THE POLITICS OF MOURNING IN EARLY CHINA

MIRANDA BROWN
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STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS
For my husband
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All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

When possible, Chinese text is transcribed as it appears in the original edition. When I have substituted a character for the nonstandard character that appears in the original text, the substitution is placed in brackets. When the character cannot be transcribed, or cannot be transcribed as a standard character, the notation [?] appears. Finally, the notation [...] is used to indicate a lacuna in the text.
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Acknowledgments

The process of writing a book may be long, but it is not solitary. Over the years, I have consulted numerous teachers and colleagues, beginning with my teacher David Keightley (to whom I owe this life of the mind). I am also indebted to David Johnson for teaching me everything I know about Chinese social history, and to Kwong-loi Shun for continuing to look after my professional welfare long after I completed my PhD. In addition, I am deeply grateful to Michael Nylan. Besides serving as a careful reader, role model, and teacher, Michael has been an exemplary friend.

In the early China field, I am indebted to three colleagues who commented upon what ultimately became the last draft of my dissertation: Lothar von Falkenhausen, Ed Shaughnessy, and Martin Kern. Their detailed and candid comments convinced me to scrap most of the dissertation and move in other directions for this study. Lothar impressed upon me the need for greater precision, Ed encouraged me to focus much more on the inscriptions, and Martin persuaded me to think about tone and rhetoric. Martin also paid me the compliment of traveling from Princeton, New Jersey, to New York City on a cold Saturday morning to offer further suggestions on an early version of chapter 4, along with his encouragement.

I have also been fortunate to receive the feedback of numerous colleagues who commented on portions of the manuscript. They include: Kevin Adams, Erica Brindley, Paul Goldin, Li Feng, Larissa Heinrich, Bob Harrist, Eric Hutton, Hou Xudong, Janam Murkherjee, Lai Guolong, Kevin Landdeck, Li Bozhong, Luo Shaodan, Jeff Richey, Conrad Schirokauer, Shao Dan, Nick Tackett, Jun Uchida, and R. Bin Wong. My erstwhile correspondent Rafe de Crespigny not only provided critical feedback on parts of the manuscript, but also patiently answered all of my many questions about Han administration. Michael Puett has also been an unusually supportive colleague, offering strategic advice and help with the publication process, along with unwavering support. Last but not least, I must single out Bob Hymes for his help with this manuscript. Although Bob was busy with his duties as Chair of his department
at Columbia, he took time out on not one, but two weekends to attend presenta-
tions and provide detailed comments on this study. Bob brought the broader
perspective of a Song historian—a perspective that forced me to rethink the
ultimate significance of my findings.

Roger Ames came to my rescue at a critical juncture of this project. Last
summer, I was beginning to wonder if the manuscript—languishing on the
desks of editors and lost in delivery trucks for some nine months—would ever
go into review. I am deeply grateful to Roger for his willingness to shepherd
this book through the process of publication. He introduced me to Nancy
Ellegate and Allison Lee at SUNY, whose professionalism has made the pub-
lication process infinitely easier. I am also obliged to the two anonymous read-
ers commissioned by SUNY Press for their detailed, candid, and unusually
balanced comments on the manuscript.

The University of Michigan has been an especially supportive environ-
ment for research. In addition to providing funding that facilitated the publi-
cation of this book, the university has also afforded many attentive colleagues.
Beyond my home department, James Lee, Louis Loeb, Vic Lieberman, Marty
Powers, Tomi Tonomura, Norman Yoffee, and Yu Xie each read different parts
of the manuscript and offered their reactions. (Yu Xie gets special mention
for his audible cheerleading.) Within the department, I also benefited from
the guidance of Ken Ito, Christi Merrill, Lydia Liu, Donald Lopez, David
Rolston, and Jonathan Zwicker. Don’s encouraging reading of the introduc-
tion gave me the confidence to stay my course last summer. Lydia’s reflections
on chapter 5 helped me to move beyond the old framework of *Gesellschaft*
and *Gemeinschaft*. David’s questions on problems relating to the survival of
sources, coupled with Jon’s insistence that I pay more attention to the mate-
riality of writing, bore fruit in chapter 2. Ken sat down with me and helped
me brainstorm a new conclusion. Three senior colleagues also deserve special
thanks: Bill Baxter, Shuen-fu Lin, and Nancy Florida. In addition to read-
ing the entire manuscript twice, Shuen-fu assisted me in deciphering Song
texts. An historian of Indonesia, Nancy read the entire manuscript with an
eye to making it accessible to the nonspecialist reader. And in her capacity as
Chairwoman of Asian Languages and Cultures, she came up with the idea of
organizing a manuscript workshop, which made it possible for me to enlist
the help of my colleagues throughout the university. I am especially indebted
to Bill, who read all of the early drafts of the manuscript, offering frank crit-
cisms with admirable tact. But perhaps more important, he has served as my
chief interlocutor; indeed, the very design of this book owes much to our many
conversations about early China.

Finally, I would like to thank my editor, Melanie B. D. Klein, who edited
the manuscript with unusual efficiency and grace.
### Chronology

**SELECTED CHRONOLOGY OF CHINESE DYNASTIES AND PERIODS RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY**

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Introduction

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family
is unhappy in its own way
—Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

As Zhao Yongjiang 趙永姜 (d. 187 CE) lay dying, her son received an official commission to fight insurgents at the frontier. According to Cai Yong 程邕 (132–192), the great eulogist who wrote the funerary inscription for Zhao in which this story is recounted, Zhao’s son went to fight because she insisted. Although weak, Zhao summoned all of her strength and rose up as if cured in order to encourage her son to go to his post. Not long after he left, Zhao died; the news of her final illness reached her son too late for him to return home while she was still alive. If we believe Cai’s inscription, Zhao’s son deeply regretted his absence from home. What seems to have bothered him most was the fact that he could not be by his mother’s side during her final moments. “My eyes did not look down upon her as her breath was cut off,” he complained. “My hands did not touch the jades placed in her mouth. The others laid out the garment and shroud, but I did not inspect it. They attached the ropes and outer coffin, but I did not witness it.”

What is striking about this inscription, which may seem on the surface to recount little more than a private family drama, was not that Zhao’s son regretted that he was unable to be with his mother when she died; rather it is that this son, an official from a family with a history of dynastic service, created a public testimony of his personal grief for his mother. After all, the inscription was probably like most funerary monuments of the era: it was cut into a large stone stele and set out in front of a tomb, where it was intended to be read by future generations. In fact, inscriptions like this are far from anomalous; subsequent research revealed that this emphasis on the mother-son relationship was quite common in the Han 漢 dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). Indeed, in dynastic records and public monuments, accounts of officials mourning for mothers outnumber those for fathers by more than two to one. Even the most moving line
of the inscription—“My hands did not touch the jades placed in her mouth”—does not appear to have been unique. The same phrase is included in another account of a man mourning his mother, which suggests that Zhao’s eulogist was merely making use of an existing trope.

My surprise at the prevalence of accounts of officials mourning for their mothers was rooted in my initial assumption that Han officials would have instead emphasized mourning for fathers. I reasoned that mourning for fathers would have been emphasized not only because the father-son relationship was stressed over that between mother and son in the classical (sometimes called “Confucian”) texts, but also because fulfilling obligations to one’s father should have been crucial for establishing credibility as a loyal official in traditional Chinese political life. After all, in an influential textbook, John King Fairbank described family life as the training ground for obedient subjects of the emperor, who was regarded merely as a father “writ large.” Similarly, the Classic of Filial Piety (孝經), a canonical text of uncertain date memorized by children in China even to the twentieth century, comments that an official should serve his lord as he would his father.

My initial assumptions about classical (or “Confucian”) views on filial piety have had a long history in studies of premodern China. In his very influential General Description of China (Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, 1735), Jesuit cartographer Jean-Baptiste Du Halde (1674–1743) saw filial piety as the linchpin of the Qing (1644–1911) state. “The political government of China,” he remarked with no shortage of admiration, “entirely turns on the duty of parents to their children, and of children to their parents; the emperor is called the father of the empire, the viceroy is father of the province over which he presides, and the Mandarin of the city that he governs.” Du Halde went on to observe “the great veneration and ready obedience” of officers to this “general principle.” For Du Halde, mourning practices served to inculcate the young with proper reverence for ancestors, parents, and ultimately state authority. Commenting on the assiduous care that went into regulating funerals and mourning periods, he noted, “On this account they have determined what ought to be observed in the time of mourning, and at funerals, and what honors ought to be paid to deceased relations.”

The perspectives of eighteenth-century commentators no doubt shaped subsequent views of the Chinese body politic. Early-twentieth-century views echo those of Du Halde in stressing the importance of filial piety in the political statecraft of premodern China. In two works made available to English readers as Religions of China and Economy and Society, Max Weber (1864–1920) argued that Chinese statecraft before the modern era rested largely on a single conception of filial piety, which I will conveniently call the “lord-father analogy.” This concept of filial piety had three key components. First, classical authors and political elites considered the father-son relationship of primary importance, and thus thought of filial piety first and foremost in terms of a son’s relationship
to his father. Second, a man owed his lord or bureaucratic superior the same personal obedience and loyalty he owed his father. As Weber states in *Economy and Society*: “Just as patrimonialism had its genesis in the piety of the children of the house toward the patriarch’s authority, so Confucianism bases the subordination of the officials to the ruler, of the lower to the higher-ranking officials, and particularly of the subjects to the officials and the ruler, on the cardinal virtue of filial piety." Third, official duty and familial obligation had to be analogous, since filial sons made for loyal ministers. Filial piety, as Weber noted, was “the virtue from which all others issue,” and provided “the test and guarantee of adherence to unconditional discipline, the most important status obligation of the bureaucracy.” For Weber, the clearest expression of this analogy could be found in classical protocol, which mandated that men should mourn lords and fathers in the same way and for the same length of time.

Certainly some readers will wonder about the relevance of Weber, not to mention Du Halde, to current scholarship on China. After all, it may be expected that Weber’s arguments, made early in the last century, would have already been relegated to the dustbins of scholarship; indeed, over the last several decades, historians and sociologists have called into question many of Weber’s conclusions. For example, social historians working in the late imperial period have critiqued Weber’s simplistic assumptions about the nature of elite status and power in premodern China. The Chinese elite was not uniform in composition, as Weber thought, nor did it necessarily rule by virtue of its connection to the imperial state. More pertinently for our perspective, Gary Hamilton has challenged Weber’s understanding of the Chinese family system. As he shows in a brilliant article, it is doubtful that fathers in imperial China ever enjoyed the scope of authority that Weber attributed to them. Unlike their Roman counterparts, Hamilton emphasizes, Chinese fathers did not have the power of life and death over members of their households either by law or by custom.

Although scholars have challenged many details of the picture painted by Weber, the assumption that filial piety served as the linchpin of classical political discourse from Han times onward has yet to be reexamined. Certainly Norman Kutcher has looked at the Qing evidence in detail and shown that court policies on officials leaving office to wear mourning garments were not consistent with Qing rhetoric regarding the lord-father analogy. But by focusing on the gap between rhetoric and reality, Kutcher fails to ask whether there were competing political discourses that may have shaped Qing policies. More recent work by scholars such as Keith Knapp and especially Michael Nylan has refined the original Weberian formulation. Nylan argues that the lord-father analogy represented more than a stable feature of Chinese statecraft from time immemorial. In fact, she shows that initial attempts on the part of *ru* 倫, or classical thinkers, to win government patronage by constructing the analogy were controversial. At least one important statesman, Han Feizi 韓非子 (d. 233 BCE), denounced as a “villainous plot” attempts to resolve possible conflicts between familial and state obligations by constructing "a false analogy between
the father-son and ruler-subject relations." Furthermore, Nylan points out that *ru* were only able to achieve "a perfect fusion of filial piety and patriotic duties" relatively late, that is, after the establishment of imperial rule in the mid-Western Han period (ca. 100 BCE). While valuable, the work of Nylan and others has left open the question of how the lord-father analogy was received after the mid-Western Han. Was it widely accepted by the political elites of the Han and later periods, or was it continually challenged?

In spite of these questions, the view that filial piety was the cornerstone of classical discourse is so pervasive that virtually every discussion of early Chinese statecraft (or of filial piety) makes at least a passing reference to it. For example, in a 2004 volume devoted to the subject of filial piety in Chinese culture and thought, Anne Cheng observes that during the Han, the central court "assimilate[d] filial piety, a central value in Confucian ethics, to the loyalty of the subject to the ruler and the state." As a result, "loyalty to the ruler, just like a son's piety towards his father, [was] as 'natural' as the submission of Earth to Heaven." In the same volume, Ikeda Tomohisa writes of the emergence of the lord-father analogy late in the Warring States period (453–221 BCE), a sociopolitical model he describes as being "based on the authority of the father figure." "Filial piety should serve this political edifice and does not conflict with loyalty," Ikeda writes. "In principle, there is no inherent contradiction between *xiao* (filial piety) and *zhong* (loyalty). This is because the relationship between father and son is seen to be the same as that between ruler and subject."

In fact, this view of filial piety is so pervasive that it can be found outside the field of premodern Chinese history. For example, Joan R. Piggot has argued recently that some rulers were able to successfully diverge from what she calls the "male script of Chinese rulership," a script that Japanese rulers of the Nara period (710–794 CE) inherited from the Chinese of the Tang (618–907 CE). This Chinese script, Piggot notes, "elided the spheres of state and family and glorified the virtue of filiality shown to both fathers and rulers... Filial piety was the virtue that legitimized the familial and state hierarchy, and it gave precedence to males, whether rulers, fathers, or elder brothers." Such assumptions about classical political discourse also continue to shape narratives in contemporary social sciences, in particular research on the Chinese family. In a 2004 volume on filial piety in contemporary East Asian society, sociologist Martin King Whyte puts it succinctly: "In imperial China filial piety was a central value of family life, and the centrality of family life in Confucian statecraft made filial piety a linchpin for the entire social order."

It is not my intention to say that Weber and others are wrong for arguing that some classical thinkers created an analogy between filial duty and state
service. As will be shown presently, they were certainly right when they argued for the existence of this concept of political life. But I would assert that Weber and others are on shakier ground when they assume that the lord-father analogy represented the cornerstone of classical discourse. For example, if demonstrations of filial devotion to fathers were the most important gauge of political virtue, why did members of the Eastern Han (25–220 CE) official elite publicly emphasize the mother-son relationship in mourning to a much greater extent? Or more notably, if the father-son relationship did indeed serve as the template for political relationships, why did at least some members of the Han elite choose to wear the garments normally worn for mothers when mourning their superiors? Both of these examples suggest that there are limits to what the lord-father analogy can explain about early Chinese political discourse. Could it be that in the Han there was more than one important conception of filial devotion, including those that perhaps did not privilege fathers over mothers? And could those conceptions also have shaped the ways in which elite men understood their political relationships to other men?

