his Executive Council.

[54] Significantly, later in 8 BCE Wang Gen claimed illness and asked to retire. Chengdi allowed him to withdraw from active government service, increasing his sinecure by 5,000 households and providing him with a chariot and 500 catties of gold (*Hanshu* 98.4027). In 8 BCE, Wang Gen had just supported Aidi's successful installation as heir to the throne, and perhaps saw an opportunity to remove himself while he could, since he had accepted bribes and built up an opulent residence whose luxury rivaled that enjoyed by the emperor himself. Indeed, these offenses came under close scrutiny in memorials submitted against Wang Gen after Aidi came to the throne in 7 BCE (*Hanshu* 98.4028).

[55] *Hanshu* 83.3405. As noted earlier, the chancellor Zhu Bo managed to convince Aidi, Chengdi's successor, to rescind the reforms. Zhu argued that they had disrupted the old promotional hierarchy whereby the Imperial Counsellor gained experience before moving into the position of Chancellor, and had prevented the Provincial Shepherds from actually doing their job of inspecting the provinces (*Hanshu* 83.3405-6). In 8 BCE, Zhai Fangjin had managed to remove Zhu Bo from his position as General of The Rear (*Hou Jiangjun* 後將軍), saying that Zhu had supported the emperor's uncle Wang Li, who had just been indicted (*Hanshu* 84.3419). Given this conflict between Zhu Bo and Zhai Fangjin, Zhu Bo was more than likely one of the opponents of the reforms with links to the Wang family.

[56] He Wu's and Zhai Fangjin's call to reform the Inspectorate particularly emphasized this problem with the chain of command. Many scholars have noted the controversy inspired by the lower rank of Regional Inspectors vis-à-vis the Governors and kingdom Ministers, controversy that arose starting from when Wudi established the positions. De Crespigny 2007 emphasized that the 8 BCE reform of the Inspectorate responded to these concerns and completely transformed Wudi's model. As the evidence assembled in this essay reflects, however, the 8 BCE reforms cannot be cast solely as reactions against Wudi's policies. For a helpful overview of the gradual incorporation of ad hoc inspectors and monitors into the larger bureaucratic structure, see Liao Boyuan 2006.

epitomized. Duty and rank thus became the terms by which "legitimate" versus "illegitimate" alliances were defined and policed.

To begin with a few background details: in the years leading up to 18 BCE, Zhai Fangjin served as Deputy to the Chancellor (*Chengxiang sizhi* 丞相司直), ranking just below the Chancellor in that head administrator's bureau.[57] On a trip outside the Chang'an city walls while accompanying the emperor to Ganquan Palace 甘泉宮, Zhai's chariot had briefly travelled on the highway reserved for imperial use. The Colonel of Internal Security (*Sili xiaowei* 司隸校尉) charged Zhai with a crime and duly confiscated his chariot. At a meeting held upon their arrival in Ganquan, the Colonel and Zhai both submitted memorials with counter-accusations, with Zhai Fangjin claiming that the Colonel had divulged confidential matters while holding an earlier office. In the end, Zhai prevailed and the Colonel forfeited his post.[58]

The conflict was not merely a clash of personalities, since Zhai Fangjin's and the Colonel of Internal Security's jurisdictions overlapped to some degree. The Deputy to the Chancellor investigated the illegal activities of officials,[59] while the Colonel of Internal Security monitored officials of the capital region, in effect serving as an Inspector for the capital.[60] To make matters worse, the Colonel held a post ranked at 2,000 bushels, while the Deputy's rank was set at "equivalent to" (*bi*) 2,000 bushels. According to Han "precedent" (*gushi* 故事), the Colonel of Internal Security ranked below the Deputy to the Chancellor.[61] But "precedent" hardly prevented conflict caused by overlapping authorities and jurisdictions. In another earlier incident, the Chancellor, Zhai's immediate superior, once ordered members of his staff (*yuan shi* 掾史) to help apprehend a murderous gang. The Colonel of Internal Security, at that time one Juan Xun 涓勳, protested that the Chancellor was infringing on his responsibility:

> 春秋之義，王人徵者序乎諸侯之上，尊王命也。臣幸得奉使，以督察公卿以下為職
> According to the *Annals*, those appointed by the King rank above the vassal lords in order to lend authority to the king's orders. I have been fortunate enough to receive imperial favor in being as an imperial envoy (*shi*; i.e. Inspector), with a duty to oversee and observe the ministers (*gong qing* 公卿).[62]

Juan Xun thus asserted the inspectorial nature of his office, by citing its classical justification and casting it as a direct charge from the emperor himself, which gave him jurisdiction over monitoring

---

[57] In 18 BC, Zhai Fangjin was promoted from Deputy to the Chancellor to Governor of the Capital (*Jingzhao yin*) (*Hanshu* 19b.833), a position hardly distinguishable from a ministerial post, in that the Governor was expected to participate regularly in court debates and policy discussions; see An Zuozhang and Xiong Tieji 2006 [1984-5], 534.

[58] *Hanshu* 84.3412.

[59] Bielenstein 1980, 8; An Zuozhang and Xiong Tieji 2006 [1984-5], 36-37.

[60] Bielenstein 1980, 84-85, noted that the only difference between the Colonel of Internal Security and the Regional Inspectors was that (prior to 8 BCE) the former was higher in rank at 2,000 bushels and retained the staff of authority that allowed him to act in the name of the emperor. See also Kamada Shigeo 1962, 291-92; An Zuozhang and Xiong Tieji 2006 [1984-5], 498-505.

[61] *Hanshu* 84.3414. Note that in this particular case "precedent" outweighed rank: according to "precedent," the Colonel of Internal Security, ranked at 2,000 bushels, held more authority than the Deputy to the Chancellor at "equivalent to" 2,000 bushels.

[62] *Hanshu* 84.3413.

all high ministers and officials at court. In doing so, Juan obliquely referred to a key difference between his office and that of the Chancellor: the latter was ennobled only by virtue of his unassailably high position, and did not enjoy a direct charge from the emperor himself that was rooted in classical principles. In the event, officials agreed that the Chancellor had overstepped his bounds, after which the gang's leader was duly apprehended and punished.

Zhai Fangjin did not let the matter drop. Perhaps he was offended, or perhaps he thought Juan Xun himself had offended against precedent by failing to visit the bureaus of the Chancellor and Imperial Counsellor, an omission whose rudeness seemed compounded by Juan's show of arrogance when in the company of these officials. When Zhai launched a secret investigation against Juan Xun, he discovered two things: that the Colonel had met privately with the Commissioner of the Palace (*Guangluxun* 光祿勳) and that he had once descended from his chariot to pay his respects to Wang Shang 王商, yet another of the emperor's Wang family relatives.[63] Zhai accusation against Juan Xun is worth quoting in full for what it reveals about inter-ministry conflicts:

> 臣聞國家之興，尊尊而敬長，爵位上下之禮，王道綱紀。《春秋》之義，尊上公謂之宰，海內無不統焉。丞相進見聖主，御坐為起，在輿為下。群臣宜皆承順聖化，以視四方。
>
> 勳吏二千石，幸得奉使，不遵禮儀，輕謾宰相，賤易上卿，而又詘節失度，邪諂無常，色厲內荏。墮國體，亂朝廷之序，不宜處位。臣請下丞相免勳。
>
> I have heard that when a ruling house is founded, it is to treat the honorable suitably and to revere the elderly, conferring rank and position according to courtesies reserved for high and low. In doing so, the kingly way is regulated. According to the *Annals*, we honor the highest lord by calling him "Minister." Within all of the land bound by the seas, nothing falls outside his purview. When the Chancellor has an audience with our sagely ruler, out of respect for the Chancellor the ruler rises from the imperial throne or gets down from his chariot.[64] The ministers thus all receive and conform to sagely instruction. In this way, they show it to the rest of the empire.
>
> Xun is an official ranked at 2,000 bushels, who was fortunate to be chosen to serve as an Inspector. He does not respect ritual protocol, he belittles the Chancellor, and he denigrates superior ministers. He moreover disdains decorum and fails to maintain probity. He is treacherous, sycophantic, and inconstant, "a coward who assumes fierce looks."[65] He damages the imperial structure, throwing the court ranks into disorder. He is not fit to occupy this position. I respectfully submit that the emperor should order the Chancellor to remove Juan Xun from office.[66]

By failing to show proper respect to the Chancellor, Zhai Fangjin argued, the Colonel had disrupted court protocols. Even worse, in dismounting from his chariot to show respect for Wang Shang, displayed calculated deference to a member of the Wang family, hence Zhai's thinly veiled reference

---

[63] *Hanshu* 84.3414.

[64] Following Yan Shigu's (581-645) interpretation, based on citation of the *Han Jiuyi* (*Hanshu* 84.3414).

[65] A reference to the *Analects* (*Lunyu*) 17.12: "The Master said: 'The coward who assumes fierce looks — to borrow a crude image — is like a cutpurse who sneaks over the wall." *Analects* translation follows Leys 1997, 87.

[66] *Hanshu* 84.3414.

to Xun's "sycophancy" (*chan* 諂). The implication was clear: Colonel Juan Xun put far more stock in the power of the consort family than he did in the emperor or the imperial bureaucracy under the emperor's supervision. The Colonel, by insinuating himself into the powerful Wang patronage network for his own personal benefit, acted at the expense of his official duty.

Review of this memorial enables us better to understand the probable motivations that drove Zhai Fangjin and He Wu to offer their proposals to Chengdi. In theory, the Western Han bureaucracy administered the realm according to a strict hierarchy of duties and ranks at whose apex sat the emperor. In practice, however, differing interpretations of these duties and ranks, not to mention overlapping jurisdictions, easily gave rise to conflicts at the court, with the parties to these conflicts calling upon their allies for support. To again take this example: had Colonel Juan Xun actually managed to attain the intervention of Wang Shang, for example, perhaps he could have looked to him for help against Zhai Fangjin. Zhai, however, called upon normative notions of rank and duty in order to cast Juan Xun's attempt to curry favor with Wang Shang as illegitimate. The 8 BCE reforms attempted something similar: to clearly define the ranks and duties of high officers in order to firmly establish the emperor's position at the top of the hierarchy, and thus as every official's sole support, while in the process condemning all other alliances as "illegitimate."

Conclusion

This chapter concerned the perceived threat to the body politic that the Wang family represented at Chengdi's court during the late Western Han. In order to suppress the Wang family and minimize its opportunities to build alliances, Chengdi and a circle of reform-minded officials put forth the 8 BCE reforms, which cast Chengdi as the leader of a new bureaucratic hierarchy where Wang family power would be offset by that of two other officials named to the Executive Council. The 8 BCE reforms, in legitimizing some alliances at the expense of others liable to increase the power of the Wang family, reflected a fact of life at the Western Han court: the throne-Wang conflict drove court politics and institutional change. Still, factional politics alone are insufficient to explain the reforms. As this essay has emphasized, the reforms were not solely motivated by family or individual interests, nor even by the public interest. Rather, supporters and critics of the Wang family alike had to heed norms and precedents relating to ranks, obligations, jurisdictions, and the bureaucratic procedures for recommendation and selection, knowing that all of these could be invoked in the course of court debates on policy matters.

At no point throughout the 8 BCE debates did reforms mention or call upon notions of an "inner" or "outer" court, nor do we see clear dividing lines between inner and outer court factions. Indeed, an underlying thread of this chapter has traced the differing objectives and experiences of all the actors – Zhai Fangjin and He Wu, Liu Xiang and Chengdi himself, Zhang Yu and a gaggle of Wang family members, among them – their permanent or temporary alliances notwithstanding. Let us remember that Chengdi went beyond the proposal of Zhai and He, eliminating the Metropolitan Commissioners and introducing the Commissioners of the Capital; that Zhai Fangjin invoked his talk of ranks and duties in order to prevail in a conflict he had with another official; that Chengdi and Zhang Yu, each in his own way, sought a precarious balance at court, whereby Wang family power would be at once acknowledged and limited by the institution of the tripartite Executive Council, which would enforce power-sharing between Wang Gen, Zhai Fangjin, and He Wu; and that this new arrangement would have been personally enriching for both Zhai and He, since it effectively awarded them a major salary raise and a big boost in status at court. All of these factors (and doubtless many more for which we have no records) contributed to a major institutional shift. Changing virtually congealed institutions after some two hundred years of Western Han rule was

clearly no easy matter.[67] This convergence of interests is a more plausible explanation for the ultimate success of the 8 BCE reforms than a simplistic notion of conflict between an "inner" and "outer" court.

More importantly, the 8 BCE reforms provide a good window by which we can understand the political motivations that might have supported interest in the Tables and "Admonitions" that we analyzed in Chapter 4. The authors of those sources navigated through a world in which complicated political alliances and contradictions between court rank and official duties clashed with the notion that the imperial court rested at the top of the official hierarchy. How was this hierarchy to be defined? Who belonged and who did not? Could the at times terrifying reality of cutthroat court politics be mitigated by defining offices as autonomous institutions that existed from the beginning of the Western Han (*a la* the *Hanshu* "Table") and required prescribed forms of behavior and even voice (as claimed by the "Admonitions")? As the 8 BCE reforms remind us, such discussions were not divorced from institutional realities and could have a profound impact on the administrative structure of the entire empire that would last for centuries. At the same time, as the debates within this chapter also reveal, whatever institutional arrangements emerged from fights about ranks, duties, and alliances at the imperial court were always subject to contestation. The hierarchies that gave structure to the imperial court and officialdom as a whole were by no means fixed, and we should probably assume that new members of both did what they could to craft new arrangements and definitions for a variety of reasons.

Appendix to Chapter 6: The 8 BCE Reform Proposals

1. *A proposal* (jian) *by He Wu, ca. 10 – 8 BCE, to create the Executive Council* (*Hanshu* 83.3404-05)*:*

古者民樸事約，國之輔佐必得賢聖，然猶則天三光，備三公官，各有分職。

今末俗文弊，政事煩多，宰相之材不能及古，而丞相獨兼三公之事，所以久廢而不治也。宜建三公官，定卿大夫之任，分職授政，以考功效。

In ancient times the people were plain and governing duties were simple. The advisors in the kingdoms were necessarily worthies and sages. They still, however, followed the model of the three luminaries of Heaven (sun, moon, and stars), and filled the three offices of the Executive Council, each having discrete responsibilities (*fen zhi*).

In this declining age, customs and patterns have degenerated and the duties of governing have proliferated. The talent of administrators is inferior to the talent of the ancients, but the Chancellor on his own initiative has arrogated duties rightly belonging to an Executive Council. This is why over the long-term they have been abandoned, not properly administered. It is right to establish the offices of the Executive Council, define the charges of the ministers and counselors, and divide up their responsibilities and dispense their governing duties. In this way we cans evaluate effectiveness.

[67] This fact, of course, is no less true of contemporary political institutions. Historians and social scientists alike have emphasized the importance of path-dependence in the development of institutions, as well as their "stickiness" and the difficulties inherent to reforming them. See, e.g., Pierson 2004 and Fukuyama 2011. For conjunctures in institutional change, see Sewell 2005.

2. *A memorial* (zou) *submitted by He Wu and Zhai Fangjin, 8 BCE, to establish Provincial Shepherds* (*Hanshu* 83.3406)*:*

古選諸侯賢者以為州伯，《書》曰『咨十有二牧』，所以廣聰明，燭幽隱也。今部刺史居牧伯之位，秉一州之統，選第大吏，所薦位高至九卿，所惡立退，任重職大。

《春秋》之義，用貴治賤，不以卑臨尊。刺史位下大夫，而臨二千石，輕重不相準，失位次之序。臣請罷刺史，更置州牧，以應古制。

The ancient rulers selected worthies from among the nobles and made them Provincial Lords. The *Documents* says: "He consulted with the twelve Shepherds," and thus broadened his perception, lighting a candle on the darkness and hidden recesses. Now the Regional Inspectors occupy the position of the Shepherds and Lords, and they control the governance of one whole province. They select and rank the senior officials. Those they recommend to a position can reach as high as the Nine Ministers. Those they deem to be poor are immediately withdrawn. Their charge is heavy and their responsibilities great.

The meaning (*yi*) of the *Annals* is to employ the noble to govern the lower-ranked, and to not have those at the bottom oversee those at the top. The Inspector's grade is that of a low-ranking counselor (*dafu*), but he oversees those at 2,000 bushels. The weight of rank is out of balance; there has been a loss of the order properly due to official position. Your servants request that you eliminate the Inspectors, and replace them with the Provincial Shepherds so as to accord with the ancient system.