This book will reconsider the role played by filial piety in shaping the political discourse of the early elite. By looking in depth at mourning practices of the Han, we will examine to what extent the elite did, in fact, imagine political relationships as seamless extensions of the father-son relationship—a relationship often construed by scholars as personalistic and hierarchical. Were the early imperial elite also able to imagine political life outside the metaphor of fatherhood—to conceive, in other words, of alternatives? As we will see, though some members of the Han elite did see their relations with political associates as extensions of those between father and son, others believed that they should not treat their lords just like fathers. Some preferred to emphasize friendship, rather than fatherhood, as a metaphor for political relations, and still others hinted that political service might not require subordination at all. In short, as I will argue presently, the early imperial elite held remarkably varied and contradictory beliefs about political life, and they had at their disposal multiple templates and changing scripts for political action. The goal of this book is to document and explain such diversity and variation, which have been largely overlooked. This study will do so by reexamining the very mourning practices that Weber saw as enshrining the lord-father analogy, in order to show specifically that the Han-dynasty practice of mourning expressed multiple visions of political life, visions that left lasting legacies for later periods.

Skeptical readers may raise questions about the scope of the book, asking why political discourse should be studied through mourning practice. There are several reasons for doing so. First, mourning has become synonymous with filial piety in Western scholarship. Because filial piety has arguably figured large in popular (as well as scholarly) accounts of “traditional” Chinese society, a study of mourning practice promises to test many of our basic assumptions about Chinese civilization. Another reason is that the funerals of powerful or well-known figures have long represented—and continue to represent—political
sites of contestation, interaction, and change. For example, most readers will recall that the death of Zhou Enlai 周恩来 (1898–1976) was met with popular expressions of grief. When members of the Gang of Four attempted to crack down on public mourning for Zhou, riots erupted, ultimately setting in motion a series of events that would bring the downfall of the Gang.21

Having justified our study of mourning, I now turn to the question of the focus on the Han dynasty. For one thing, no book-length study on Han mourning practice exists, although there are a number of classic essays in Chinese and Japanese.22 Another important reason to study the Han is that this dynasty represents a formative period in Chinese history, if we consider it from the perspective of the development of classical discourse and imperial ideology. As Nylan, Kutcher, and Cheng have recently argued, it was during the Han that the lord–father analogy was formulated and incorporated into mainstream political discourse. A final reason to focus on the Han is the fact that the mourning system seemingly reached its apex during this period. Unlike in later periods, during the Han elite men could be recruited into official service ostensibly for the way in which they conducted themselves in mourning. As we will see presently, mourning in the Han also became one of the most important ways for elite men to create alliances and signal political values, as well as to establish reputations for personal virtue.

Now a few words about the methodology and design of this book. First, because language is not a transparent vehicle of meaning, and the past simply does not await recovery through a straightforward reading of sources, I will lavish much attention on the language of my sources, their provenance, and their interpretation. More often than not, as we will see, the meanings of texts and of individual terms are uncertain and lend themselves to competing readings. For these reasons, I have written a book that places the act of textual interpretation in the foreground. In actual practice, this means quoting rather than paraphrasing my sources so as to allow competing readings sufficient room to shape my story.

Second, my treatment of historical causation, which may strike some readers as timid at times, bears explanation. Just as the meanings of texts are elusive, the causes behind events or phenomena are difficult, if not impossible, to determine. Although this is a problem common to all historians, I believe that it is especially acute for those working in ancient sources because of the extent to which our interpretations of the past are mediated. For the Han, our interpretations are mediated not only by the assumptions of recent Western commentators like Weber, but more importantly the antiquarians of the Song 宋 dynasty (960–1279 CE), whose efforts to retrieve Han artifacts have shaped all modern attempts to interpret the period.23 In addition, the nature of our sources—which are not only suspect, but also thin at times—creates further difficulties. As one smart demographer puts it, “when observed data is thin, it takes strong assumptions to yield sharp results.”24 Faced with such a choice, I have chosen to go with weaker assumptions and decided to highlight, rather
than conceal, the uncertainties of historical knowledge. This means adopting an approach that trades seamless narratives for messier stories with more than one plausible or probable explanation. It is an approach, I believe, that is not only warranted by the nature of the sources, but also is consistent with my larger views about how culture should be studied. Just as a fuller understanding of our subjects requires that we go beyond, as Franz Boas once remarked, the search for “standard beliefs and customs” to illuminate “differences in opinions and modes of action,” a proper account of the historical enterprise necessitates that we confront the open-endedness of historical interpretation.25

SETTING THE STAGE: INTRODUCING THE HAN

Throughout this introduction, I have treated the Han state as a known quantity. Hence, a summary of background information on the Han may be in order to provide the general reader with a way to make sense of unfamiliar terms and titles. The task is not without its difficulties, as it requires that we select from a mass of details what we believe to be the most salient features of complex and evolving systems, and that we choose sides in unresolved debates, summarily dismissing opposing views.

I begin with a simple matter: what I mean by the Han. I will use “the Han” primarily to designate the period under consideration, a period that owes its name to the dynasty founded in 206 BCE and ending some four centuries later, around 220 CE, as typically judged by historians. When possible, I will avoid conflating the Han dynasty with the Han state or administration, bearing in mind that ancient statesmen were careful to distinguish between the possessions of the imperial family, on the one hand, and those of the polity, on the other.26 A second matter, which requires clarification, is that scholars commonly divide the Han into two periods, the Former Han (206 BCE–9 CE) and Later Han (25–220 CE), also called the Western and Eastern Han, respectively. The latter set of names derives from the location of the capital, with the Western Han ruled from Chang’an (modern-day Xi’an), and the Eastern Han ruled from Luoyang. While useful, such a division is somewhat misleading. The Han did not represent a period of unbroken rule by a single clan; interregnums occurred twice during the dynasty. In the second century BCE, the consort dowager attempted to overthrow the ruling Liu 官 family in favor of her natal relatives, resulting in a brief interregnum from 188 to 180 BCE. Later, during his self-styled Xin 新 dynasty (9–23 CE), an imperial relative by marriage, Wang Mang 王莽 (46 BCE–23 CE), briefly overthrew the dynasty. Wang’s usurpation was never fully accepted, and it was not long before a distant relative of the last Western Han emperor made use of the opportunity to further his own claims to the throne. Rallying support around his cause, this Liu relative eliminated the Wang clan and “restored” Han rule—or, better yet, founded his own dynasty, known as the Eastern Han.
The Han state did not emerge from a void. Because the establishment of the foundations of Han rule did not follow a single trajectory, the origins of the dynasty are best understood in terms of two contrasting narratives. The first, which is arguably the better known of the two, is one of unity. This is the narrative of leaner and meaner regimes, headed by ruthless lords and ambitious technocrats, which began supplanting the aristocratic order in the sixth century BCE. With these new technocrats came more efficient systems of counting people and extracting resources, new modes of warfare, and higher technology. If the history of one state epitomizes this story it is Qin 秦, a “semicivilized” Western state that rose to prominence in the fourth century BCE and conquered much of what is now China in 221 BCE. In contrast, the second narrative is one of disintegration, of the forces that constantly threatened imperial unity. Although the achievements of the Qin were undeniable—they created an efficient taxation system, an impressive legal apparatus, a comprehensive transportation and communications infrastructure, and an innovative administrative strategy of ruling through imperial proxies—the dynasty did not last more than a generation before a modest uprising brought it to a surprisingly swift end in 206 BCE. The uprising was followed by a civil war; bandits and local bullies seized the opportunity to reassert their power, and the scions of the aristocratic houses conquered by the Qin resurfaced, eager to reclaim their patrimony.

It was in this context that Liu Bang 刘邦 (r. 206–195 BCE), a man of obscure origin, founded his dynasty. When he claimed the Qin title of emperor (huangdi 皇帝) after the civil war, Liu Bang ruled the realm in name rather than in reality. This was not a matter of choice: he did not have the power to return to the centralized arrangement of the Qin. Liu had indeed vanquished his leading foe, the aristocrat Xiang Yu 翟羽 (d. 202 BCE). But doing so had required the help of other powerful men who were not so easily eliminated in the first years of the empire, when the Liu grip on power was fragile. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Liu Bang agreed to an arrangement in which the “empire” comprised a large number of semiautonomous kingdoms (guo 国), headed by kings (wang 王) or marquis (hou 侯). This federation, however, did not last long. Predictably, many of the kings fancied themselves the equals of the Han emperor and entertained dynastic ambitions of their own. Faced with such bold challenges to their authority as well as open rebellions, Liu Bang’s successors required little persuasion to reassert control. By the end of the second century BCE, they had broken the power of the kings and reverted to the administrative system of the Qin.27

This administrative system, known as junxian 郡縣, now bears description. In this system, the dynastic rulers dispatched a limited number of provincial administrators to administer the realm on their behalf. The name junxian derives from the basic organization of territory into commanderies (jun 郡) and counties (xian 县), with counties being subunits within commanderies.28 Some commandery-level units in the Han were also referred to
INTRODUCTION

as gue 國 (kingdoms), and some county-level administrative units were referred to as houguo 侯國 (marquisates). Apart from such differences in names, there were no essential differences between the commandery and kingdom, on the one hand, and the county and marquisate, on the other. By the end of the Eastern Han, there were slightly more than one hundred commandery-sized administrative units. The commanderies or kingdoms were each governed by a centrally appointed official, the Grand Administrator (taishou 太守) or Chancellor (xiang 相), usually not native to the area under his charge. This official was responsible for all civilian and military affairs, and for administering criminal and civil law.29 Below the level of the commandery was the county or marquisate, over one thousand in number, each headed by another centrally appointed official known as the Magistrate (zhang 長 or ling 令) or Marquis (hou 侯). The heads of both commanderies and counties maintained staffs of their own, ranging from several dozen to more than a hundred men. Recognizing the need to control the men they had entrusted with governance, the Han rulers devised a system of checks and balances. For monitoring and evaluating Grand Administrators and Chancellors, there were thirteen Inspectors (cishi 刺史) for the whole empire, each with a staff of nine men. The responsibility of monitoring county-level administrators fell upon the commandery-level administrator, who had up to five assistants, or Investigators (duyou 監御), for this task.30

With the larger institutional framework thus described, we now turn to the men and women who ruled the Han. The policies and decisions of the emperor, or “Son of Heaven” (tianzi 天子), were made largely in consultation with his senior ministers. During the Western Han, the most senior official was the Prime Minister (chengxiang 臣相). In the Eastern Han, the power and authoritative scope of the Prime Minister were split between three senior ministers, known as the Three Lords (sangong 三公), who were ranked at the salary level of ten thousand bushels of grain, and who supervised the civil and military administration of the empire. Directly under the Three Lords were the Nine Excellencies (jiuqing 九卿), who were responsible for various ceremonial, civil, and military affairs; their salary rank was two thousand bushels.31 The men who filled the ranks of the Three Lords and Nine Excellencies tended to come from the most prominent clans in the empire, clans with a long-term presence in the capital that had produced ministers for generations.32 In addition to members of ministerial families, members of the consort clans (waiqi 外戚)—relatives of the imperial consorts—also occupied many of the highest government posts. As members of consort clans exerted influence at court and represented a threat to dynastic power, emperors sought alliances with outside groups to bolster their own support. By the middle of the Eastern Han, eunuchs (huan 宮) emerged as a counterweight to the power of the consort clans. Eunuchs were members of the imperial household, and their titles reflected their roles as the personal attendants of the emperor and guardians of the harem. There is some indication that eunuchs tended to be recruited
from obscure origins, the rationale being that these men—who lacked independent sources of power—would be loyal to the emperor. As such, eunuchs were allowed to take on ministerial functions, received salaries comparable to those of provincial administrators, and wielded power at court.\textsuperscript{33}

Let us now turn to the more than one hundred thirty thousand men who filled the ranks of the bureaucracy, known as officials (\textit{li}). The single term “officials” may lend the impression that the composition of the Han bureaucracy was homogeneous, but there was an essential distinction between commissioned and appointed officials. The former were elite officials who had received their appointments from the rulers in the capital, and who were not native to the regions in which they served.\textsuperscript{34} The latter were appointed by commissioned officials as junior staff, and served directly under county and commandery administrators, or under ministers in the capital. The path to office was not uniform, as officials came into the service through a variety of tracks that reflected their diverse social origins. One track involved being brought directly into the commissioned ranks of the bureaucracy through nomination by senior ministers in the capital or by provincial Inspectors, as Abundant Talents (\textit{maocai}). But such an opportunity, needless to say, was not open to many. According to Rafe de Crespigny, only seventeen men per year received this distinction.\textsuperscript{35} Another track involved entering the official service directly as a Gentleman Cadet (\textit{lang}) and serving in the capital for a short probationary period before being moved into the commissioned ranks. Only the sons and brothers of senior ministers at the rank of two thousand bushels at minimum, however, qualified for this track, and the number of such ministers was under two hundred at any time. The most common route was for a commissioned officer to begin his career as a local appointee, either at the county or commandery level, and move gradually into the commissioned ranks.\textsuperscript{36} To be sure, information about who filled the ranks of provincial administration is thin. Yet anecdotal evidence suggests that these men were commonly members of powerful local families, who did not necessarily have ties to the capital.\textsuperscript{37}

\section*{Mourning: Definition and Practices}

Just as the Han polity has been treated as an abstract or known quantity, what we mean by mourning has also been taken for granted. In Warring States and Han texts, the term \textit{sangli} seems to evoke much of our common sense of mourning as the ceremonial expression of sadness at death or loss. Observing mourning was largely synonymous with wearing various mourning garments, and the ancient elite usually marked the end of mourning by removing these garments (\textit{chufu}). Yet ancient Chinese notions of mourning tended to be somewhat broader than our own; they also involved the act of burying or interring the dead, the responsibility for which usually fell upon the chief mourner.\textsuperscript{38} In addition to defining our use of the term, it may also be useful to provide a synopsis of early mourning practices,\textsuperscript{39} beginning with
the classical prescriptions preserved in two texts of uncertain date, the Book of Rites (Li ji 禮記), and Ceremonies and Rituals (Yi lì 緯禮). Quite naturally, one might question the prudence of using prescriptive texts as sources of information about actual practice. In light of this problem, I consult prescriptions only when they can be corroborated by reports of what the elite men and women of the Western and Eastern Han supposedly did. Certainly, the irony of beginning a book precisely about variation in opinions and modes of action with a generic description of early Chinese mourning practice will not be lost on some readers. As a result, it is worth mentioning that this synopsis is not only oversimplified but also incomplete. In the pages below, I restrict myself to sketching briefly the general parameters of the subject, noting variations in practice, debates over protocol, and changes in custom so as to avoid lending the impression that Han mourning practice was fixed and uniform.