3. *A memorial submitted by He Wu and Zhai Fangjin, 8 BCE, to equalize kingdom and commandery officials* (*Hanshu* 86.8485-86)*:*

往者諸侯王斷獄治政，內史典獄事，相總綱紀輔王，中尉備盜賊。今王不斷獄與政，中尉官罷，職并內史。

郡國守相委任，所以壹統，信安百姓也。今內史位卑而權重，威職相踰，不統尊者，難以為治。臣請相如太守，內史如都尉，以順尊卑之序，平輕重之權。

In the past the vassal kings decided trials and were in charge of governing. Their Commissioners were in charge of judicial duties, their Ministers coordinated administration and advised the kings, and their Commissioners of the Capitals had full command over [the control of] violence and wrongdoing. Now the kings do not make judicial decisions or parcel out governing duties. The Commissioner of the Capital's office is abandoned, its responsibilities folded under the Metropolitan Commissioner's office [in the kingdoms].

Appointment of commandery Governors and kingdom Ministers is the means to unify and systematize, making the people trustful and secure.[68] Now the Metropolitan Commissioner's position is low but his power is great, so authority and rank of position are at odds with each other. Since high-ranked officers are not strung together into one system, governing is difficult. Your humble servants request that the Ministers be made equal to the Governors, and the Metropolitan Commissioners be made equal to the Commandants. In this way we will accord with the order of high and low, and level out the powers due to salary grade weights.

[68] My punctuation and rendering here follows the interpretation of Yan Shigu, who explained the phrase as "to make the commoners trust the officials and peacefully attach to them." See *Hanshu buzhu* 86.1505b.

Conclusions

One of the problems emphasized throughout this dissertation is the difficult necessity of bridging the gap between institutional configurations of power on the one hand and the complexities of how that power was represented and debated at the imperial court on the other. By considering this problem in detail, we have noted in several different contexts (e.g. talk of court space, the performance of funerary rituals and audience rituals, discussions and depictions of official service, and conflicts about the organization of officialdom) that there was no *single* understanding of the court and its purpose. Even by late Western Han, some two hundred years after the founding of the dynasty, we see several different models of the court in circulation. Debate about these models was closely linked to political conflicts at the imperial court. This multiplicity of models was no failure in the Han political system, nor does it necessarily indicate confusion on the part of ruling elites. Rather, it was precisely the capacity of the imperial court to accommodate a range of different visions that contributed to the longevity of the Western Han.

Indeed, the vociferous debates in the late Western Han about the structure of the court and the continued capacity of the court to accommodate a wide variety of debates should give us pause before assuming that the late Western Han was necessarily a period of political decline. If anything, some of the phenomena that we have traced in the foregoing chapters, such as continued imperial travel by late Western Han emperors despite the obfuscating efforts of the *Hanshu* (Chapter 1) and the intensity of debate about the proper organization of the court (Chapter 6) indicate that imperial court institutions and practices had a continued vitality even into the waning years of the dynasty. We probably have to be very specific about what we mean when we claim dynastic "decline." Certainly the capacity of the late Western Han court to marshal impressive amounts of material resources and wealth does not appear to have been significantly diminished.[1]

Turning to issues of more general concern, the fact that a range of models of the Western Han court not only existed but were central to the vitality of the dynasty can tell us a few things about our notions of the court. First, a long-standing focus on the impressive capacity of the early Chinese state to exert control over such a broad population and territory should probably be paired with a recognition that state actions at best could be directed only towards specific goals and populations. We noted in the introduction that scholars such as Bielenstein and Loewe have long rejected the notion that the early Chinese empires were autocratic regimes, even if casual references to the "autocratic" (*zhuanzhi* 專制) early state still commonly surface in secondary literature. As other scholars of the ancient world have emphasized, the debate about autocracy in early states is not only inaccurate but also misguided, since it is highly unlikely that any ancient ruler desired or even believed it was possible to exert total and uniform control over their territories.[2] In fact, rulers were constrained by the institutions of rule inherited from their predecessors and a lack of uniform, consistent, and accurate information.[3] These facts required highly selective applications of state power to specific arenas. We should not look to the Western Han imperial court only as the

---

[1] See, for example, the tables of gifts in Chapter 2. We might also note that the "Account of Wang Mang" in the *Hanshu* describes the newly enthroned emperor consistently giving out large amounts of gifts. The "usurper" does not appear to have inherited an impoverished state.

[2] See, e.g., Crone 1989 and Manning 2010, esp. 57-59.

[3] On the information problem in the Western Han, see Hsing 2013. As Manning 2010, 58, noted: "…some historians have simply ascribed total power to the state by looking at certain phenomena and assuming that the power of the ruler, theoretically absolute, could be applied to any issue at any time."

embodiment of centralized control, but rather as an institution that engaged in targeted activities and allowed for a range of discussions.

This segmented nature of ancient state activity is reflected in the diversity of debates and models traced in this dissertation. As we saw, for instance, it was entirely possible to view court funerary ritual simultaneously as a means to enforce lateral ties between the imperial court and the royal courts and as a way to project the exalted status of the imperial court. Along with the segmentation of state aims came an inconsistency in rhetoric. The key point for us is that the diversity of models about discrete arenas of state activity did not all issue from the ruler or even his immediate circle. Rather, it was the collective achievement of members of the larger court society, who advanced different visions of how the court should be organized. Models of the court were just as much rooted in concerns over status amongst court members as they were in ambitions of centralized control on the part of Western Han rulers, be they emperors, empress dowagers and their family members, or heads of government.

This centrality of the larger Western Han court society in advancing models of the court can help us think in different terms about both the court and the nature of early imperial government. We already noted in the introduction to this dissertation that one of the key critiques of Elias's analysis of the court was its neglect of the key role played by court members in developing court institutions, since courtiers and rulers alike saw the court as an effective tool for consolidating power. This critique was repeatedly emphasized in the essays collected in Spawforth (2007), with many contributors highlighting strategies that court members employed to ensure their own political positions. Too often, however, they stressed the dynamic between rulers on the one hand and courtiers on the other. To quote Paterson's essay on the early imperial Roman court:

> The ruler's court is not the creation of the ruler alone or even his initiative. It is as much the means by which the subjects come to terms with the fact that power is now the monopoly of the ruler, and the way they create a *modus vivendi* with the ruler.[4]

As we have seen throughout this dissertation, however, the relations and conflicts *between* courtiers were just as if not more important factors in debates about the court than were relations between rulers and courtiers. In thinking about the early Chinese court, we must first of all think seriously about the status aims and political ambitions of members of the larger court society, since they were the key people offering models for how the court should be organized.

When we begin to look at sources produced by courtiers as inextricably linked to their status and political concerns, we are also forced to reassess our understanding of the early imperial government more broadly. In short, courtiers wrote our sources for the court, a fact that has profound implications. As courtiers put forth their models of the imperial court, they did not stop at the walls of Chang'an. As we saw in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 especially, discussions of the court were often projected upon the organization and structure of the empire as a whole. The line between "literary" discussion of the court and "administrative" descriptions of officialdom writ large might not have been so clear to the people at court who produced both types of writings. As noted in the introduction, while modern academic discussion of the court has tended to distinguish between "court literature" on the one hand and the official documents of administration on the other, this dissertation has sought to demonstrate that much can be learned when we consider intersections between the two. At the very least, adopting this interpretive lens reminds us that administrative documents from the court did not merely reflect aims of centralized government. They also

[4] Paterson 2007, 131.

projected idealized and politically inflected constructions of the empire that we should not assume were entirely realized in institutional terms.

Bibliography

Adams, William Howard. 2012. *On Luxury: A Cautionary Tale.* Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books.

Allan, Sarah. 1981. *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China.* San Francisco, CA: Chinese Materials Center.

An Zuozhang 安作璋 and Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基. 1984-1985. *Qin Han guanzhi shi gao* 秦漢官制史稿. Jinan: Qi Lu shu she.

Aoki Shunsuke 青木俊介. 2007. "Kan Chōan jō Biō kyū no kinchū – so no ryōiki teki kōsatsu" 漢長安城未央宮の禁中—その領域的考察. *Gakushūin shigaku* 45 (3): 35-62.

Barbieri-Low, Anthony. 2000. "The Organization of Imperial Workshops During the Han Dynasty." Ph.D. Dissertation: Princeton University.

Barmé, Geremie. 2012. *The Forbidden City.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bartlett, Beatrice. 1991. *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China, 1723-1820.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bastid-Bruguière, Marianne. 2013. "Réceptions et fêtes dans les cours de China, du Japon, et de l'Europe au XIX siècle." Conference paper, "Cité Interdite, Palais impériaux et Cours royales: Comparaison entre les symbols du pouvoir imperial et monarchique en Orient et en Occident," Université du Littoral Côte d'Opale, Boulogne-sur-mer, September 25-28, 2013.

Bielenstein, Hans. 1980. *The Bureaucracy of Han Times.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bodde, Derk. 1975. *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances during the Han Dynasty, 206 BC-AD 220.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Brown, Miranda. 2007. *The Politics of Mourning in Early China.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bujard, Marianne. 1997. "Le 《Traité des sacrifices》 du Hanshu et la mise en place de la religion d'État des Han." *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 84: 111-27.

Bujard, Marianne. 2000. *La sacrifice au ciel dans la Chine ancienne: Théorie et pratique sous les Han occidentaux.* Paris: École française de l'extrême orient.

Bujard, Marianne. 2008. "State and Local Cults in Han Religion." In *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, edited by John Legerwey and Marc Kalinowski, 777-811. Leiden: Brill.

Bumke, Joachim. 1991. *Courtly Culture: Literature and Society in the High Middle Ages.* Thomas Dunlap, trans. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Campbell, Aurelia. 2010. "The Form and Function of Western Han Dynasty Ticou Tombs."

Artibus Asiae 70 (2): 227-56.

Cao Lüning 曹旅寧. 2008. "Zhangjiashan 336 hao Han mu 'Chao lü' de ji ge wenti" 張家山 336 號漢墓「朝律」的幾個問題. *Guizhou shifan daxue xue bao* (*shehui kexue ban*) (4):

Chang, Michael. 2007. *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680-1785*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Chen, Jack Wei. 2010. *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Chen Suzhen 陳蘇鎮. 2011. Chunqiu *yu "Han dao": Liang Han zhengzhi yu zhengzhi wenhua yanjiu* 《春秋》與「漢道」：兩漢政治與政治文化研究. Beijing: Zhonghua.

Chen Zhi 陳直. 1979. *Han shu xin zheng* 漢書新證. Tianjin: Tianjin ren min chu ban she.

Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123-1195). 2002. *Yonglu* 雍錄, punctuated and edited by Huang Yongnian 黃永年. Beijing: Zhonghua.

Crone, Patricia. 1989. *Pre-Industrial Societies*. Oxford and New York: Blackwell.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mark and Michael Nylan. 2003. "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions Through Exemplary Figures in Early China." *T'oung Pao*, 89 (1/3): 59-99.

Dawson, Raymond. 1967. *The Chinese Chameleon: An Analysis of European Conceptions of Chinese Civilization*. London: Oxford University Press.

de Crespigny, Rafe. 2007 (1981). "Inspection and Surveillance Officials Under the Two Han Dynasties," Second Edition, for Internet. www.anu.edu/au/asianstudies/decrespigny/Inspection _1981_for_Internet.doc (accessed March 22, 2012). First edition in *State and Law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger*, edited by Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke, 40-79. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz.

Dong Pingjun 董平均. 2007. *Chutu Qin lü Han lü suo jian feng jun shi yi zhidu yanjiu* 出土秦律漢律所見封君食邑制度研究. Haerbin: Heilongjiang renmin.

Duindam, Jeroen, Tülay Artan, and Metin Kunt, eds. 2011. *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective*. Leiden: Brill.

Duindam, Jeroen. 1994. *Myths of Power: Norbert Elias and the Early Modern European Court*. Lorri S. Granger and Gerard T. Moran, trans. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Duindam, Jeroen. 2003. *Vienna and Versailles: The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals, 1550-1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Durrant, Stephen W. 1995. *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian*. Albany:

State University of New York Press.

Elias, Norbert. 2006. (1969, first written in 1933). *The Court Society*. Trans. Edmund Jepbcott. Ed. Stephen Mennell. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Elias, Norbert. 2000 (1936-9, 1969). *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*. Edmund Jepbcott, trans. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom, and Stephen Mennell, eds. Oxford (UK) and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers.

Er shi wu shi bu bian 二十五史補編. 1937. Volume 1. Shanghai: Kaiming shu dian.

Frainais-Maitre, Marie-Julie. 2013. "The *Edifying and Curious Letters*: Jesuit China and French Philosophy." In *The Chinese Cameleon Revisited: From the Jesuits to Zhang Yimou*. Edited by Zheng Yangwen. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 30-57.

Fu Juyou 傅舉有 and Chen Songchang 陳松長. 1992. *Mawangdui Han mu wen wu* 馬王堆漢墓文物. Volume 1. Changsha: Hunan chu ban she.

Fukui Shigemasa 福井重雅. 1988. *Kandai kanri tōyō seido no kenkyū* 漢代官吏登用制度の研究. Tokyo: Sōbunsha.

Fukui Shigemasa. 2005. *Kandai Jukyō no shiteki kenkyū : Jukyō no kangakuka o meguru teisetsu no saikentō* 漢代儒教の史的研究 : 儒教の官學化をめぐる定說の再檢討. Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin.

Fukunaga Yoshitaka 福永善隆. 2011. "Zen Kan ni okeru naichō no keisei – rōkan taifu no hensen wo chūxin to shite" 前漢における内朝の形成—郎官・大夫の変遷を中心として. *Shigaku zasshi* 120 (August): 1-39.

Fukuyama, Francis. 2011. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuamn Times to the French Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Gale, Esson, trans. and ed. 1967. *Discourses on Salt and Iron: A Debate on State Control of Commerce and Industry in Ancient China, Chapter I-XXVIII*. Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Company.

Gan Huaizhen 甘懷真. 2003. *Huang quan, li yi yu jing dian quanshi: Zhongguo gudai zhengzhi shi yanjiu* 皇權, 禮儀與經典詮釋 : 中國古代政治史研究. Taipei: Ximalaya yanjiu fazhan jijinhui.

Gao Chongwen 高崇文. 2006. "Shi lun xian Qin liang Han sangzang lisu de yanbian" 試論先秦兩漢喪葬禮俗的演變. *Kaogu xue bao* (4): 447-72.

Geertz, Clifford. 1983. "Centers, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power." In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, by Clifford Geertz. New York: Basic Books.

Gibbon, Edward. 1985 (1776-88). *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York, NY: Penguin

Classics.

Giele, Enno. 2005. "Signatures of 'Scribes' in Early Imperial China." *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatiques* 59 (1): 353-387.

Giele, Enno. 2006. *Imperial Decision-making and Communication in Early China: A Study of Cai Yong's* Duduan. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Guojia wenwu ju gu wenxian yanjiu shi 國家文物局古文獻研究室, Hebei sheng bowuguan 河北省博物館, Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo 河北省文物研究所, and Dingxian Han mu zhujian zhengli zu 定縣漢墓竹簡整理組. 1981. "Ding xian 40 hao Han mu chutu zhujian jianjie" 定縣 40 號漢墓出土竹簡簡介. *Wenwu* (8): 11-13.

Habberstad, Luke. Forthcoming. "Text, Performance, and Spectacle: The Funeral Procession of Marquis Yi of Zeng, 433 BC." *Early China* 38.

Han Feizi zhuzi suoyin 韓非子逐字索引. 2000. Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute for Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, No. 42. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press.

Harkness, Ethan. 2011. *Cosmology and the Quotidian: Day Books in Early China.* Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest UMI (Number 3487616).

He Qinggu 何清谷, ed. and annot. 2006 (1993). *Sanfu huang tu jiao zhu* 三輔黃圖校注. Xi'an: San Qin.

He Youzu 何有祖. 2006. "Anhui Tianchang Xi Han mu suo jian Xi Han mu du guankui" 安徽天長西漢墓所見西漢木牘管窺. *Bamboo and Silk Manuscripts* (www.bsm.org.cn). Article URL: http://www.bsm.org.cn/show_article.php?id=488 (accessed June 5, 2014).

Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo 河北省文物研究所. 1981. "Hebei Ding xian 40 hao Han mu fajue jian bao" 河北定縣 40 號漢墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (8): 1-10.

Hebei sheng wenwu yanjiu suo 河北省文物研究所 and Luquan shi wenwu baoguan suo 鹿泉市文物保管所. 2006. *Gaozhuang Han mu* 高莊漢墓. Beijing: Kexue.

Ho, Kenneth P. H. 1976. "A Study of the Didactic Function of Han *Fu* on Hunts and on Capitals." *Journal of Oriental Studies* (2) July: 172-82.