RECONSTRUCTION OF MOURNING PROTOCOL

SOUL-CALLING

As soon as breathing stopped, the survivors would call back the soul of the dead (zhao hun 招魂). Climbing atop buildings and facing north, they would hold out the clothes of the newly deceased and call out his or her name. The Rites provides an idealized account of the thoughts and feelings of mourners as they called back the soul, one not very different from later accounts found in Han funerary inscriptions:

求而無所得之也．入門而弗見也．上堂又弗見也．人室又弗見也．亡矣喪矣．
不可復見已矣．故哭泣踊躍．盡哀而止矣．

[The mourners seek him but there is no one to be found. They enter the gate but do not see him. They ascend the hall but they still do not see him. They enter the chamber but they do not see him. He is gone. He is dead. They will never see him again. Because of this, they wail, sob, beat their breasts, and stamp their feet in grief. They do not stop until they exhaust their grief.]

The initial three-day waiting period (see below) and soul-calling rituals represented precautionary moves on the part of the mourners, who feared that the deceased might not really be dead. But this tradition was also rooted in the belief that a person’s spirit could temporarily wander off from the body; if the spirit could be coaxed into returning to the body, death could be averted.

THE FIRST THREE DAYS

The end of the soul-calling rite marked the beginning of mourning. Under the supervision of the deceased’s son, a member of the household would wash the body and change its clothes. The son would plug the ears and mouth of the
corpse, presumably to stop noxious vapors from escaping. The chief mourner would begin to whimper (ti 嘀). According to the great scholar Zheng Xuan (127–200 CE), whose comments presumably drew from contemporary practice, the principal mourner became like a “small child who had lost his mother on the road.” Weak and overcome with sorrow, he would be unable to express his grief loudly. Yet the deceased’s male relatives, presumably less affected, would wail. Women, finally, would follow the men in their wailing and leaping.

For the first three days, the son would be exempt from responsibility as the funeral officiate. One text explains this exemption as follows: the principal mourner, full of grief, is incapacitated. All he can do is “crawl around, wailing for his parents. How could he be able to dress the corpse promptly?” For at least the first three days, he still holds out hope that the dead will come back to life. In addition to these psychological justifications, ritual texts offer more pragmatic reasons for this waiting period. The first three days provided enough time for the family to calculate their budget for the funeral and organize their mourning garments. This period of time also permitted relatives and condolence-payers to arrive.

Not only would the chief mourner still hold out hope that the deceased could be revived, but he also would experience intense sorrow, leaving him physically weak. As the Book of Rites observes,

> [The bitterness of his heart, the distress and pain of his thoughts injure his kidneys, parch his liver, and burn his lungs. Even watery gruel does not enter his mouth for three days. The fire is not lit. . . . The grief and sorrow within give rise to a change in his exterior. With the severe pain in his heart, his mouth cannot taste the flavor of food. His body cannot take comfort in beauty.]

According to ritual prescriptions, however, the principal mourner was not to go too far with this initial stage of mourning. His health had to remain intact, if only barely. After three days, his neighbors would prepare gruel for him to eat.

When confronted with the loss of a loved one, Eastern Han men were far from strong or silent. They were not expected to pull themselves together quickly, or to bear their loss calmly and return to their duties. Rather, they were expected to indulge their grief fully, growing pale and thin in the process, and withdrawing from everyday society. Some became emaciated. One eulogist described a man who suffered the loss of his mother, Madame Cui (d. 161):

> Pained was this principal mourner
> Gaunt and so grieved,
> His feelings, alas, were those of constant longing.
INTRODUCTION

COFFINING AND THE MOURNING PERIOD

After three days, members of the household would finally dress the corpse in burial garments and place it in the coffin, which was left in the master chamber of the house before being moved into the tomb. The movement of the coffin was part of a larger rite of passage, a process through which the deceased was transformed from a living person to a corpse and remade from the head of the house to a spirit guest (bin 貧).49

As for the identities of the mourners, the chief mourner or mourners were the sons of the deceased, although a daughter, grandchild, or adopted heir might assume the role if the need arose. The siblings, grandchildren, and cousins of the deceased formed the mourning circle (wufu五星).50 Aside from the chief mourner and members of the mourning circle, unrelated men and women also wore mourning garments. As we will see in chapter 4, Eastern Han men wore mourning—for up to three years—for men who had been their colleagues, friends, teachers, and superiors. In some cases, men practiced what was referred to as “three years mourning of the heart” (xin sang san-nian 心喪三年), which meant that they mourned for this period yet wore no mourning garments.

Extant sources reveal that there was some variation in the role of the chief mourner. According to some classical texts, the chief mourner was supposed to observe “three years mourning,” a practice whose name derives from the fact that the period of wearing mourning extended into a third year, though was not three years (or thirty-six months) long. The exact length of time involved was furthermore open to debate and interpretation. By some Han accounts, the period of wearing mourning should last for twenty-five months; by others, twenty-seven months.51 Needless to say, as we will see in the first chapter, not all members of the educated or official elite observed extended mourning when their parents died. In fact, there is evidence that considerably shorter periods of mourning—as little as a month—were also common.

Wearing mourning appears to have required that the chief mourner forego the privileges of rank and station. During the Eastern Han, if he had an official post, he relinquished it, only returning to office after he had changed out of his mourning garments.52 While explicit discussion of whether mourning could be worn while in office is not found anywhere in the Western or Eastern Han textual corpus, there are several reasons to believe that it was not socially acceptable to return to office while wearing mourning garments. First of all, Han-dynasty discussions of the mourning obligations of ministers largely assume that men in mourning were disengaged from the affairs of the state, although there is the exceptional case found in Gongyang’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals (Gongyang zhuan 公羊傳), a text that dates as early perhaps as the late Warring States period. In this account, a senior minister, Min Sun 閔損 (b. ca. 515 BCE), was forced to serve when he was supposed to be in the midst of mourning. As we will see, this situation was regarded by
Han men as highly irregular. In fact, most mentions of officials in mourning during the Han strongly imply that these men only returned to office once they were no longer wearing mourning garments.

In addition to relinquishing their posts, mourners were expected to accept social isolation. This social isolation was reinforced by the mourner’s withdrawal from the abode of the living and his extended residence in a crude thatched lean-to with a dirt floor, located beside the tomb. By most accounts, the mourner would no longer receive guests, and in some cases, he would even stop talking. Inside the crude structure was an uncomfortable reed mat and a clod for a pillow. In theory, the mourner lived in the lean-to not because it was dictated by convention, but because he desired the isolation it provided:

孝子哀，不欲聞人之聲。又不欲居故處。

[The filial son is so bereft that he does not want to hear the sounds of other people’s voices, nor does he want to stay in his old place.]

In some cases, the mourner’s seclusion went to extremes. When mourning his older brother, Ma Yuan (14 BCE–49 CE), the famed general and father to the empress, reportedly did not once leave the graveyard. Perhaps more extreme was the case of Wei Biao (d. 89 CE), an official close to the emperor’s inner circle. When in mourning, Wei was so overcome with sorrow that he did not set foot outside the lean-to for three years.

The mourner’s social isolation was also signaled by his change of clothes. He would remove his colored silk robes, a sign of high economic and social status, and don mourning garments. He would also walk with a cane, for as one ritualist stated,

孝子悲懼，悲哀哭泣，三日不食。體羸病，故杖以扶持。

[When the filial son has lost a parent, he is so bereft and so grieved that he can only wail and sob. For three days, he does not eat. As a result, his body is emaciated and sickly. Because of this, he carries a staff to support his body.]

The mourner’s diet could be austere, with gruel supposedly the major source of his caloric intake, and only at the end of the mourning period would he eat vegetables or dried meat. Throughout the mourning period, he would abstain from both alcohol and sex. As a result, accounts from the Eastern Han often describe sons in the deepest stage of mourning as malnourished. The aforementioned official Wei Biao nearly starved during mourning for his parents, and this significantly damaged his health:

彪孝行純至，父母卒，哀毀三年，不出廬宮。服竟，羸瘠骨立異形，醫者數年乃起... 

[[Wei] Biao’s filial conduct was of the utmost sincerity, and when his father and mother died, he was devastated by grief for three years and did not come out of his lean-to beside the tomb. When his period of mourning had come
to an end, he was emaciated and weak to the point that his bones stood out, altering his form. It was only after years of medical treatment that he was able to get up again.]

THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Did elite women mourn? Unfortunately, too few accounts of women’s mourning survive from the Han dynasty to allow us to discern general patterns. Yet there are two reasons to believe that the paucity of such accounts does not reflect the absence of women wearing mourning in the Han dynasty. First, ritual prescriptions indicate that elite women were expected to mourn their own relatives, as well as their husbands’ relatives. Second, eleven accounts of mourning by elite Eastern Han women survive in the History of the Later Han (Hou Hanshu 後漢書) by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445 CE), and in stele inscriptions. Not surprisingly, accounts of the mourning practices of nonelite women, like those of nonelite men, are utterly lacking.

Extant sources indicate that unmarried women mourned their kin. An inscription dedicated to the Chancellor of Pingdu 平都, a Mr. Jiang 蒋 (d. 152), mentions the reactions of the deceased’s daughter, Zeng 增. The author of the funerary inscription does not mention whether or not Zeng wore mourning for her father, but the eulogist does give us a rare glimpse of a woman’s grief. According to the eulogist, Mr. Jiang’s daughter was so bereft that she lingered and paced about the graveyard, sobbing. In a similar vein, the History of the Later Han also notes that the daughter of the famed official and scholar Ma Rong 马融 (79–166 CE) “mourned her parents for a long time when she was young and longed for them.” She even composed a poetic work, a rhapsody, about her mourning. Both cases are rather unsurprising, and seem to follow conventional interpretations of a classical prescription for women, otherwise known as the principle of churu 出入 (leaving home and entering the family). As Lai Guolong has recently argued, this principle meant several things. If a woman was unmarried or living in her natal home with no descendants of her own, then, like a son, she would be obliged to mourn for her father for twenty-five months. Yet if she was married, her mourning obligations for her own parents would be relatively light, and she would instead wear mourning for only a year.

Even if the length of the mourning period was not as long, our sources indicate that the mourning of married women for their natal relatives was certainly as deep. When her father died, the future Empress Dowager Deng Sui 鄧綝 (81–121 CE), about whom we will read extensively in chapter 2, reportedly cried all night and refrained from eating her favorite foods for three years. She became so emaciated that her intimates did not recognize her. As Michael Nylan argues, the historian Fan Ye described the future empress dowager’s mourning in exactly the same way he would have described the mourning of a man.
CONDOLENCES

After the principal mourner put on mourning garments, condolence-payers would come to pay their respects. If the deceased was famous or of the highest court status, high-ranking members of the court would attend, either on their own initiative or on the court’s behalf.66 In a few cases, the emperor or empress dowager might make a personal appearance to offer condolences to the family.67 The court would also bestow a gift, such as cash, a luxurious outer coffin, or a shroud.68 If the deceased was an imperial clan member or a favorite of the ruler, the court might even bestow a full-bodied jade suit made at the emperor’s own workshop.69

Judging from the information provided in stele inscriptions about members of the local and political elite, the period between coffining and interment varied from several months to several years. In fact, the more important the deceased, the longer his body went unburied.70 Many members of the Han elite were in no great hurry to bury their dead since they presumably were not eager to separate their beloved deceased from the living. There were also several practical reasons for this delay. First, time was often needed to finish constructing elaborate tombs. Second, if the dead person had been important, the interment ceremony had to be put off long enough to allow mourners to arrive from great distances.71

The interment usually involved the participation of the larger social network. On the day selected, the principal mourner, family members, and friends would “send off” (song 送) the body to its final resting place. A procession of mourners would enter the tomb through a narrow passageway. Judging from contemporary accounts, the condolence-payers would expect the principal mourner to make a final show of sorrow and even to say a few words.72

STELE INSCRIPTIONS

Unlike their Warring States and Western Han predecessors, Eastern Han mourners would commission stele inscriptions, which stood outside the gate of the tomb or in other places that were publicly accessible. Most of these inscribed stelae appear to have been erected within a few years of their subjects’ deaths, but in some cases they were erected decades later.73 Mourners intended the inscriptions to serve as lasting tributes to the deceased and testimonies to the grief of survivors. These stele inscriptions often recount the circumstances of death, the reactions of survivors, and the treatment of the dead. In many cases, the names of the stele donors and amounts they contributed were carved on the reverse side. Inscriptions take several different styles, but nearly all of them are hyperbolic and conventionalized in their language. Some are very simple, like this one carved in 83 CE:

孝子張文思
哭父而禮
石直三千

A filial son, Zhang Wensi,
Wailed for his father according to the rites.
And spent three thousand bushels [erecting this monument].74
Later inscriptions tend to be longer, more elaborate, and less crass in mentioning costs. (The custom of leaving the price tag on the inscription, however, did not disappear as the genre developed.) Inscriptions describe not only the reactions of the deceased’s kin in mourning, but also those of the community. Of a certain Chancellor Jing (d. 143 CE), we read,

The former officers were bereft.
They sobbed in sorrow, pacing back and forth.
The officials within the four seas
Were shaken with grief and moved with sorrow.75

On the stele’s reverse, the eulogist recorded the names of fifty-three self-styled students and former officers, as was the practice.76

Inscriptions extol the individual merits of the dead. Most inscriptions, claiming that the dead had been active members of a local community, detail the work of the deceased in defense, social welfare, and the moral improvement of the populace. The same Chancellor Jing had been a former Minister of Agriculture and a military leader. His service to the population had been exemplary:

He fixed policies and rectified plans,
Considered primary conscientious service and trustworthiness,
Guarded the land of great lords
Mollifying the myriad people.77

In stele inscriptions, eulogists focused on the experience of loss, perhaps because the life to come was not celebrated in the Eastern Han. Some eulogists questioned outright whether personal survival after death was possible, though they did believe that the dead lived on in communal memory as moral exemplars.78 Others registered their dread of the afterlife, calling death the “pervasive darkness,” and viewing it as a process of “sinking into great obscurity.” They likened it to the “bright sun returning to the dark yin,” traveling through “great darkness,” or “extinguishing the lamps and candles.”79 Such comparisons implied that at least some Eastern Han men believed that death obliterated individual consciousness. Certainly this was one reason why the survivors were so unwilling to acknowledge the finality of death—and so slow to lay their dead to rest.