Hölkeskamp, Karl-J. 2010. *Reconstructing the Roman Republic: An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research*, trans. Henry Heimann-Gordon. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hou, Xudong 侯旭東. 2008. "Zhongguo gudai zhuanzhi shuo de zhishi kaogu" 中國古代專制說的知識考古. *Jindai shi yanjiu* 4: 4-28.

Hsing, I-tien. 2013. "Qin-Han Census and Tax Corvée Administration: Notes on Newly Discovered Materials." In *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*, edited by Yuri Pines, Gideon Shelach, Lothar von Falkenhausen, and Robin D. S. Yates, 155-86. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Huang Zhanyue 黃展岳. 2008 (1986). "Xi Han Qi wang mu qiwu keng chutu qi ming kaoshi" 西漢齊王墓器物坑出土器銘考釋. In *Xian Qin liang Han kaogu luncong* 先秦兩漢考古論叢, Huang Zhanyue, 108-22. Beijing: Kexue.

Hubei sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 湖北省文物考古研究所 and Suizhou shi kaogu duibian 隨州市考古隊編. 2006. *Suizhou Kongjiapo Han mu jian du* 隨州孔家坡漢墓簡牘. Beijing: Wenwu.

Hulsewé, A. F. P. 1955. *Remnants of Han Law*. Leiden: Brill.

Hulsewé, A. F. P. "Ch'in and Han Law." In *Cambridge History of China*, *vol. 1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC-AD 220*, edited by Dennis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, 520-44.

Hulsewé, A. F. P. 1989. "Founding Fathers and Yet Forgotten Men: A Closer Look at the Tables of the Nobility in the *Shih chi* and the *Han shu*." *T'oung Pao*. 75 (1/3): 43-126.

Hulsewé, A. F. P. 1993. "*Han shu* 漢書." In *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, edited by Michael Loewe, 129-36. Berkeley, CA: Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

Hunan sheng bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 湖南省文物考古研究所. 2004. *Changsha Mawangdui er, san hao Han mu* 長沙馬王堆二，三號漢墓. Beijing: Wenwu.

Jaeger, C. Stephen. *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 950-1210*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

Jiang Baolian 姜寶蓮 and Qin Jianming 秦建明, eds. 2004. *Han Zhongguan zhu qian yi zhi* 漢鐘官鑄錢遺址. Beijing: Kexue.

Jiao Nanfeng 焦南峰. 2012. "Qin, Xi Han di wang ling fengtu yanjiu de xin renshi" 秦，西漢帝王陵封土研究的新認識. *Wenwu* (12): 52-58.

Jiao Nanfeng 焦南峰. 2013. ""Tong zhi jing shi' – Dayunshan Xi Han wangling xingzhi chu shi" 同制京師－大雲山西漢王陵形制初識. *Dongnan wenhua* (1): 74-80.

Kalinowski, Mark. 2010. "Divination and Astrology: Received Texts and Excavated Manuscripts." In *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, edited by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, 339-66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kamiya Masakazu 紙屋正和. 1974. "Zen Kan shokō ōkoku no kansei – naishi wo chūshin ni shite" 前漢諸候王国の官制—内史を中心について. *Kyūshū daikgaku tōyōshi ronshū* (3): ??-??

Kamiya Masakazu 紙屋正和. 2009. *Kan jidai ni okeru gun ken sei no tenkai* 漢時代における郡県制の展開. Kyoto: Hyōyūshoten.

Kern, Martin. 2001. "Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transitions of *Wen* in Early China." *T'oung Pao* 87 (1-3): 43-91.

Kern, Martin. 2003. "The 'Biography of Sima Xiangru' and the Question of the *Fu* in Sima Qian's *Shiji*." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123.2: 303-16.

Kern, Martin, ed. 2005. *Text and Ritual in Early China.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Kern, Martin. 2009. "Literature: Early China." In *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America,* edited by Haihui Zhang, Zhaohui Xue, Shuyong Jiang, and Gary Lance Lugar. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies: 292-316.

Kern, Martin. 2014. "Creating a Book and Performing it: The "Yao Lüe" Chapter of the *Huainanzi* as a Western Han Fu." In *The* Huainanzi *and Textual Production in Early China*, edited by Sarah A. Queen and Michael Puett, 125-50. Leiden: Brill.

Knechtges, David. 1970-71. "Wit, Humor, and Satire in Early Chinese Literature (to A.D. 220)." *Monumenta Serica* 29: 79-98.

Knechtges, David. 1976. *The Han Rhapsody: A Study of the Fu of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.-A.D. 18).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knechtges, David. 1982. *Wen hsuan, or, Selections of Refined Literature, Volume 1: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Knechtges, David. 1987. *Wen hsuan, or, Selections of Refined Literature, Volume 2: Rhapsodies on Sacrifices, Hunting, Travel, Sightseeing, Palaces and Halls, Rivers and Seas.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Knechtges, David. 1996. *Wen hsuan, or, Selections of Refined Literature, Volume 3: Rhapsodies on Natural Phenomena, Birds and Animals, Aspirations and Feelings, Sorrowful Laments, Literature, Music, and Passions.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Knechtges, David. 1999. "Criticism of the Court in Han Dynasty Literature." In *Selected Essays on Court Culture in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, edited by Yaofu Lin, 51-77. Taipei: Taiwan University Press.

Knechtges, David and Eugene Vance, eds. 2005. *Rhetoric and the Discourses of Power in Court Culture: China, Europe, and Japan.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Korolkov, Maxim. 2012. "'Greeting Tablets' in Early China: Some Traits of the Communicative Etiquette of Officialdom in Light of Newly Excavated Inscriptions." *T'oung Pao* 98: 295-348.

Kumagai Shigezō 熊谷滋三. 1996. "Zen Kan ni okeru 'Bani kōsha' to 'Kigi bani'" 前漢における「蛮夷降者」と「帰義蛮夷」. *Tōyō bunka kenkyūjo kiyō* 134 (Dec 1997): 19-71.

Kumagai Shigezō 熊谷滋三. 2001. "Zen Kan no tenkaku • taikō rei • daikōrō" 前漢の典客•大行令•大鴻臚. *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 59 (4, March): 69-103.

Lai, Guolong. 2002. "The Baoshan Tomb: Religious Transitions in Art, Ritual, and Text During the Warring States Period (480-221 B.C.E." Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, Los Angeles.

Lao Gan 劳幹. 1948. "Lun Han dai de neichao yu waichao" 論漢代的內朝與外朝. *Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo ji kan* (13): 227-67.

Lévi, Jean, trans. and ed. 2010. *Dispute sur le sel et le fer*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Lewis, Mark Edward. 1999. "The Feng and Shan Sacrifices of Emperor Wu of the Han." In *State and Court Ritual in China*. Joseph P. McDermott, ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 50-80.

Lewis, Mark Edward. 2007. *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Lewis, Mark Edward. 2009. "Gift Circulation and Charity in Ancient China and the Roman Empire." In *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, edited by Walter Scheidel, 120-36. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leys, Simon, trans. and ed. 1997. *The Analects of Confucius*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Lianyungang shi bowuguan 連雲港市博物館, Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan jianbo yanjiu zhongxin 中國社會科學院簡帛研究中心, Donghai xian bowuguan 東海縣博物館, and Zhongguo wenwu yanjiu suo 中國文物研究所. 1997. *Yinwan Han mu jiandu* 尹灣漢墓簡牘. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju.

Li Kaiyuan 李開元. 2000. *Han diguo de jianli yu Liu Bang jituan: Jun gong shouyi jiceng yanjiu* 漢帝國的建立與劉邦集團：軍功受益階層研究. Beijing: Sanlian.

Li Ling 李零. 2011. "Zhongguo zui zao de 'sheng guan tu': Shuo Kongjiapo Han jian 'rishu' de 'ju guan tu' ji xiangguan cailiao" 中國最早的「升官圖」：說孔家坡漢簡「日書」的「居官圖」及相關材料. *Wenwu* (05): 68-79.

Li Lingfu 李令福. 2009. *Gu du Xi'an chengshi buju ji qi dili jichu* 古都西安城市佈局及其地理基礎. Beijing: Renmin.

Li Zebin 李則斌 and Chen Gang 陳剛. 2012. "Jiangsu Xiyi Dayunshan Han mu kaogu chenguo lunzheng hui ji yao" 江蘇盱眙大雲山漢墓考古成果論政會紀要. *Wenwu* (3): 87-96.

Lin Zhen'ai 林貞愛. 2001. *Yang Xiong ji jiao zhu* 揚雄集校注. Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chuban she.