The mourning practices of the Han brought together a wide range of people, resources, and interests. Mourning involved members of the deceased’s family; his or her wider network of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and neighbors, and the craftsmen and eulogists responsible for creating monuments to his or her memory. Given the range of parties involved, it is no surprise that we will find diverse and even contradictory sets of beliefs about political life and human relations associated with these practices. Those beliefs form the core of this study, which is outlined below.
Each of the five chapters of this book reconstructs one alternative to the lord-father analogy. The first chapter opens in the Western Han and tackles one portion of the Weberian thesis: Did early elites necessarily see political service in personalistic terms? Were sons supposed to extend the personal devotion they felt for their parents to lords as well, or were they supposed to put aside such devotion? We will explore these questions by looking at definitions of filial piety and ideals of political service. By most accounts, the Western Han court glorified the cult of the filial son. Not only did the Han court recruit “filial sons” into the ranks of the bureaucracy, but it also adopted filial piety (xia” as the cardinal virtue of the dynasty. More interestingly, the court even prosecuted members of the imperial family, including one heir apparent, for ritual violations while wearing mourning. Yet despite the overwhelming importance placed on filial piety by the Western Han court, only a handful of elite men chose to observe the protocol of three years mourning. The first chapter attempts to explain this apparent paradox, arguing that it is not an accident of the extant sources, nor (as some have concluded) solely the consequence of court policies. Instead, the paucity of accounts of elite men in mourning reflects in part a certain view of what constitutes filial obligation, a view that held impartial state service to be the ultimate expression of filial devotion. Accordingly, sons were to transform their feelings for their parents into impartial public-mindedness rather than transfer personal allegiances or feelings to their lords.

Eastern Han mourning practice takes center stage in the second chapter. In contrast to that of their Western Han predecessors, the textual record for the Eastern Han local and political elite is replete with references to men and women wearing mourning and making grand displays of their grief for siblings, grandparents, and children, as well as for parents. Here, we set out to explain why mourning was far more visible in Eastern Han society than in earlier periods—even though, quite paradoxically, the court banned officials from leaving office to wear mourning for most of the dynasty. I contend that the new visibility of mourning represents the prominence of a certain discourse of filial piety that figures in court memorials, elite gossip, official dossiers, and funerary inscriptions. This discourse emphasized personal obligations, particularly the obligation of sons to observe extended mourning for parents. So important, in fact, were mourning obligations that some believed men should choose to fulfill personal mourning over official obligations. This discourse represents an alternative to the lord-father analogy, which stressed the seamless fit between filial obligation and official duty; instead, it acknowledged—and even emphasized—conflict between the two. Finally, the rise of such a discourse on filial obligation reflected the changing balance of power between the Han court and the local elite.
The third chapter explains the startling degree of attention given to depictions of the mother-son bond in accounts of Eastern Han mourning. Examining a variety of sources, I argue that such attention can be explained in terms of the rise of stereotypes about the bonds between mothers and sons in the first century BCE. Whereas elite thinkers and statesmen associated the relationship between fathers and sons with official duty, they regarded the relationship between mothers and sons as emotional, personal, and intimate. Thus, the emphasis on the mother-son bond came to provide an ideological alternative to the paternalistic ethos of official service. It rejected one of the central premises of the lord-father analogy, namely, the primacy of the paternal, official, and overtly hierarchical.

In the fourth chapter, political association in the broader society of the Eastern Han political and local elite is examined. Scholars have long argued that Eastern Han political culture was shaped by what could be called an "ideology of paternal submission," an ideology that was enshrined in networks of political patronage and official slogans about the lord-father analogy. In this chapter, I return to the question of how members of the Eastern Han elite spoke of their relationships to other, unrelated men. I analyze the words that elite men in the Eastern Han used to refer to each other in funerary stelae, the clothes they wore to mourn their associates, and the narratives they recorded about the magical efficacy of friendly devotion. Although some members of the elite did in fact represent their relationships as an extension of the hierarchical relationship between father and son, in many other cases they spoke of unrelated men—including those more powerful—as peers, colleagues, and even friends.

The final chapter examines visions of personal merit seen in the corpus of Han funerary inscriptions. Most accounts of premodern elite culture assume that men of education and means had one of two rhetorical choices at their disposal: withdrawal from political life altogether, or service to the dynasty. But a careful look at Eastern Han funerary inscriptions—in particular, what they say, who wrote them, and when, why, and by whom they were commissioned—reveals that there was a third choice as well. This view of personal merit reaffirmed the importance of political participation and even official service. Yet in contrast to rhetoric about the lord-father analogy, this vision dissociated political participation from subordination to the dynastic ruler, instead emphasizing service to and esteem from the population.

We close by asking in the epilogue whether the alternative visions of political life expressed in elite mourning practice survived the fall of the Han dynasty. To answer this question, I briefly examine the reception of Han funerary stelae in the Song dynasty, focusing in particular on the connection between the antiquarian rediscovery of the Han in the late Northern Song (960–1127) and the spread in the Southern Song (1127–1279) of shrines celebrating “worthies” (shengci 生祠). These were the same shrines that modern
scholars have argued were responsible for transmitting the values associated with the Learning of the Way, or neo-Confucianism. Through this analysis, I suggest that a proper understanding of the major ideological and political developments of late imperial China requires that we acknowledge that the legacies of the Han went beyond the lord-father analogy, and that Han elite men left behind a wide range of accumulated models, systems, and other symbolic resources. In other words, such an understanding requires an appreciation of the unwieldiness of the Han political imagination.
CHAPTER 1

Where Did All the Filial Sons Go?

In the year 73 BCE, the most powerful man in the Han empire, the General-in-Chief (da jiangjun 大將軍) Huo Guang 霍光 (d. 68 BCE), charged Liu He 劉賀 (ca. 92–59 BCE), the Imperial Heir Apparent, with ritual misconduct. The General called for Liu’s removal from power as the result of a scandal involving sex, alcohol, and a man ostensibly in mourning. In a memorial to the empress dowager, Huo enumerated the crimes of the eighteen-year-old Liu. While in mourning for his imperial predecessor, the young man indulged in such pastimes as visiting zoos and bringing entertainers into the palace, when music and dance were not only in poor taste, but also strictly forbidden to mourners. He used public money for making gifts of concubines to his friends and imprisoned officials who tried to admonish him. Worse still, Liu ate meat, drank spirits, and engaged in sexual activity (all forbidden to mourners). In fact, while traveling to the capital, he ordered his subordinates to seize women on the road and load them into screened carriages. Upon his arrival in the capital, the debauchery continued, as Liu and his followers took liberties with women from the dead emperor’s harem. Acts such as these led Huo to conclude, not unreasonably, that the young man, though he wore the garments of deepest mourning, was “without sorrow or grief in his heart.” Such a lack of filial piety, Huo reminded the empress dowager, was the gravest of crimes, and thus called for severe punishment and removal from power. Huo’s arguments met with imperial favor: not long afterwards, Liu’s riotous followers were executed, and he was duly removed as heir apparent and sent back to the provinces.

The fact that an imperial heir was removed for improper conduct in mourning seems to reflect the dominance of filial piety as a social virtue. Indeed, there is other evidence for such a conclusion. As Michael Nylan puts it, the Han court claimed “to rule by the virtue of filial piety.” Not surprisingly,
Han emperors adopted the posthumous title of “filial” (xiao 孝), as in the Filial Emperor Wen or the Filial Emperor Wu. Beginning with Emperor Hui 惠 (r. 195–188 BCE), emperors of the Western Han, operating on the assumption that filial sons made for loyal officials, issued proclamations calling for the “Filial,” the “Filial and Incorrupt,” the “Filial and Fraternal,” and the “Utmost Filial” to be recruited into the bureaucracy. The dominance of filial piety as a social virtue can be seen finally in certain legal statutes that called for the unfilial to be executed, with their remains cast off into the marketplace.

But despite the importance of filial piety in Western Han society, few men observed the custom of three years mourning for their parents, a practice long assumed to have embodied filial devotion. According to extant records from the Western Han, only four officials and one imperial family member are known to have observed three years mourning (see table 1.1). If we apply a looser standard of evidence and include men known for their proper ritual conduct while wearing mourning, then two more cases may be added, bringing the total number of men who observed the custom to seven. The paucity of such accounts raises the following question: if mourning was indeed the ultimate measure of filial piety, why are so few men said to have worn extended mourning for their parents?

In this chapter, I attempt to explain this apparent paradox, one first noticed by two Qing historians, Zhang Shouchang 張壽常 (fl. 1750), and He Zhuo 何焯 (1661–1772). Examining the extant textual records, which include statements of court policy, excavated administrative documents, and memorials by leading statesmen, I argue that the striking paucity of accounts of Western Han men observing three years mourning reflects neither the biases of the Han chroniclers nor state policies explicitly forbidding the practice. Rather, the scarcity of such accounts is due to a variety of possible factors, ranging from official discouragement and elite indifference to classical mourning protocol, to the importance of rhetoric that called upon officials to transcend personal obligations and affinities—even to kin—in order to maintain the public order. Such rhetoric left its imprint on the beliefs entertained by some (but certainly not all) elite men about filial obligation: namely, that impartial public service, more so than mourning, represented the ultimate expression of filial piety.

A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ILLUSION?

Does the scarcity of accounts mean that only a few members of the Han political elite observed three years mourning? Certainly, it is very easy to imagine that elite men had the inclination to observe three years mourning for their parents, but historians Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–ca. 85 BCE) and Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE), our main sources for the period, fail to mention it. Perhaps there was a systematic bias against recording such information—or perhaps three years mourning was too common a practice to mention.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF MOURNER</th>
<th>HIGHEST OFFICE ATTAINED</th>
<th>PERSON MOURNED</th>
<th>THREE YEARS MOURNING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gongsun Hong</td>
<td>Chancellor (xiang 相)</td>
<td>Stepmother</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. 200–121 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Zhu Jian</td>
<td>Chancellor of Huainan 淮南</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 196 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ju Meng</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 154 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chen Rong</td>
<td>Marquis (hou 侯) of Longxi 厉緡</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 145–116 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Jin Midi</td>
<td>Prince of the Xiongnu 匈奴人民 (and Han hostage)</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 140–87 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Liu Bo</td>
<td>King (wang 王) of Hejian 河間</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 114 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Wang Shang</td>
<td>Prime Minister (chengxiang 程相)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 46–25 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Yu Yong</td>
<td>Imperial Counselor (yushi dafu 御史大夫)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. ca. 40–20 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Zhai Fangjin</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Stepmother</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 28–7 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Lou Hu</td>
<td>Grand Administrator (taishou 太守) of Guanghan 广漢</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 27 BCE–7 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Xue Xiu</td>
<td>Governor of the Capital (jingzhaoyin 京兆尹)</td>
<td>Stepmother</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 7 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Liu Liang</td>
<td>King of Hejian</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d. 5 BCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Yuan She</td>
<td>Magistrate (ling 令) of Gukou 谷口</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fl. 13–25 CE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Yao Qi</td>
<td>Aide to the Officer of Thieves (zeicaoyuan 贼曹掾)</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Xin Period)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Song 湘</td>
<td>Magistrate of Sui 郑</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Zun 尊</td>
<td>Magistrate of Sui 郑</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Hua Qiao 华侨</td>
<td>Magistrate of Tan 郑</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Er Xin 元助</td>
<td>Assistant (zhong 范) of Licheng 利成</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the one hand, evidence suggests that the scarcity of such accounts does not reflect a bias against making records of mourning. Both Sima and Ban mention mourning obligations in a handful of cases, which belies a systematic bias. For example, in one case Ban notes that a senior minister quit his post in order to wear mourning. On the other hand, other evidence indicates that three years mourning was not so common a practice that it would go unmentioned. In fact, records of a number of cases suggest that observing extended mourning was unusual enough to catch the attention of the mourner’s contemporaries. Consider the case of Yu Yong (fl. ca. 40–20 BCE; table 1.1, no. 8), who had been a prodigal son. When his father died in 40 BCE, Yu distinguished himself through his mourning: “he dwelt in sorrow, as was prescribed by the rites, and his filial conduct became famous.” He became so well known, in fact, that he won appointment as the Palace Attendant (shizhong 侍中) and as the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace (zhonglang jiang 中郎將). The best evidence, however, that three years mourning was not widely observed by members of the political elite during the Western Han comes from comments made by Ban Gu in the first century of the Eastern Han. Reflecting on the rare case of the observant Yuan She (fl. 13–25 CE; table 1.1, no. 13), who lived only a generation or two before him, Ban notes, “At that time, there were few who observed three years mourning.”

**Imperial Prohibitions?**

If the paucity of accounts reflects the fact that Han elite men did not widely observe three years mourning, we are then left with explaining why this was the case. One explanation, first proposed by historian Yang Shuda (1885–1956), is that Han court policies strongly discouraged (if not explicitly forbade) officials from observing three years mourning. According to Yang, Han court policy only changed during the Xin period, when the imperial usurper Wang Mang began to encourage the practice. Indeed, if we believe Ban Gu, Wang encouraged the revival of classical institutions and learning. As regent, he reportedly observed three years mourning for the empress dowager. And Wang did more than set a personal example: he even required high-ranking officials to wear mourning for Emperor Ping (r. 1 BCE–6 CE).

In many regards, Yang’s thesis makes sense, despite its drawbacks (which will be examined presently). There are several reasons why the court, initially led by vigorous emperors, may have wanted to prevent officials from observing three years mourning. For one thing, the custom would have required officials to leave their posts for twenty-five to twenty-seven months. From the perspective of governance, this would have been disruptive. Additionally, the first two Western Han emperors were born in social obscurity and reportedly did not like archaic customs and rituals, complaining that some had been rendered pointless by changing times. Citing this principle, Han emperors and their
advisors suggested dispensing with rituals that were cumbersome, expensive, or otherwise not to their liking.\textsuperscript{13}

Clearly there are potential reasons why Han emperors would have discouraged officials from observing three years mourning, but does much evidence of either imperial discouragement or prohibition exist? Scholars (including Yang) point to the edict issued posthumously by Emperor Wen 文 (r. 180–157 BCE) in 157 BCE as evidence of imperial prohibition.\textsuperscript{14} In it, the emperor provides directions for his own mourning and burial rites. As transmitted in Ban Gu’s History of the Han (Hanshu 漢書), the text reads,

![Chinese text]

[It is thus ordered of all the officers and commoners under Heaven: When this order arrives, they are to wail over the course of three days, and then all are to remove their mourning garments. There will be no prohibitions against them taking wives or giving away their daughters in marriage, making sacrifices to gods or ancestors, drinking spirits, or eating meat. . . . Do not send the commoners to wail over the body inside the hall of the palace [where the coffin is kept]. Those in the hall who wail over the body, each of them at dawn and dusk should raise their voices fifteen times [in wailing]. Once the rites are completed, they should desist. And except for the [fifteen] times that they wail over the body at dawn and dusk, it is prohibited that anyone should take it upon himself to wail. After the coffin is lowered into the grave, the mourners will wear mourning garments of roughly processed cloth for fifteen days, mourning garments of smoothly processed cloth for fourteen days, and thin mourning garments for seven days before removing their mourning garments. Those who are not mentioned in this order should deal with affairs along the same lines of the order. Notify all under Heaven and make them clear and aware of Our intentions.\textsuperscript{15}]

Judging from this edict, the emperor did not wish his chief mourners (or anyone, for that matter) to observe three years mourning on his behalf. Instead he ordered his chief mourners to wear mourning for only forty-three days—seven days before and thirty-six days after burial—rather than twenty-five months; to wear hemp sashes and belts no more than three inches wide (as opposed to nine and seven inches, respectively); and to limit their wailing to dawn and dusk.\textsuperscript{16}

In fairness to Yang Shuda and others, in this posthumous edict Emperor Wen did strongly discourage three years mourning. Like many critics of the late Warring States and Western Han, Wen thought that people observed the custom because they lacked perspective about death. He complained that his contemporaries prized life but hated death, and indulged in lavish burials and heavy mourning as a result.\textsuperscript{17}
Although he certainly discouraged the practice of three years mourning, Emperor Wen did not prohibit it. For one thing, as Xu Gan (170–217 CE), an Eastern Han social critic (and later proponent of three years mourning), was quick to point out, the edict was very limited in scope: it applied only to mourning for Wen himself. Furthermore, the edict never mentions or criticizes the custom by name, only referring to “heavy mourning.” And indeed, while we may say that Wen opposed the practice, he certainly did not prohibit or prevent people from observing three years mourning for their own parents.

The only other evidence I have found to support Yang’s claim that the Han court discouraged officials from observing three years mourning comes from administrative documents recently excavated at the Zhangjiashan site (186 BCE). There, one administrative document discusses rules on mourning leave for local officials:

[The statute observes: Those who are responsible for affairs in the county magistrate’s office, but whose father or mother or wife dies, are allowed a grace leave of thirty days. If their paternal grandfather or grandmother dies or their uterine siblings die, they are allowed fifteen days. Any who are remiss or act out of anger are to be shaved and made wall-builders or grain-pounders of the state. They are to be shackled at the feet and transported to the bureau of the salt mines in Ba commandery.] 19

At first glance, there seems to be two reasons to interpret the document as evidence that officials were prohibited from observing extended mourning periods. First, the document mentions that officials are permitted thirty days’ leave for burying their parents or spouse, and fifteen days for grandparents or maternal siblings. This suggests, at the very least, that official policy would have discouraged three years mourning simply by not providing the requisite leave time. In many ways, this is expected of the court when we consider the administrative chaos that would have ensued if all officials had been allowed to take extended leaves of absence. 20 Second, and perhaps more important, the document seems to indicate that those who fail to abide by the rules, or who are remiss or act out of anger (asahan 敵悍), should be punished with hard labor.

A closer look at the Zhangjiashan case and other material, however, suggests that this administrative document does not provide strong evidence of a prohibition against three years mourning. The passage does not say that officials were forbidden from taking more than thirty days’ leave; it merely states that officials were allowed to take leaves of thirty days, leaving open the possibility that court statutes required officials to stay away from their posts for at least this period for the sake of propriety or due to concerns about death pollution. 22 In addition, there is evidence that officials who took longer leaves for mourning were not punished. One of the Juyan 居延 or Edsin-gol
administrative documents (ca. 100 BCE–40 CE) mentions one official taking a sixty-two-day leave; several others mention officials taking leaves of three months for the death of parents. Still another fragmentary document, as interpreted by historian Yan Buke, refers to an official taking a six-month leave of absence on the occasion of his wife's death. Judging from what remains of these documents, none of the officials was punished for doing so.

The meaning of aohan (guilty of being remiss or acting out of anger) as used in the Zhangjiashan document also raises questions. Aohan is admittedly a difficult term to interpret; it is not clear whether it refers here to laxity in returning to an official post or in failing to fulfill mourning obligations. Although both readings are plausible, the larger context of the passage, which deals with punishments for the unfilial, favors the latter reading. Consider the following excerpt from subsequent portions of the document detailing the same case, which, besides being interesting for prurient reasons, also provides greater context:

[The property rights] of a wife are secondary with respect to the parents of her husband. If in [prior] cases in which a father or mother had died—and before he or she had been buried, the child had fornicated by the side of the deceased's [coffin]—the child would have been deemed unfilial. Being unfilial, [the child] would have been cast off in the marketplace. If his or her crime had been secondary in severity to being unfilial, then [the child] would have merited being tattooed and made a wall-builder or grain-pounder. Had he or she been lax or acted out of anger, then [the child] would have been shaved. Applying this principle to this case, the wife reveres the husband, and reveres him second only to her father and mother. Yet A's husband died, and she was not sorrowful or grieved. She fornicated with a man by the side of the deceased's [coffin], and thus her offense warrants the punishments as stipulated by the two regulations concerning the "unfilial" and "those guilty of being remiss or acting out of anger." 

Judging from this passage, aohan does not refer to an official's failure to return to his post on time here (or, more generally, to laxness in carrying out official duties). Instead, aohan refers to the widow's ritual shortcomings, and therefore does not suggest the existence of statutes that punish officials for taking mourning leaves of more than thirty days.

In addition to the lack of strong evidence for discouraging three years mourning, there are reasons to doubt that the Western Han emperors and their advisors were in complete agreement in their dislike of the practice. As Yang Tianyu has recently suggested, long before Wang Mang promoted three years mourning, Emperor Wen's successors and their advisors began to
officially encourage it. During the early part of the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE), Tian Fen (d. 131 BCE), and Dou Ying (d. 131 BCE), two imperial uncles, attempted to reform mourning practice. According to Sima Qian and Ban Gu, the two advocated “use [of] the classical rites as the regulations for mourning in order to promote great peace.” The policies foundered, though only because the political fortunes of Tian and Dou suddenly fell as a result of court factionalism. The account of an imperial brother, Liu Liang (d. 5 BCE; table 1.1, no. 12), provides further evidence that the Han court encouraged men to observe three years mourning. When his mother died, Liu Liang mourned her “according to the rites” for three years. His conduct impressed Emperor Yuan (r. 48–33 BCE), who rewarded Liu with more territory.

In fact, later courts made repeated efforts to ensure that at least certain officials had adequate leave time for fulfilling their mourning obligations, as seen in two edicts. In the first, issued in 66 BCE, Emperor Xuan (r. 74–48 BCE) expressed his concern that military officers be allowed to return home and bury their parents:

If one leads the commoners with filial piety, then all under Heaven will be obedient. Now, there are those among the hundred surnames who encounter unfortunate circumstances necessitating the wearing of mourning garments and sashes. . . . Yet the officers responsible for overseeing [laborers] are caused to be unable to bury their dead. This damages the heart of the filial son, and we sympathize greatly with such people. From this day on, those who suffer the loss of their grandparents or parents will not oversee labor, and will be allowed to go back to prepare the body for burial and “escort the dead to the end” in order to fulfill the way of the child.

This edict raises the question of how long a mourning leave these officers were allowed to take. I believe that the language is intentionally vague: officers should go as long as required “to fulfill the way of the child.” In theory, this statement could be interpreted as a regulation that allowed officers to observe the full twenty-five months of mourning. Yet in practical terms, if we can believe one Eastern Han interpreter, this edict provided officers with considerably longer mourning leaves. A second edict, also from the late Western Han, clearly encouraged the custom of three years mourning, but was somewhat limited in scope. Upon his accession in 7 BCE, Emperor Ai (r. 7–1 BCE) granted all court erudites (boshi 博士) and students of the classics (dizi 弟子) three years of mourning leave.

Yet despite such official encouragement, members of the Western Han political elite seem to have paid little attention to whether their contemporaries fulfilled their mourning obligations to parents. This is obvious from the case
of Xue Xuan 薛宣 (fl. 20 BCE–3 CE), a former Chancellor and lord of Gaoyang (Gaoyang hou 高陽侯). His younger brother, Xue Xiu 薛修 (fl. 7 BCE; table 1.1, no. 11), was the Governor of the Capital. When their stepmother died, Xiu decided to quit his official post and observe three years mourning. Xuan not only refused to do so himself, but also strongly advised his younger brother against observing the custom. The dispute led to bad feelings between the brothers, but it attracted little attention at the time. Years later, during the reign of Emperor Ai, a court erudite named Shen Xian 申咸 took the younger brother's side in the dispute. He voiced his opinion that because Xuan had not observed three years mourning for his stepmother, he was unworthy of his post as Lord of Gaoyang. Xuan's son, himself an official, overheard these rumors and bribed another man to wound and mutilate Shen. Subsequently men at court debated what punishment Xuan and his son deserved. Interestingly, they observed that the son's anger was entirely understandable, and decided he should be punished with four years of hard labor (but not death or mutilation) for “disrespectful conduct” (bujing 不敬). As for Shen Xian, one official noted that “the rumors he spread were inappropriate and could not be called righteous.” As this case illustrates, Xue Xuan's contemporaries by and large saw nothing irregular about his failure to observe three years mourning; instead, they thought it was Shen Xian who deserved censure, for making it an issue in the first place!

Further evidence suggests that many members of the Western Han political elite did not regard fulfilling the obligation of three years mourning as the ultimate test of character, because a man’s career might not be adversely affected even if he was punished for neglecting his mourning obligations entirely. For example, Ban Gu mentions the case of Chen Tang 陳湯 (fl. 47 BCE), who did not return home to bury his father. Chen was punished for this, along with the person who recommended him as an Abundant Talent. Though he lost the post, Chen's fortunes were soon revived when he was recommended as a Gentleman Cadet and then subsequently as Lieutenant Colonel (fu xiaowei 副校尉) of the Western Regions. Later, he won the support of Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE), the famed author, and was ennobled. After he died, he was even honored by Wang Mang with the posthumous title of Lord of Pohuzhuang 破胡莊, in return for his own earlier suggestion that Wang be ennobled.

**DID FILIAL SONS HAVE TO MOURN?**

The fact that many members of the Western Han political elite were indifferent to mourning obligations raises the possibility that they were not entirely “Confucianized.” Such an argument has surfaced in previous discussions of Han mourning practice, especially in the works of Kamiya Noriko, Keith Knapp, and Yang Tianyu. Kamiya’s arguments in particular merit our attention. Examining the practice of “exceeding the rites” (guoli 過禮) in the Eastern Han, Kamiya argues that there were gaps between actual practice and
mourning prescription through the end of the period, an indication that the “Confucianization” of the elite was still incomplete. The arguments of Kamiya and others admittedly make sense. After all, filial piety was a central component of “Confucianism,” and observing three years mourning was presumably an important expression of a son’s filial obligation to his parents. As a result, one would expect to be able to gauge whether the Han elite was “Confucianized” by the extent to which they observed extended mourning.

Before commenting on the merits of the “Confucianization” thesis, a brief digression about terminology is in order. The term “Han Confucianism” is often treated as synonymous with classical orthodoxy or imperial ideology. Recently, Michael Nylan, Kidder Smith, and Mark Csikszentmihalyi have challenged the existence of any kind of imperial orthodoxy in the Han. For one thing, there were no organized schools of thought responsible for transmitting a body of texts or coherent doctrines attributed to Confucius. In addition, there was nothing approximating an imperial orthodoxy based on the classics. As Nylan shows, the court never exclusively sponsored any single interpretation of the classics, let alone any one group of organized thinkers. Nor can we say that members of the educated elite—including those who called themselves classicists (ru)—professed allegiance to any core set of beliefs or doctrines.

Putting aside the issue of terminology, another problem with the “Confucianization” thesis is that it assumes that classical authors articulated a consistent position on mourning. To be sure, some classical authors insisted that filial sons had to wear three years mourning for parents. For example, in a famous anecdote from the Analects (Lunyu), Confucius (551–479 BCE) himself underscores the importance of three years mourning. There, in fact, the Master reportedly goes so far as to condemn his incorrigible disciple, Zai Wo, for suggesting that a son could mourn his parents for less than the required twenty-five months. “Yu [Zai Wo] is not humane,” Confucius said. “Only at three years is a child no longer held by his father and mother. Now, three years is the mourning custom that pervades all under Heaven. Did not Yu receive three years of affection from his father and mother?” Equally unambiguous pronouncements appear in other texts attributed to Warring States masters. The Mencius (fourth–third century BCE) declares three years mourning the obligation of all sons “from the Son of Heaven down to the commoner.”

Some classical authors clearly thought that sons should not observe extended mourning for their parents in circumstances in which the custom interfered with more important state obligations. The “Questions of Zengzi” chapter of the Book of Rites neatly explains an official’s mourning obligations as follows:
Zengzi [ca. 505–443 BCE] asked, “If a noble or an officer has an occasion [to which he would wear] personal mourning [i.e., for a parent], he can put off wearing mourning. If, however, a lord is mourned, under what conditions can [mourning] be removed?” Confucius said, “If a lord is mourned, then one wears mourning for the lord and does not venture to wear the garments of personal mourning. How can there be conditions under which mourning worn for a lord is removed?”

The dialogue reveals three things. First, it reveals that the authors considered mourning for a parent a personal affair (si). Though the authors do not go so far as to say that wearing mourning for a lord is public, nor do they equate it with official duty (gong), we can infer these views from the context of the passage. Second, the dialogue shows that the obligation to mourn a lord takes precedence over the obligation to mourn a parent. Third, it is Zengzi, the figure most associated with filial conduct, who raises the issue. The fact that Zengzi would insist on the priority of official duty over the obligation to mourn parents is noteworthy, especially in a chapter that discusses the minutiae of mourning protocol. It suggests that at least some ritualists did not regard the obligation to wear three years mourning for parents as a duty of unsurpassable importance.

Similarly, Gongyang’s Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals discusses why it might be appropriate for an official not to wear mourning for parents under certain circumstances. To return to a passage mentioned in the introduction, this commentary ponders the question of whether it was appropriate for Min Sun to serve his lord during his period of mourning. In contrast to the Book of Rites, Gongyang’s Commentary rejects the idea that lords should call their ministers into service while those ministers are wearing mourning. “In antiquity when ministers encountered an occasion of great loss,” the Commentary states by way of criticism, “their lords did not call at their gates for three years,” as such requests “do not conform with the dictates of the human heart.” Surprisingly, Gongyang’s Commentary also maintains that it was appropriate for Min Sun to have answered his lord’s call to service, although it does not provide much justification for this stance. “Although it was wrong for the lord to have commissioned the minister under the circumstances,” the text remarks, “for the minister to have carried out his duties—this was in accord with ritual propriety.”

Later texts, such as Luxuriant Dew of the Annals (Chunqiu fanlu), elaborate on the appropriate reasons for officials to remove mourning under certain circumstances. In one chapter, its putative author, the Han statesman and thinker Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BCE), explored the question of whether Min should have completed his official mission. Dong concurred with Gongyang’s Commentary that Min had done the right thing.
But whereas the Commentary's authors emphasized that it was wrong for the lord to have asked Min to serve, Luxuriant Dew of the Annals is silent on this matter. Instead, the focus here is on the obligations of the minister to his lord, which took priority over the obligation to wear mourning for parents. Dong thought that ministers, even in times of peace, were not free to act in ways that ran contrary to dynastic prerogatives. To do so would be to “abase” (bei 卑) one’s lord—and to threaten the very hierarchies that served as the foundations of the political order. According to Dong, the right course of action was for the minister to proceed on his mission unless recalled. But instead of considering this a necessary but unfortunate duty, Dong gave it a positive spin: “This was what is meant by not harming the venerated one [i.e., the lord] on account of an intimate, and not impeding the public good on account of the personal.”