Liu Pak-yuen. 1983. *Les institutions politiques et la lute pour le pouvoir au milieu de la dynastie des Han antérieurs*. Paris: Collège de France.

Liu Pak-yuen 廖伯源. 1998 (1986). "Xi Han huanggong suwei jingbei za kao" 西漢皇宮宿衛警備雜考. In *Lishi yu zhidu – Han dai zhengzhi zhidu shishi* 歷史與制度－漢代政治制度與試釋, 1-35. Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan.

Liu Pak-yuen 廖伯源. 1995. "Han dai daifu zhidu kao shi" 漢代大夫制度考釋. *Zhongguo lishi xue hui shixu jikan* 27: 139-59.

Liu Qingzhu 劉慶祝 and Li Yufang 李毓芳. 2003. *Han Chang'an cheng* 漢長安城. Beijing: Wenwu.

Liu Qingzhu 劉慶祝. 2004. "Xi Han Taihou chui lian ting zheng zhengju que zao – cong Weiyang gong, Changle gong de kaogu faxian lai kan Xi Han de 'er yuan zheng zhi'" 西漢太后垂簾證據確鑿－從未央宮，長樂宮的考古發現來看西漢的「二元政治」. *Xinhua wen gao* 9.

Liu Qingzhu 劉慶祝. 2006 (1995). "Han Chang'an cheng Weiyang Gong buju xingzhi chu lun" 漢長安城未央宮佈局形制初論. In *Han Chang'an cheng yi zhi yan jiu* 漢長安城遺址研究, edited by Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo Han Chang'an cheng gong zuo dui 中國社會科學院考古研究所漢長安城工作隊 and Xi'an shi Han Chang'an cheng yi zhi bao guan suo 西安市漢長安城遺址保管所, 483-95. Beijing: Kexue.

Liu Rui 劉瑞. 2007. "Xi Han Chang'an cheng de chaoxiang, zhoujian ji buju sixiang" 西漢長安城的朝向，軸線及佈局思想. *Wen shi* 79.2: 61-105.

Liu Rui 劉瑞. 2011. *Han Chang'an cheng de chaoxiang, zhouxian yu nan jiao li zhi jianzhu* 漢長安城的朝向，軸線與南郊禮制建築. Beijing: Zhonggui she hui ke xue.

Liu Rui 劉瑞 and Liu Tao 劉濤. 2010. *Xi Han zhuhou wang ling zhidu yanjiu* 西漢諸侯王陵制度研究. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chuban she.

Liu, Tseng-kuei. 2009. "Taboos: An Aspect of Belief in the Qin and Han." In *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD), Volume 2*, edited by John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, 881-948. Leiden: Brill.

Liu Zhendong 劉振東 and Zhang Jianfeng 張建鋒. 2006. "Xi Han Changle gong yizhi de faxian yu chubu yanjiu" 西漢長樂宮遺址的發祥與初步研究. *Kaogu* (10): 22-9.

Liu Zehua 劉澤化. 2000. *Zhongguo de wangquan zhu yi* 中國的王權主義. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin.

Llewellyn-Jones, Lloyd. 2002. "Eunuchs and the Royal Harem in Achaemenid Persia." In *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*, edited by S. Tougher, 19-49. London: Classical Press of Wales and Duckworth.

Lo, Andrew. 2004. "Official Aspirations: Chinese Promotion Games." In *Asian Games: The Art of Contest*, edited by Colin MacKenzie and Irving Finkel, 64-75. New York: Asia Society.

Loewe, Michael. 1960. "The Orders of Aristocratic Rank of Han China." *T'oung Pao* 48: 97-173.

Loewe, Michael. 1967. *Records of Han Administration*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Loewe, Michael. 1974. *Crisis and Conflict in Han China*. London: Allen and Unwyn.

Loewe, Michael. 1981. "The Authority of the Emperors of Ch'in and Han." In *State and Law in East Asia: Festschrift Karl Bünger*. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke, eds. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: 80-111.

Loewe, Michael. 1999a. "The Imperial Way of Death in Han China." In *State and Court Ritual in China*, edited by Joseph P. McDermott, 81-111. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loewe, Michael. 1999b. "The Heritage Left to the Empires." In *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, edited by Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy, 967-1032. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loewe, Michael. 2000. *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han, and Xin Periods*. Leiden: Brill.

Loewe, Michael. 2004. *The Men Who Governed Han China: Companion to A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han, and Xin Periods*. Leiden: Brill.

Loewe, Michael. 2008. "The Organs of Han Imperial Government: *zhongdu guan*, *duguan*, *xianguan*, and *xiandao guan*." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 71 (03): 509-28.

Loewe, Michael. 2010a. "Imperial Tombs." In *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, edited by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, 213-231. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loewe, Michael. 2010b. "Social Distinctions, Groups and Privileges." In *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, edited by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, 296-307. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Loewe, Michael. 2011. *Dong Zhongshu, a "Confucian Heritage and the* Chunqiu fanlu. Leiden: Brill.

Loewe, Michael. 2012. "Review of *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*, edited by Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe." *Journal of Chinese Studies* 54 (January): 348-56.

Luo Qingkang 羅慶康. 1988. "Shuiheng duwei zhidu kao shu" 水橫都尉制度考述. *Yiyang shi zhuan xue bao (zhe xue ban)* 益陽師專學報 (哲學版). 1: 13-20.

Lü Shihao 呂世浩. 2009. *Cong "Shi ji" dao "Han shu": zhuanzhe guocheng yu lishi yiyi* 從《史記》到《漢書》：轉折過程與歷史意義. Taipei: Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin.

Lüshi chunqiu zhuzi suoyin 呂氏春秋逐字索引. 1994. Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute for Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, No. 12. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press.

Lynn, Richard John, trans. 1994. *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the* I Ching *as Interpreted by Wang Bi.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Major, John, Sarah Queen, Andrew Seth Meyer, and Harold D. Roth, trans. and eds. 2010. *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Manning, Joseph Gilbert. 2010. *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt Under the Ptolemies.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McDermott, Joseph P., ed. 1999. *State and Court Ritual in China.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meguro Kyōko 目黒杏子. 2011. "Zen Kan Butei no junkō – saishi to kōtei kenryoku no shiten kara" 前漢武帝の巡幸−祭祀と皇帝権力の視点から. *Shirin* 94.4 (July): 37-70.

Mengzi zhuzi suoyin 孟子逐字索引. 1995. Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute for Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, No. 15. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press.

Miller, Allison Ruth. 2011. "Patronage, Politics, and the Emergence of Rock-Cut Tombs in Early Han China." Ph.D. Dissertation: Harvard University.

Nanjing bowuyuan 南京博物院 and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 盱眙縣文廣新局. 2012. "Jiangsu Xuyi xian Dayunshan Han mu" 江蘇盱眙縣大雲山漢墓. *Kaogu* (7): 53-59.

Nanjing bowuyuan 南京博物院 and Xuyi xian wenguang xinju 盱眙縣文廣新局. 2013. "Jiangsu Xuyi Dayunshan Jiangdu wang ling er hao mu fajue jianbao" 江蘇盱眙大雲山江都王陵二號墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (1): 25-66.

Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生. 1961. *Chūgoku kodai teikoku no keisei to kōzō; nijittō shakusei no kenkyū* 中国古代の帝国の形成と耕造：二十等爵制の研究. Tokyo: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai.

Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生. 1965 [1983]. "Butei no shi: 「En tetsu ron」no seiji shiteki haikei" 武

帝の死：「塩鉄論」の史的背景. In *Chūgoku kodai kokka to Higashi Ajia sekai*. Tōkyō: Tōkyō daigaku shuppankai: 193-233. Originally published in *Kodai shi kōza* (22) 1965.

Nishijima Sadao. 1986. "The Economic and Social History of Former Han." In *Cambridge History of China*, *vol. 1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC-AD 220*, edited by Dennis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, 545-607. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nylan, Michael. 1998-1999. "Sima Qian: A True Historian?" *Early China* 23-24 (1998-1999): 203-246.

Nylan, Michael. 1999. "A Problematic Model: The Han 'Orthodox Synthesis,' Then and Now." In *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Coinfucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, edited by Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson. Albany: State University of New York Press, 17-56.

Nylan, Michael. 2000. *The Five "Confucian" Classics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Nylan, Michael. 2001. "On the Politics of Pleasure." *Asia Major, 3rd Series*, 14 (p. 1): 73-124.

Nylan, Michael. 2005. "Toward an Archaeology of Writing: Text, Ritual, and the Culture of Public Display in the Classical Period (475 BCE-220 CE). In *Text and Ritual in Early China*. Martin Kern, ed. Seattle: University of Washington Press: 3-49.

Nylan, Michael. 2009. "Classics Without Canonization: Reflections on Classical Learning and Authority in Qin (221-210 BC) and Han (206 BC-AD 220). In *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han*, edited by John Legerwey and Marc Kalinowski, 721-77. Leiden: Brill.

Nylan, Michael. 2010. "The Art of Persuasion from 100 BCE to 100 CE." In *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, edited by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, 492-504. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nylan, Michael. Forthcoming. "Han View of the Qin Legacy and the Late Western Han 'Classical Turn.'" *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* (79-80).

Olberding, Amy and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds. 2011. *Mortality in Traditional Chinese Thought*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Paterson, Jeremy. 2007. "Friends in High Places: The Creation of the Court of the Roman Emperor." In *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, edited by A. J. S. Spawforth, 121-56. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peng Hao 彭浩, Chen Wei 陈伟, and Kudō Motoo 工藤元男. 2007. *Er nian lü ling yu zou yan shu: Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu chutu falü wenxian shi du* 二年律令與奏讞書：張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋讀. Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji.

Peng Hao 彭浩. 1993. "Hubei Jiangling chutu Xi Han jiandu gai shuo" 湖北江陵出土西漢簡牘

概説. In *Kankan kenkyū no genjō to tenbō: Kankan kenkyū kokusai shinpojūmu '92 hōkokusho* 漢簡研究の現状と展望：漢簡研究国際シンポジュウム'92 報告書, edited by Ōba Osamu 大庭脩, 166-73. Suita-shi: Kansai daigaku shuppanbu.

Peterson, Willard. 1994. "Ssu-ma Ch'ien as Cultural Historian." In *The Power of Culture: Studies in Chinese Cultural History*, edited by Willard J. Peterson, Andrew Plaks, and Ying-shih Yü, 70-79. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press.

Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pines, Yuri. 2000. "Disputers of the *Li*: Breakthroughs in the Concept of Ritual in Pre-Imperial China." *Asia Major* (Third Series). 13 (1): 1-41.

Pines, Yuri. 2002. "Friends or Foes: Changing Concepts of Ruler-Minister Relations and the Notion of Loyalty in Pre-Imperial China." *Monumenta Serica* 50, 35-74.

Pines, Yuri. 2009. *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

Pines, Yuri, Gideon Shelach, Lothar von Falkenhausen, and Robin D. S. Yates, eds. 2013. *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, Michèle. 1990. "Ateliers, patronage, et collections princières en Chine à l'époque Han." In *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 134 (2): 521-36.

Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, Michèle. 2010. "Urbanism." In Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (eds). *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 169-85.

Poo, Mu-chou. 1998. *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Poo, Mu-chou. 2013. "Religion and Religious Life of the Qin." In *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*, edited by Yuri Pines, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Gideon Shelach, and Robin D. S. Yates, 187-205. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Qin Jianming 秦建明. 2004. "Han Shanglin yuan yu Kunming chi" 漢上林苑與昆明池. *Wenbo* (3): 21-24.

Rawski, Evelyn. 1998. *The Last Emperors: A Social History of Qing Imperial Institutions*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Rawson, Jessica. 1999. "The Eternal Palaces of the Western Han: A New View of the Universe." *Artibus Asiae* 59 (1-2): 5-58.

Riegel, Jeffrey. 1995. "Do Not Serve the Dead as You Serve the Living: The *Lüshi chunqiu* Treatises

on Moderation in Burial." *Early China* (20): 301-30.

Roberts, Moss. 2013. "Balancing Power: The Ascent of the Vassal (*Chen*)." *Chinese Studies in History* 46 (4): 6-26.

Rouzer, Paul. 2006. "The Life of the Party: Theorizing Patrons and Clients in Early China." *Comparative Literature*, 56-69.

Rouzer, Paul. 2001. *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Schafer, Edwin. 1968. "Hunting Parks and Animal Enclosures in Ancient China." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. 11.3: 318-43.

Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo 陝西省考古研究所, ed. 2004. *Qin du Xianyang kaogu baogao* 秦都咸陽考古報告. Beijing: Kexue.

Shandong sheng Zibo shi bowuguan 山東省淄博市博物館. 1985. "Xi Han Qi wang mu sui zang qi wu keng" 西漢齊王墓隨葬器物坑. *Kaogu xue bao* (2): 223-66.

Shuihudi Qin mu zhujian zhengli xiaozu 睡虎地秦墓竹簡整理小組. 1990. *Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian* 睡虎地秦墓竹簡. Beijing: Wenwu.

Smith, Dennis. 2009. "Norbert Elias and *The Court Society*: From Gallapagos to Versailles via Quai des Orfèvres." Paper presented at conference, "Les cours en Europe: bilan historiographique. Colloque international." Centre de recherché du château de Versailles. Versailles, France, 24-26 September, 2009. Paper available at: http://homepages.lboro.ac.uk/~ssds3/d.smith/Norbert%20Elias%20and%20The%20Court%20Society.pdf (accessed May 15, 2014).

Smith, Rowland. 2007. "The Imperial Court of the Late Roman Empire, c. AD 300-c. AD 450." In *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, edited by A. J. S. Spawforth, 157-232. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spawforth, A. J. S., ed. 2007. *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steinhardt, Nancy. 1999. *Chinese Imperial City Planning.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Sterckx, Roel. 2008. "The Economics of Religion in Warring States and Early Imperial China." In *Early Chinese Religion, Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-AD 220)*, edited by John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, 839-80. Leiden: Brill.

Sun Xingyan 孫星衍 (1753-1818) and Zhou Tianyou 周天游. 2008 [1990]. *Han guan liu zhong* 漢官六種. Beijing: Zhonghua.

Swann, Nancy Lee, trans. and annot. 1950. *Food & Money in Ancient China: The Earliest Economic History of China to A.D. 25, Hanshu 24, With Related Texts, Hanshu 91 and Shih-chi 129*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, ed. 1982. *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* 中國歷史地圖集, *Volume 2: Qin, Xi Han, Dong Han shi qi* 秦，西漢，東漢時期. Shanghai: Di tu chu ban she.

Tao Fu 陶復. 2004. "Qin Xianyang gong di yi hao yizhi fuyuan wenti de chubu tantao" 秦咸陽宮第一號遺址復原問題的初步探討. In *Qin du Xianyang kaogu baogao* , edited by Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiu suo 陝西省考古研究所, 763-75. Beijing: Kexue.

Tatemi Satoshi 楯身智志. 2012. "Zen Kan no sōsei – teishitsu • shokō ōka kankei saikō" 前漢の宗正－帝室 • 诸侯王家関係再考. *Shigaku zasshi* 121 (3): 1-34.

Tian Tian 田天. Forthcoming. "The Suburban Sacrifice Reforms and the Evolution of the Imperial Sacrifices." In *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China*, edited by Michael Nylan and Griet Vankeerberghen. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Tianchang shi wenwu guanli suo 天長市文物管理所 and Tianchang shi bowuguan 天長市博物館. 2006. "Anhui Tianchang Xi Han mu fajue jianbao" 安徽天長西漢墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (11): 4-21.

Tomita Kenichi 富田健一. 2005. "Zen Kan Butei ki no sokkin seiji to 'kugyō' " 前漢武帝の側近政治と「公卿」. *Niigata daigaku kyōiku ningen kagaku bu kiyō* (8) 1: 13-29.

Tsai, Shih-shan Henry. 2002. "Eunuch Power in Imperial China." In *Eunuchs in Antiquity and Beyond*. Shaun Tougher, ed. London: Classical Press of Wales and Duckworth: 221-34.

Van Auken, Newell Ann. 2010 (2007). "Could 'Subtle Words' Have Conveyed 'Praise and Blame'? The Implications of Formal Regularity and Variation in *Spring and Autumn* (*Chun qiu*) Records." *Early China* (31): 47-111.

Van Ess, Hans. 2007. "The Imperial Court in Han China." In *The Court and Court Society in Ancient Monarchies*, edited by A. J. S. Spawforth, 233-66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Van Ess, Hans. 2013. "Emperor Wu of the Han and the First August Emperor of Qin in Sima Qian's Shiji." In *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*, edited by Pines, et. al, 239-57. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Vankeerberghen, Griet. 2010. "Texts and Authors in the *Shiji*." In *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, edited by Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe, 461-79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vankeerberghen, Griet. 2013. "Kinship and Kingship in Han China: The 120 CE Case Against Liu Chang, King of Lecheng." In *Facing the Monarch: Modes of Advice in the Early Chinese Court*, edited by Garrett P. S. Olberding, 203-36. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center.