Like Luxuriant Dew of the Annals, the Garden of Persuasions (Shuoyuan 論; ca. first century BCE) also defends the view that there were circumstances under which officials should not wear mourning for parents. Once again, discussion revolves around the figure of Min Sun, who is also depicted elsewhere in the document as a filial exemplar. Commenting on the incident involving Min, the author of the Garden largely concurred with Dong Zhongshu and the author of Gongyang’s Commentary: it was indeed right for Min (and other ministers) to continue serving in office during their periods of mourning. As is the case with Luxuriant Dew of the Annals, the discussion in the Garden of Persuasions sidesteps the issue of whether it was inappropriate for lords to deny their ministers leaves of mourning. Instead, the text emphasizes that ministers were to act in ways that showed their respect, above all, for dynastic authority; not doing so would jeopardize not only larger principles, but also the health of the state. “To act without authorization in situations in which there is no danger,” the text remarks, “is not to be a minister.”

OFFICIAL SERVICE AND FILIAL OBLIGATION

The foregoing discussion raises a question: how could classical authors argue that filial piety was a cardinal social virtue if they defended officials who chose not to wear mourning for parents? To answer this question, we must first ask if classical authors had uniform views on the relationship between filial obligation and mourning. As will be shown presently, they certainly did not. In fact, some classical texts are vague about whether observing extended mourning was considered the most important expression of filial obligation, and others even go so far as to emphasize state service, rather than mourning, as a component of filial duty.

Of course, some canonical texts (in particular, the Classic of Filial Piety) would seem to assert that three years mourning was the most important component of filial obligation. The following passage, for example, would seem to be unambiguous, at least at first glance:
子曰：孝子之喪親也，哭不懶，禮無容，言不文，服美不安，聞樂不樂，食旨不甘，此哀戚之情也。三日而食，教民無以死傷生，毀不滅性，此聖人之政也。哭不過三年，示民有終也。生事愛敬，死事哀感，生民之本盡矣，死生之義備矣，孝子之事親終矣。

[The Master said, "In mourning his parents, the wailing of a filial son should not be prolonged; his handling of ritual matters should lack deportment, and his speech should be without embellishment. He does not find comfort in wearing fine garments, does not take pleasure in hearing music, and does not relish the taste of delicacies. All of these are characteristics of sorrow. After three days, the son in mourning eats to instruct the commoners that he does not harm the living on account of the dead and does not extinguish his nature though wracked with grief. These are the regulations of the sages. Mourning does not extend beyond three years in order to show the commoners that there is a conclusion ... If in life he serves his parents with love and reverence, and in death serves them with sorrow and grief, then the basis for generating the people will be completed, the duties to the living and the dead fulfilled, and the filial son's service to his parents exhausted."\(^53\)]

A closer look at the *Classic of Filial Piety*, however, does not explicitly reveal if the authors would demand that all sons wear three years mourning. Comments about the effects of three years mourning on governance suggest that the authors were speaking of the filial obligations of men at the top of the state hierarchy, those who set examples for commoners. One advantage of this interpretation is that it is consistent with the larger pattern established in the text of clarifying the filial obligations of men of different stations. For example, the authors claim that the Son of Heaven should express his filial regard for his parents by exhausting his feelings of love and reverence for them, thus educating the population. In contrast, nobles should express their filial regard by modeling their words and conduct on those of ancient kings, thus protecting their ancestral temples from ruin; commoners, in turn, should take care to be moderate in their expenditures so that they can support their parents. Quite notably, for *shì*士, or officers—the men who would find themselves choosing between the demands of state service and familial obligation—the observation of three years mourning is not stressed. In fact, the *Classic of Filial Piety* advocates conscientious state service for these men: "If in his loyalty and obedience, he misses nothing in serving his superiors, he will in the end be able to preserve his official stipend and position. He will be able to guard his ancestral sacrifices: this is the filial piety of an officer."\(^54\)

The authors of the *Classic of Filial Piety* also emphasized earning fame through exemplary official service. In one passage, the key components of filial obligation are summarized as follows:

身體髮膚，受之父母，不敢毀傷，孝之始也。立身行道，揚名於後世，以顯父母，孝之終也。夫孝，始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。
[The body and the form, the skin and the hair all come from one’s father and mother, and thus one does not venture to destroy them: this is the beginning of filial piety. To establish oneself and carry out the Way, to make one’s name known to later generations, thereby extolling one’s father and mother: this is the end of filial piety. In the beginning, filial piety lies in serving one’s parents; in the middle, it entails serving one’s lord; and in the end, it involves establishing oneself.]55

The passage raises two points of interest: first, it deals specifically with the filial obligations of those in official service; and second, it emphasizes the multifaceted nature of filial obligation. For the authors, it was not enough for a son to merely serve his parents. A filial son was also someone who made his fame through exemplary public service. In fact, fame—and not the wearing of mourning—is described as the end (i.e., the ultimate expression) of filial regard. Although the emphasis here on fame in no way suggests that the authors discounted the importance of wearing mourning, it raises a question not addressed in the text: if an official had to choose between leaving office to wear mourning and making his name through exemplary public service, which of the two was more important?

Like the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the *Annals of Lü* (*Lüshi chunqiu*; ca. 239 BCE) emphasizes expressions of filial obligation other than extended mourning, in particular a man’s public conduct. In fact, while other aspects of filial obligation are mentioned, the authors fail to bring up three years mourning at all. The text places great importance on keeping one’s body intact, for example, since “the body is the form left behind by one’s father and mother.”56 But above all, a filial son is to distinguish himself through his public conduct. A son must be “dignified” in his daily interactions with others; he must “serve his lord conscientiously”; and he must be “attentive with respect to his official duties,” “trustworthy with his friends and associates,” and “valorous” when serving in the lines of battle. Such conduct, furthermore, should not be taken as something above and beyond the basic obligations of the filial son; sons who fail to conduct themselves in this manner, the *Annals of Lü* declares, are not filial (*feixiao*).57

The most extensive discussion of the relationship between state service and filial obligation is found in the *Odes by Han* (*Hanshi waizhuan*; ca. 150 BCE). Like the *Classic of Filial Piety* and the *Annals of Lü*, the *Odes by Han* reiterates that exemplary public service is an important component of filial obligation. Compared with earlier treatments of the problem, the *Odes by Han* goes a step further to explore challenges to the idea that official service should be a seamless extension of filial obligation. As we will see below, filial sons who entered the official service not only had to put aside more personal expressions of devotion to parents, but also had to become impartial officials.

Like earlier texts, the *Odes by Han* does endorse the view that sons serve their fathers best by being exemplary officials. In anecdotes about Zengzi, the aforementioned Warring States paragon of filial piety, the authors suggest that
filial sons provide support for their parents by earning official stipends. Furthermore, those who refrain from public service while their parents live “cannot be counted among the filial.” We find a similar understanding of filial obligation in a dialogue recounted in the Odes by Han. The dialogue between Tian Guo 田過, and King Xuan 齊宣 (fourth century BCE) attempts to explain away any apparent contradictions between state service and filial obligation. It opens with the king reiterating the analogy between lord and father, and asking whether a father is more important than a lord. Tian answers the king’s queries by asserting that “a lord is most likely not as important as a father.” This answer prompts the king to speculate angrily about the inconsistency of being an official when such service would require leaving one’s father, and therefore not attending to his everyday needs. In defense of his answer, Tian Guo reportedly said,

> "If it were not for the land and soil of the lord, there would be no way to provide residence for my parents. If it were not for the stipend of my lord, there would be no way to support my parents. If it were not for the titled ranks of my lord, there would be no way to venerate and extol the name of my parents. All of these things I receive from my lord, and I provide them to my parents. When I serve my lord, I am thereby serving my parents.”

King Xuan looked gloomy and had no response. The Odes observes, “There is no respite from the business of serving my king, and there is no time to support my father.”

In effect, the dialogue contrasts two understandings of filial obligation. The first, for which the king of Qi serves as a mouthpiece, emphasizes the importance of children, not only for tending personally to their parents’ needs, but also for providing them with love and respect. The second, expressed by Tian Guo, asserts that parents can also be served through illustrious service. Certainly this second perspective is hardly unique to the Odes by Han, but the priority placed on official service was perhaps new. The best way to express filial piety was not by staying home and attending to the everyday needs of parents, but through exemplary public service (“There is no respite from the business of serving my king”). In other words, an official served his father best by putting aside certain personal expressions of filial piety and affection in order to better redirect his energies toward official service.

Other sections of the Odes by Han push the logic of exemplary service further, arguing that official service was not simply a seamless extension of filial obligation, but that filial obligation ultimately required sons to become impartial officials. In one episode, the mother of Zhuang Zhishan 壯之善 rebuked her son as he prepared to go off to battle. “Is it right,” she asked, “to abandon a mother and die for a lord?” In response, Zhuang reminded his mother that the stipend he received from his lord was used to support her. Later, on the road, Zhuang fell off his chariot, prompting his attendant to suggest turning
back. But Zhuang replied, “Fear is my personal emotion [si]. To die for my lord would for me be in accordance with public duty [gong]. I have heard that the gentleman does not damage the public because of the personal.”60 In many regards, Zhuang was emblematic of certain attitudes about filial piety: in serving his parents he put impartial public service before all else.

As other episodes recorded in the Odes by Han make clear, the notion that filial sons served their parents best by becoming impartial public servants also had its detractors. A certain degree of ambivalence toward the idea that impartial public officials always made for filial sons is detected in a few episodes. In one chapter, we hear of a certain mythical gentleman of the South, a Shen Ming 申鳴, whose filial piety became known to his king.61 The king summoned Shen with the aim of appointing him to office, but Shen was reluctant to go, realizing that he would have to “give up being a son in order to become a minister.” Shen's father, however, urged him to go to the king, observing, “If you receive a stipend from the country and hold a position at court, you will be happy and I will have no worries. I wish you to serve.” Ever the obedient son, Shen went and received the king’s command, becoming a military official. A year later, Shen led a campaign against a revolt. Facing defeat, the insurgents took Shen's father hostage. “If you join us,” the leader of the insurgents told Shen, “I will divide with you the state of Chu. If you do not join us, your father will die.” The situation presented Shen with a terrible dilemma. “At first I was my father's son,” he said. “Now I am the minister of my lord. Since I am no longer in a position to be a filial son, how can I not be a conscientious minister?” Shen thereupon pursued the insurgents, killing them, but his father was also slain. After the campaign, Shen was rewarded by the king, but he lamented the fact that he had failed to be either a conscientious official or a filial son, and so took his own life.62

To return to the question raised at the beginning of this section, was it necessarily inconsistent for classical authors to extol the virtues of filial piety but not to insist upon officials’ observance of three years mourning? Certainly, a few classical texts, like the Mencius, emphasized three years mourning as a crucial component of filial obligation. But classical authors also diverged in their understandings of filial obligation. By some accounts, observing extended mourning was not necessarily considered the most important way to express filial obligation. Other accounts de-emphasized mourning altogether for officials, arguing that a son served his parents best by earning a lasting reputation and a stipend through exemplary public service.

FILIAL OBLIGATION AND LARGER DISCOURSES ON OFFICIAL SERVICE

Having argued above that classical authors held divergent views of filial obligation, we now ask why notions of filial obligation that emphasized official service had any appeal for the political elite, especially if these notions were
Where Did All the Filial Sons Go?

controversial. Surely such an interpretation of filial obligation allowed men in office to forego observance of three years mourning, a practice some must have regarded as not only inconvenient, but also disruptive to a career. But there was also another reason: this view of filial obligation was appealing because it complemented the dominant rhetoric in the Western Han court. This rhetoric of impartiality was a political rhetoric that called upon officials, as well as rulers, to transcend their personal interests, biases, and obligations for the sake of impartially maintaining the public order.

The rhetoric of impartiality reached as far back as the Warring States period, and its earliest incarnation can be found in the *Mozi* (ca. fifth–fourth century BCE), a text that often pits personal obligations (sometimes associated with familial interests) against the public good. In the document, the thinker Mozi called upon his contemporaries, especially rulers, to express “impartial concern” (jian’ai) for “all under Heaven,” rather than partisanship. In one especially acrimonious passage, Mozi reportedly complained that one major reason why governance was ineffective was that rulers employed only those to whom they were partial—such as their kin or their male lovers—and thus failed to elevate “worthies” like Mozi himself.

By the reign of Emperor Wen, the rhetoric of impartiality had become ubiquitous at the Western Han court, as ministers attempted to curb the influence and power of imperial relatives and favorites. For example, in his indictment of the Qin, the Senior Tutor (taifu) Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BCE) criticized the First Emperor for “dispensing with the Way of Kings and establishing in official positions those for whom he had personal concern.” According to Jia, the objects of the First Emperor’s “personal concern” included his own kin. Jia also leveled the same charge at the early Han emperors. In a sharply worded memorial to Emperor Wen, he observed,

Kaishì zhèwáng, suí míngwéi zī, zhèngyǐyǒu bù yīqǐ páng dì zhīxīn. Fù yùbù dé de rén, tā nǐ zī kuài bì fúzhí, rú tā qīng bǐ qiě wéi yī zhī. Zān qù, yì bā ci dōu bǐ yí zhī, bǐ zhī yī bǐ huá; mǎn fǎ lì bǐ fángyì. Zān wǎn bǐ zhī, lì bǐ zhī bǐ huá, zhī bǐ zhī bǐ huá; liè bǐ zhī bǐ huá, liè bǐ zhī bǐ huá! [Now, though they are in name your subjects, the various kings have really regarded you just as an untiiled brother or cousin. They fancy themselves outside the imperial system of rule, acting as the Sons of Heaven, presumptuously conferring titles of nobility upon others and exempting criminals from the death penalty. There are even some who use the yellow-silk covers for chariots [reserved for the Son of Heaven]. Hence, the Han regulations and codes fail to prevail. Regarding those who have not submitted to the rules, such as King Li [Liu Chang], if you allow them not to listen, how will they be made to come when summoned? Even in the event that they do come [to court for summons], how is the court to apply the laws to them?]68

Here, Jia Yi alluded to Emperor Wen’s reluctance to charge his wayward brother, Liu Chang 劉長 (ca. 199–174 BCE), with treason. Liu had violated
sumptuary rules, committed murder, and participated in a rebellion against his brother. Nevertheless, Wen had been unwilling to punish him because Liu was his last surviving brother. The well-known Liu Chang incident epitomized the difficulties of making subjects out of imperial brothers when affection for kin came into conflict with the demands of governance. Jia urged the emperor to discipline his feelings for his kin and make the impartial public order his priority. According to pressure from the senior tutor, Wen sent Liu into exile in 174 BCE, where the imperial brother subsequently died in a rage over his perceived mistreatment, according to Sima Qian’s account. Unhappy about this turn of events and the criticism he received over his handling of the affair, Wen wryly remarked: “Yao and Shun banished their own flesh-and-bone kin. The Duke of Zhou killed Guan and Cai. All under Heaven praise them as sages. Why is this so? It is because they did not harm the public on account of the personal.” Here, Emperor Wen was alluding to the story of two sage kings and the virtuous Duke of Zhou, who transcended their personal feelings and severely punished their own kin in order to preserve the public order.

Appeals to the rhetoric of impartiality reached their zenith with complaints about the influence of emperors’ maternal kin. This, of course, comes as little surprise, since imperial relatives must have been resented by other officials. In some cases in the Western Han, these complaints met with an emperor’s favor, as certain emperors were eager to eliminate powerful uncles who had become nuisances. For example, in 136 BCE, the aforementioned statesman Dong Zhongshu, Counselor of the Palace (zhong dafu 中大夫), urged Emperor Wu to execute his many “brothers, relatives, and those kin with flesh-and-bone ties,” because they were creating serious political instability. In particular, he was attacking the immense influence of Emperor Wu’s maternal uncle, Tian Fen. Dong claimed that the emperor’s kin damaged the greater peace (taiping zhi gong 太平之公) and could not be controlled. His views were shared by the court jester, Dongfang Shuo (fl. ca. 138–129 BCE), who also submitted a memorial to the emperor, inveighing against favoritism for imperial kin. In particular, the jester urged the emperor to resist the urge to shield an offending nephew from punishment. The Prime Minister Zhai Fangjin (fl. 28–7 BCE; table 1.1, no. 9) issued similar calls to a later emperor. And if we can believe the account given by Ban Gu, imperial relatives also deployed the rhetoric of impartiality on occasion, when it was in their best interests. Imperial usurper Wang Mang, for example, also submitted memorials, complaining about the special favors that the empress dowager showered on some of her own kin. (Wang, needless to say, was in the habit of claiming to be virtuous in all possible ways.) Although he was also the empress dowager’s kin, he claimed that the favors she showed to other relatives (but not to(554,774),(787,782) were an expression of partiality, and came at the cost of political cohesion.

In short, it was perhaps no coincidence that certain interpretations of filial obligation emphasized impartial public service over more personal acts of devotion to parents. In fact, these interpretations of filial obligation may be seen as
nothing more than a subset of a larger political rhetoric that flourished during
the Warring States and Western Han periods. Furthermore, such rhetoric was
constantly deployed in court struggles during the Western Han, mostly by min-
isters who sought to curb the power and privilege of imperial relatives.

NEW DIRECTIONS

Why did so few officials choose to observe three years mourning in the West-
ern Han, an age that glorified filial piety? Or, to put the question in more
positive terms, why did Western Han officials and imperial family members
observe mourning periods that were shorter than those prescribed by the rit-
ual classics? No doubt, any answer to this question will have to be tentative,
given the limited nature and number of sources for the period. That said, the
reasons for observance of shorter mourning periods cannot be chalked up to
Western Han court policy. Emperor Wen did indeed discourage others from
observing three years mourning for himself, but Han rulers even before Wang
Mang appear to have encouraged the practice, and even punished members
of the ruling elite who disregarded their mourning obligations or violated rit-
ual taboos. Nor can we interpret shorter mourning periods simply as a sign
that few members of the political elite were “Confucianized.” Certainly, some
members of the elite may have been ignorant of or indifferent to classical
mourning protocol. Yet familiarity with classical prescriptions alone would not
have been enough to goad members of the Han political elite into wearing
extended mourning, because classical authors failed to articulate a consistent
position on the relationship between mourning and filial obligation. In fact,
some classical authors regarded impartial public service, more than the observ-
ance of extended mourning, as the ultimate expression of filial obligation.
This understanding of filial obligation, furthermore, was consistent with the
dominant court rhetoric at the time. Such rhetoric called upon men, espe-
cially rulers, to transcend their personal feelings and affinities in order to bring
about an impartial public order.

Two accounts of Western Han officials in mourning, provided by Ban
Gu, offer material for further reflection. The first is about the aforementioned
Yuan She, who was famous for observing three years mourning. When his
father died, Yuan lived in a lean-to by the side of the tomb for three years. He
won great fame for this, in part because he was one of the few men of his age
who observed three years mourning. Unfortunately, Yuan left behind no docu-
ments explaining his actions, but looking at subsequent events in his life, his
decision to observe three years mourning fits a larger pattern. Yuan became
famous for spending large sums of money to build an extravagant tomb for his
father but little for other things. More tellingly, he quit his post as the Magis-
trate of Gukou and spent a year as a fugitive in order to avenge his uncle’s
murder. Yuan’s choices, particularly his decision to avenge his uncle, suggest
that he put personal obligations above official duty (and, for that matter, above
Prime Minister Zhai Fangjin, an older contemporary of Yuan’s, had been one of the most powerful men in the empire. Yet when his stepmother died, Zhai refused to observe three years mourning and removed his mourning garments after only thirty-six days. According to Ban, this was not a sign that Zhai lacked filial piety; on the contrary, he had been a good son who loved his stepmother and treated her well. He did not mourn her for long because, as the most senior minister in the empire, Zhai felt that he should not turn his back on the precedent set by Emperor Wen. Zhai’s conduct in mourning was thus consistent with his priorities. For him, fulfilling his official duties in an impartial manner came before personal obligations, and he urged the Han emperors to do the same.

The two accounts of Yuan She and Zhai Fangjin, I would argue, provide us with contrasting understandings of filial piety. The first view, epitomized by Yuan, maintains that a man expressed his filial obligations to kin through various acts of personal devotion, such as mourning, building lavish tombs, and even leaving an official post to avenge their deaths, if necessary. This is perhaps the understanding of filial piety that Huo Guang promoted in his prosecution of the heir apparent, as detailed at the beginning of this chapter. It is also an understanding of filial piety that Max Weber noticed years ago—that is, a view of filial obligation as primarily a personal obligation between a man and his father, or between a subject and his lord. In contrast, the second understanding of filial piety, epitomized by Zhai, provides a very different view. Although this understanding also regards filial piety as the basis for political relations, it maintains that a son served his father best not by fulfilling all of his personal obligations to his father, or attending to his father’s needs, but through impartial public service. In essence, this understanding required sons to do more than extend or transfer their feelings for their fathers to their lords. Rather, it required sons to transcend their personal feelings and motivations, transforming them into impartial public-mindedness.

The fact that competing understandings of filial piety existed raises the question of which of these views was dominant during the Western Han. Certainly it is tempting to argue that the understanding epitomized by Yuan She was dominant. After all, this was the understanding of filial piety that the great masters of the Warring States purportedly endorsed. But the fact that so few members of the political elite appear to have chosen to observe three years mourning suggests the contrary: it hints that views of filial piety that took impartial state service to be an important expression of filial obligation were more significant during the Western Han. Yet this understanding of filial piety did not hold sway for long, if it ever did. As the next chapter will show, another interpretation of filial obligation was soon to emerge in force.
CENTURIES OF TEARS AND WOE

Eastern Han men did not concern themselves merely with the death of kings; sometimes the death of a child could inspire a eulogist. One such inscription is dedicated to a young boy named Hu Gen (163–169). Hu had been no ordinary child, as he was the grandson of Hu Guang 胡廣 (91–172), the highest-ranking official of the realm, and one of the most admired.¹ Not long after the boy’s death at the age of six, a relative asked the great eulogist Cai Yong (see introduction) to write the inscription, which reads,

慈母悼痛
His loving mother was pained with grief;

昆姊孔懷
His elder brothers and sisters longed for him,

感懷懷之親愛
Moved by their closeness and love from infancy.

憐國戚之棄離
Though they regretted the separation ? from the capital,

乃懷宜就便
They deemed it at the time fitting and expedient ?

封二祖慕觀
To bury him by the side of the tomb of his two ancestors.

親屬李陶等
A relative, Li Tao, and others,³

相與追慕先君
Collectively recalling with longing the late gentleman,

悲悼遺嗣
Lamenting the passing of his offspring,

樹碑刊辭
Erected this stele, carving these words,

以慰哀思…
In order to console their sad thoughts …

當受永福
He should have received everlasting blessings,

為光為榮
He should have had honor, should have had glory!

如何天在
How then could Bright Heaven

降此短齡
Send down so short a lifespan?

惜繁華之方□
Begrudging us the springtime of this blossom!

望嚴霜而凋零
We looked on as the frost withered him.

咄童孺之夭逝兮
Alas, this young child died young,

傷慈母之肝膈
Hurting the liver-feelings of his loving mother,
Revealing far more interest in the intimate details of family grief than any document from the Western Han, this inscription is startling. More surprising still is the fact that the eulogist would highlight the grief experienced by the family at the passing of a small child; according to the ritual classics, Hu Gen had died too young for his relatives to wear mourning. Yet the inscription is focused on what Hu's relatives felt—not only grief and loss, but also frustration in their loss, an emotion that the authors of the ritual classics believed could not be expressed. In addition, the inscription conveys feelings of anger and bewilderment (“How then could Bright Heaven / Send down so short a lifespan?”).

The singularity of this inscription, however, fades when we consider how ubiquitous accounts of mourning were in the Eastern Han record. In comparison to their Western Han predecessors, members of the Eastern Han political elite commonly spoke, wrote, and displayed their grief over the loss of relatives: siblings, uncles, aunts, grandparents, children, and parents, too. The number of extant accounts of Eastern Han men and women wearing hemp mourning garments, burying their relatives, or expressing grief at the death of family members increased more than ninefold from the Western Han, from 21 to 192. Similarly, extant accounts of men wearing mourning for parents increased eightfold, from 18 to 148.

This chapter aims to explain why mourning became more visible in the Eastern Han textual record. We begin by tackling an elementary, but important, question: namely, is the fact that there are more accounts of mourning for the later period significant? After examining several potential scenarios, I conclude that the new visibility of mourning was indeed significant, as it indicates that members of the Eastern Han political and local elite were more likely than their Western Han predecessors to display grief over the loss of their parents, if not actually to wear mourning for them for extended periods. Moving to the crux of my argument, I then explain why tears, and other expressions of grief, became so visible in the textual record for the Eastern Han. I propose that the new visibility of grief reveals the rise of a particular belief about what constituted filial obligation. This belief not only assigned crucial importance to personal obligations (particularly the obligation to observe extended mourning), but also gave priority to these obligations over court service. Such a belief about filial obligation, finally, reflects the growing power of local society vis-à-vis the dynastic court.

BAD SOURCES OR HISTORIOGRAPHICAL FLUKE?

First we must consider whether the proliferation of accounts of Eastern Han men in mourning is in itself significant. Can we trust accounts of Eastern Han
mourned practice that were compiled several centuries after the end of the dynasty? And might the proliferation of accounts reflect the fact that Eastern Han men, unlike their predecessors, used more durable mediums (such as stone) for recording such information?

The possibility that many accounts of Han practice may be unreliable is a real concern, especially since more than half of our accounts (105 out of 192) can only be traced as far back as a source from the Six Dynasties (220–581 CE). Indeed, one wonders whether some accounts from the Six Dynasties reflect myths about famous Han men rather than actual Eastern Han practice; it is not difficult to imagine a scenario in which an Eastern Han official was the claimed ancestor of a powerful Six Dynasties clan. Such claims were important to Six Dynasties families, because descent from a Han official was not only prestigious, but also could be an important criterion for holding office.

Given these circumstances, it is not difficult to see why Six Dynasties chroniclers may have exaggerated the qualities of a putative ancestor. Not only might this ancestor become an exemplary son or mourner in later accounts, but he also might become such a virtuous man that his death was said to be mourned by many of his contemporaries.

Certainly, there are hints that at least some Six Dynasties accounts of Eastern Han men were exaggerated, if not distorted. One example is the case of Chen Shi (104–187 CE), who was purportedly an ancestor of the founder of the later Chen dynasty (557–589 CE). Chen Shi lived a life of relative obscurity after being purged from office during the Proscription (danggu; 166–184 CE), the result of a bloody factional fight between the eunuchs and their enemies. These enemies included members of the consort clans, such as Dou Wu (d. 168 CE); powerful bureaucrats, such as the Grand Commandant Chen Fan (ca. 90–168 CE); and their allies or followers. When this faction lost the fight, several hundred of them were executed or imprisoned; others, along with their family members, allies, and clients, were proscribed from political life by the eunuchs for more than two decades. As a result, many (including Chen Shi) were unable or unwilling to serve in office, and therefore entered retirement or reclusion. Despite this turn of events, Chen's death did not go unmarked; one Six Dynasties account records a claim that thirty thousand men attended his funeral.

In spite of this fanciful example, there are a couple of reasons to believe that Six Dynasties historians did provide a reliable account of Eastern Han mourning practice, for the most part. First, the account of Chen Shi's funeral is unlike most others in that it involves the ancestor of a powerful Six Dynasties family. In fact, the only other account involving a figure claimed as such was that of Cui Shi (103–ca. 170 CE), the social critic and author of Monthly Instructions for the Four Classes of People (Simin yueling). Yet before we assume that the two accounts of Cui wearing mourning are distortions from a later perspective, it must be noted that one of the accounts can also be found in an Eastern Han source.
The second reason to believe that Six Dynasties accounts are generally reliable is that many of them derive from now-lost Eastern Han sources. As Hans Bielenstein points out, Fan Ye, the fifth-century author of the *History of the Later Han*, did not create his history from scratch. In practice, Fan compiled and closely followed accounts from at least fourteen different earlier histories of the Eastern Han, a majority of which were authored by important Eastern Han men who had access to the imperial archives. And indeed, when we compare Fan’s accounts of mourning with what remains of these earlier sources, we find considerable overlap in at least twenty-one cases (see table 2.1). In fact, in many of these, Fan followed the earlier accounts so closely that he copied them word for word.

It also may be asked whether the increased visibility of mourning in the Eastern Han reflects a change mainly in the nature of the sources. Such visibility might simply be due to the fact that funerary stelae, which often relate how their subjects had mourned, first emerged as a genre in the Eastern Han. For all we know, Western Han authors could have described how their contemporaries mourned but were not yet in the habit of recording these facts in stone, a medium ostensibly less vulnerable to natural destruction than bamboo or silk. Yet two facts suggest that the practice of making inscriptions on stone was not solely responsible for the new visibility of mourning. First, Six Dynasties historians did not always refer to stelae (funerary or other) for information about how Eastern Han men and women mourned, even when such a stele was available and known to the historian. In a few cases, Fan Ye’s fifth-century account diverged from the information provided on stelae. For example, in Cai Yong’s stele inscription for Chen Shi, the eulogist praised the dead man’s son, Chen Ji (fl. 188), for not exceeding the period of wearing mourning prescribed by the classics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Characters</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>元方在喪</td>
<td>Yuanfang [Chen Ji]</td>
<td>was in the midst of mourning,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>毀瘁消形</td>
<td>He was sallow and diminished in form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嘔血</td>
<td>And spat blood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>順孝過哀</td>
<td>Outstandingly filial, he was extremely grieved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>率禮不越於時</td>
<td>But he practiced the rites without exceeding the proper period of mourning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though Fan Ye was clearly aware of this inscription (even referring to it in his biography), he paraphrased another source, an earlier history by Xie Cheng 謝承 (fl. 220). Xie’s account differs subtly from Cai’s. While Cai praised Chen Ji for his conformity to ritual rules, Xie emphasized the extent to which the son grieved beyond his period of wearing mourning: “Even after he took off mourning garments, [Chen Ji] was so weak and emaciated that he nearly destroyed his nature.”

The second reason to suspect that stele inscriptions were not solely responsible for the new visibility of mourning lies in the fact that, in many cases, Eastern Han mourners died generations before the practice of commissioning
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOURNERS</th>
<th>EASTERN HAN SOURCES</th>
<th>SIX DYNASTIES SOURCES</th>
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</thead>
</table>

(continued)
stelae became pervasive. This becomes clear when we examine the non-stelae records of men known to have mourned a relative—140 cases in all. Sixty-two (or 44 percent) of these mourners likely died before the year 150; thirty-five (or 25 percent) before 100. Few extant stelae, however, were erected before 150 (only 13 percent), and virtually none (2 percent) were erected before 100 (see figure 2.1). The relatively small number of stelae predating 150 therefore suggests that most of the extant accounts of mourners who died before the middle of the second century probably came from sources other than stelae.

To be sure, we might ask how representative our stele collection is (and thus how valid our final argument). Indeed, the fact that more than half (53 percent) of all stelae date to the Proscription is suspicious. My colleagues David Rolston and David Porter have wondered if the reason so many of the inscriptions date to this brief period is that it had special significance for Song-dynasty antiquarians. If so, antiquarians were more interested in transmitting stele inscriptions dating to this period than those dating to other periods during the Han. Aside

Table 2.1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOURNERS</th>
<th>EASTERN HAN SOURCES</th>
<th>SIX DYNASTIES SOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Huan Yan 桓焉  (d. 143)</td>
<td>Records of the Han from the Dong-guan Library 16.8b.</td>
<td>History of the Later Han 37.1257.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Xu Yin 徐胤  (d. 200)</td>
<td>The History of the Later Han of Xie Cheng 3.2b/82.</td>
<td>History of the Later Han 53.1748.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
from such a selection bias, is it possible that the lopsided time distribution is the result of an accumulation of forgeries? Indeed, in her recent discussion of the Wu Ban 武班 stele, Michael Nylan notes that half of the inscriptions found in *Explications of Clerical Script* (*Lishi* 註釋), compiled by the antiquarian Hong Kuo 洪遇 (1117–1184), date to the eighteen-year period of the Proscription—a period identified by the great statesman and antiquarian Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) as the favorite for false attribution by forgers.25

Although these questions encourage additional caution, there are nevertheless good reasons to believe that most stelae were, in fact, erected during this period. First of all, we know that Ouyang Xiu and Hong Kuo, whose transcriptions provide 65 percent of all extant stele inscriptions, claimed that their collections were comprehensive. In the *Preface* to the *Record of Collecting Antiquities* (*Jigulu* 集古錄), a compilation of stone and bronze inscriptions, for example, Ouyang claimed to have included all surviving inscriptions. Hong similarly noted that he had spent thirty years seeking out all extant Han inscriptions, including those not found in the *Record of Collecting Antiquities*.26

Second, the *History of the Later Han* suggests that stelae only became common in the second half of the second century. Biographies in this document record a subject’s literary activities by listing not only titles of works, but also the genres composed by the individual. As table 2.2 reveals, two-thirds, or eighteen of twenty-seven known authors of inscriptions in stone—stelae (*bei* 碑) and markers (*ming* 銘)—were active between the years of 140 and 190. Of course, the usefulness of these figures may be questioned on the grounds that the biographies found in texts such as the *History of the Later Han* may have been based largely on information found on stelae. Yet it is highly unlikely that Fan Ye or another Six Dynasties chronicler relied upon stelae for information about who wrote these inscriptions, because the vast majority of extant stele inscriptions do not list their authors. In addition, stelae never tell us whether or not the dedicatee was himself in the habit of writing inscriptions.27
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>TYPES OF STONE INSCRIPTIONS</th>
<th>HIGHEST POST ATTAINED</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL (IN BUSHELS OF GRAIN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Ban Biao 班彪 (3 BCE–54 CE)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Magistrate (zhang 長)</td>
<td>300–500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Wang Long 王隆 (fl. 25)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Magistrate (ling 令)</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feng Yan 樊衍 (fl. 25)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>General (jiangjun 將軍)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ban Zhao 班昭 (48–120)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Tutor to the Empress</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cui Yuan 崔瑗 (77/78–142/143)</td>
<td>stele, marker</td>
<td>Chancellor (xiang 相)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Zhang Heng 张衡 (78–139)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Chancellor</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ma Rong 马融 (79–166)</td>
<td>stele</td>
<td>Grand Administrator (taishou 太守)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Hu Guang 胡廣 (91–172)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Grand Commandant (taiwei 太尉), Senior Tutor (taifu 太傅)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cui Yin 崔骃 (d. 92)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Master of Records (zhubu 主簿)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Li Gu 李固 (94–147)</td>
<td>marker</td>
<td>Grand Commandant</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Cui Shi 崔寔 (ca. 104–170)</td>
<td>stele, marker</td>
<td>Member of the Secretariat (shangshu 尚書)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ge Gong 葛龚 (fl. 107–114)</td>
<td>stele</td>
<td>Magistrate (ling)</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perhaps the best evidence that stele indeed only emerged in large numbers during the late second century comes from the Commentaries on the Classic of Waterways (Shuijingzhu), the earliest extant collection of inscription titles (composed between about 265 and 527). As usual, a caveat is in order: relatively few of the 116 presumed Han stele titles in the Commentaries are extant, somewhere between 28 and 29 percent. When a stele
has not survived, we can only infer the earliest possible date that it would have been erected (usually, the year of the dedicatee's death). Yet this is less of a problem than may be imagined, however, as our interest lies mainly in ruling out the possibility that stelae emerged in significant numbers before the middle of the second century. Turning to the problem of the time distribution of titles found in the *Commentaries on the Classic of Waterways*, we see that 52 percent fall between the years 166 and 184. A graphic representation of this time distribution (figure 2.2) yields a pattern similar to that found for extant stelae: few appear before the end of the first century; an increase occurs in the 150s; there is a dramatic increase in the 160s; the number of inscriptions increases slightly in the 170s; followed by a marked drop in the 180s; and a steady decline after 190.

To return to the question posed at the beginning of this section, can we trust the impression left by the extant sources—that is, that Eastern Han men were more likely to display (if not actually to observe) extended mourning for their parents? The nature of the sources—their materiality, retrospective nature, and, indeed, reliability—must be considered. Many of these accounts in fact date from after the fall of the dynasty. Yet it is clear that Six Dynasties chroniclers tended to follow the histories written in the Eastern Han closely. Furthermore, we may reasonably ask whether the proliferation of accounts of mourning in the Eastern Han was largely a by-product of the emergence of the stele genre in the first century. Although there are many accounts of early-first-century men in mourning, Eastern Han men were not in the habit of erecting stelae until the late second century, thereby confirming that the increased visibility of mourning accounts predated the heyday of stele construction.
The foregoing discussion raises a question: if funerary inscriptions were not solely responsible for the proliferation of accounts of Eastern Han men and women in mourning, what was? To put it somewhat differently, what kinds of sources on mourning did Six Dynasties historians—or, for that matter, their Eastern Han predecessors—have at their disposal?

One source for the history of mourning practice was official communications, which mixed information about mourning with recommendations for official posts. For example, a dossier written by the eulogist and official Cai Yong about a thirteen-year-old boy named Cheng Wei 揮未 describes the manner in which Cheng had worn mourning for his uncle:

Wei embraced and bent over the corpse of his paternal uncle, wailing loudly in grief. This caused his mouth to become parched and his breath to decrease, but—panting for breath—his wailing nevertheless continued. His maternal uncle, Yan, lamenting the boy’s emaciation, fed him dates and meat in order to nourish him... Sobbing and sniffling, the boy was unable to swallow or gulp, though he was willing to consume boiled wheat or cold water. And when his maternal uncle Yan entreated him [to eat], the boy became even more choked up with sobs. From this time on, even food that was delicious or a rare delicacy did not make it into his mouth. He constantly remained by the side of the coffin, and when the name of his paternal uncle fell upon his ears, his eyes would respond with tears.]31

By the first century, a display of extraordinary grief had become a standard pretext for recruiting a man into the bureaucracy; thus, official communications contain information about mourning. At a time when “Filial and Incorrupt” 孝廉 nominations were important for making a career, specifically for bringing officials into the commissioned ranks of the bureaucracy,32 it is not surprising that the manner in which a man mourned was scrutinized and documented by officials. In the case of Cheng Wei, Cai Yong not only described what he saw and heard, but also like a magistrate confronting crime witnesses, he questioned others about the boy’s behavior, before grilling him personally:

臣覈問掾史邑子殷盛宿彦等，辭貌皆合，臣即召來見，未年十四歲，顏色瘦小，應對甚詳，臣問為為政事，徃泣求去，白歸喪所。臣為設食，但用麥飯寒水，不食肥膄。

[Your servant thoroughly examined the clerks, Yi Zi, Yin Sheng, Su Yan, et al. Their testimonies and evidence were consistent. Your servant then immediately summoned the boy for an audience, and though [Cheng] Wei was...
fifteen sui in age [thirteen years old by Western reckoning], his complexion was sallow, and he responded to my queries in a detailed fashion. Your servant asked him if he would take pleasure in being an officer. He responded by shedding tears and begging to leave, and said that he was returning to the place of the dead. Your servant put out some food, but he only consumed boiled wheat and cold water and did not eat the fatty portions.]33

Cai was not alone in this regard; the *History of the Later Han* confirms that officials regularly investigated sons with reputations for filial piety. For example, the aforementioned Chen Fan, who would later become the Grand Commandant, looked into the case of Zhao Xuan 趙宣 (fl. ca. 150), a prominent local commoner (min 米). Zhao had earned a name as a filial son among his neighbors for living in his parents' tomb for more than two decades, wearing mourning the entire time. Thinking perhaps of recommending Zhao for a post, Chen set about questioning Zhao's wife. In the course of this interview, he discovered that during Zhao's period of mourning, he had managed to sire six sons. Needless to say, this was not only tasteless, but a gross violation of ritual prohibitions against sexual activity while wearing mourning. Chen thereupon condemned Zhao to death.34

The new visibility of mourning also may owe something to the fact that conduct in mourning had become a popular subject of gossip in Eastern Han times. This phenomenon is apparent in the *Comprehensive Discussion of Customs* (Fengsu tongyi 風俗通義) of the scholar and social commentator Ying Shao 應劭 (fl. 185–200). The following is just one of more than a dozen cases revolving around the rich and powerful:

俗説：元服父子伯楚，為光祿卿，於服中生此子。時年長矣，不孝莫大於無後，故收養之。君子不隱其過，因以服為字。

[It is rumored that the polite name of the father of Yuanfu [Yuan He (b. 109)] was Bochu, who had been a Superintendent of the Imperial Household. While in the midst of wearing mourning, he sired this child. At the time, being of advanced age, he felt that there would be "no greater impiety than to be without an heir,"35 and for this reason, he received and raised the child. And since a gentleman does not hide his faults, he thus gave him "Garment" [i.e., mourning garment] for his polite name.]36

Judging from his disapproving tone, Ying clearly was attempting to distance himself from the story, even going on to argue that the rumor could not have been true, as Yuan He 袁賀 had been a man of exemplary conduct. So exemplary was Yuan that he chose not to be buried with his beloved wife, as was customary, but asked instead to be buried by the side of his father's tomb, so that he could serve and protect him in the afterworld.37

Gossip—masquerading as political commentary—not only provided information for Han and Six Dynasties historians about what a man did, but also (interestingly) about what he failed to do. Ying Shao again serves as
our earliest source on his contemporary, Yuan Hong (袁鴻 128–184). Not coincidentally, Hong happened to be the son of Yuan He and the cousin of Yuan Shao (袁紹 d. 202), the warlord who was Ying’s ally. Yet in spite of his (perhaps reluctant) connection to the Yuan clan, Ying clearly had nothing but scorn for Yuan Hong. Unlike his famous cousin, who took a leading role in political matters, Yuan Hong had declined a nomination for public office when still a young man. Something of an eccentric, he became a recluse, living on a vegetable and ginger diet. When his mother died, Hong neither wore mourning for her nor attended her funeral, which drew Ying’s ire:

[I humbly submit: it is observed in the *Classic of Filial Piety* that in life one serves parents through love and respect, and in death one serves them through sorrow and mourning. Now, [Yuan Hong and his family] lived within the walls of the same household, and yet it was as if they were in different realms. To pay reverence in the dark after one has arisen from bed—this is far from being loving or reverent! When the older generation passes away, not even to be able to escort them to the end—this is far from being sorrowful or mournful)]

The fact that mourning had become the subject of gossip (and fodder for an attack on someone’s character) is clear from the case of one of Ying’s contemporaries and neighbors, Xue Qin 薛勤 (fl. 104–130), the Grand Administrator of Shanyang. This story found its way into subsequent histories, particularly the *Record of the Later Han* (Hou Hanji 後漢紀). According to Ying, when burying his wife of forty years, Xue stood over her coffin, and in a loud voice expressed his satisfaction that at least she had not died young. Ying felt that Xue’s behavior—especially his failure to express grief publicly—reflected a meager understanding of the purpose of the rites. Complaining that even the birds and beasts “utter plaintive cries” at the death of a mate, Ying asked,

[How can one possess feelings of loss and death, cut off for all eternity, and yet be without a grieved countenance? When facing internal devastation, one is calm on the outside; this is to conceal forcefully the truth of one’s feelings. It is the height of falseness… The Grand Commandant Wang Gong [fl. 121–140] of Shanyang and each of his sons used a cane. The Grand Tutors Chen Fan of Runan and Yuan Wei [d. 190] both wore mourning garments with hemmed sleeves and took their place in the mourning line. They entered the pathway of the tomb and were bereft when escorting their...]

wives off