Vankeerberghen, Griet. Forthcoming. "Pining for the West: Chang'an in the Life of Kings and Their Families During Chang'an's Reign." *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Wang Shejiao 王社教. 1995. "Xi Han Shanglin yuan de fanwei ji xiangguan wenti" 西漢上林苑德範圍及相關問題. *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* (3): 223-33.

Wang Xueli 王學理. 1999. *Xianyang di du ji* 咸陽帝都記. Xi'an: San Qin.

Wang Yü-ch'üan. 1949. "An Outline of the Central Government of the Former Han Dynasty." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 12 (1/2, June): 134-87.

Warner, Karl Ferdinand. 1980. "Missus-Marchio-Comes: Entre l'adminisration centrale et l'administration locale de l'Empire carolingien." In *Histoire comparée de l'administration (IV-XVIII siècles*). W Paravicini and K.F. Werner, ed. Munich: Artemis Verlag: 191-239.

Washio Yūko 鷲尾祐子. 2004. "Zen Kan kōshi seido kenkyū josetsu – Seitei ji kōshi kaikaku yi zen ni tsuite" 前漢郊祀制度序説—成帝時郊祀制度改革以前について. *Chūgoku kodai shi ronshū* (3): 1-32.

Watanabe Masatomo 渡邉将智. 2010. "Go Kan Rakuyōjō ni okeru kōtei • shokan no seiji kōkan" 後漢洛陽城における皇帝・諸官の政治空間. *Shigaku zasshi* 119 (12): 1-38.

Watson, Burton. 1958. *Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Grand Historian of China.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Wu, Hung. 1992. "Art in a Ritual Context: Rethinking Mawangdui." *Early China* 17: 111-44.

Wu, Hung. 2010. *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs.* London: Reaktion Books.

Xi'an shi wenwu guanli weiyuanhui 西安市文物管理委員會. 1963. "Xi'an Sanqiaozhen Gaoyaocun chutu de Xi Han tongqi qun" 西安三橋鎮高窰村出土的西漢銅器群. *Kaogu* (2): 62-70.

Xiaogan diqu di er qi yigong yinong wenwu kaogu xunlian ban 孝感地區第二期亦工亦農文物考古訓練班. 1976. "Hubei Yunmeng Shuihudi shiyi hao Qin mu fajue jianbao" 湖北雲夢睡虎地十一號秦墓發掘簡報. *Wenwu* (6): 1-14.

Xu Fuguan 徐復觀. 2001 [1978]. *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史, vol. 1. Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue.

Xu Fuguan. 2001 [1980]. *Liang Han sixiang shi*, vol 3. *Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue.*

Xu Weimin 徐衛民. 1991. "Xi Han Shanglin yuan gong dian tai guan kao" 西漢上林苑宮殿台觀

考. *Wen bo* 4: 34-41.

Xu Weimin 徐衛民. 2011. *Qin Han ducheng yu ziran huanjing guanji yanjiu* 秦漢都城與自然環境關係研究. Beijing: Kexue.

Xu Zhengkao 徐正考. 2007. *Han dai tongqi mingwen zonghe yanjiu* 漢代銅器銘文綜合研究. Beijing: Zuo jia chubanshe.

Xunzi zhuzi suoyin 荀子逐字索引. 1996. Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute for Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, No. 26. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press.

Yamada Katsuyoshi 山田勝芳. 1984. "Zen Kan Butei dai no zaisei kikō kaikaku" 前漢武帝代の財政機構改革. *Tōhō daigaku tōyō shi ronshu*. (1) January: 33-64.

Yamada Katsuyoshi 山田勝芳. 1993. *Shin Kan zaisei shūnyū no kenkyū* 秦漢財政収入の研究. Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin.

Yan, Buke 閻步克. 2009. *Cong jue benwei dao guan benwei: Qin Han guanliao pinwei jiegou yanjiu* 從爵本位到官本位:秦漢官僚品位結構研究. Beijing: Sanlian.

Yan Changgui 宴昌貴. 2008. "Kongjiapo Han jian 'ri shu' tian lao pian jian zhen" 孔家坡漢簡《日書》天牢篇箋證. Conference paper, International Forum on Bamboo and Silk Documents, University of Chicago. URL: http://cccp.uchicago.edu/archive/2008_IFBSD/Yan_Changgui_2008_IFBSD.pdf

Yang Zhenhong 楊振紅. 2011a. "Jizhuang Han mu 'Ben Qie' shu du de shidu ji xiangguan wenti" 紀莊漢墓「賁且」書牘的釋讀及相關問題. In *Jianbo yanjiu* 2009 簡帛 2009 年, 1-13. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chuban she.

Yang Zhenhong 楊振紅. 2011b. "Tianchang Jizhuang Han mu Xie Meng de ming, zi, shenfen ji yu muzhu ren guanxi de lice – Jizhuang Han mu mudu suo fanying de Xi Han difang shehui yanjiu zhi er" 天長紀莊漢墓謝孟的名，字，身份及與墓主人關係蠡測－紀莊漢墓木牘所反映的西漢地方社會研究之二. *Zhejiang xue kan* (6): 42-49.

Yantielun zhuzi suoyin 鹽鐵論逐字索引. 1994. Chinese University of Hong Kong, Institute for Chinese Studies, Ancient Chinese Texts Concordance Series, No. 14. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press.

Yao Shengmin 姚生民. 2002. "Yunyang gong • Linguang gong • Ganquan gong" 雲陽宮・林光宮・甘泉宮. *Wenbo* (4): 50-54.

Yates, Robin D. S. 1995. "State Control of Bureaucrats Under the Qin: Techniques and Procedures." *Early China* 20: 331-65.

Yates, Robin D. S. 2012-13. "The Qin Slips and Boards From Well No. 1, Liye, Hunan: A Brief Introduction to the Qin Qianling County Archives." *Early China* 35-36: 291-329.

Yates, Robin D. S. 2013. "The Changing Status of Slaves in the Qin-Han Transition." In *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited*, edited by Yuri Pines, Lothar von Falkenhausen, Gideon Shelach, and Robin D. S. Yates, 206-223. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Yi Ping 易平. 1989. "Shi ji • jiang xiang biao" daoshu yi li kao bian 《史記 • 將相表》倒書義例考辨. *Anhui shi daxue bao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 3

Zhang Zhenze 張震澤, ed. and annot. 1993. *Yang Xiong ji jiao zhu* 揚雄集校注. Shanghai: Shanghai guji.

Yoneda Kenshi 米田健志. 2000. "Nihon ni okeru Kandai kanryō sei kenkyū" 日本における漢代官僚制研究. *Chūgoku shigaku* 10 (Dec): 167-188.

Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan kaogu yanjiusuo 中國社會科學院考古研究所. 1996. *Han Chang'an cheng Weiyang gong: 1980-1989 nian kao gu fa jue bao gao* 漢長安城未央宮 : 1980-1989 年考古發掘報告. Beijing: Zhongguo da bai ke quan shu.

Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 中國社會科學院考古研究所. 2006. "Xi'an shi Han Chang'an cheng Changle gong si hao jianzhu yizhi" 西安市漢長安城長樂宮四號建築遺址. *Kaogu* (10): 30-9.

Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 中國社會科學院考古研究所. 2011. "Xi'an shi Han Chang'an cheng Changle gong si hao jianzhu yizhi" 西安市漢長安城長樂宮四號建築遺址. *Kaogu* (06): ??

Zhongguo shehui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 and Hebei sheng wenwu guanli chu 河北省文物管理處. 1980. *Mancheng Han mu fajue baogao* 滿城漢墓發掘報告. Beijing: Wenwu chuban she.

Zhongguo she hui ke xue yuan kao gu yan jiu suo 中國社會科學院考古研究所 and Nihon Nara kokuritsu bunkazai kenkyūjo 日本奈良国立文化財研究所. 2007. *Han Chang'an cheng Gui gong: 1996-2001 nian kao gu fa jue bao gao* 漢長安城桂宮：1996- 2001 年考古發掘報告.

Zhu Zongbin 祝總斌. 1990. *Liang Han Wei Jin Nanbei chao zaixiang zhidu yanjiu* 兩漢魏晉南北朝宰相制度研究. Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue.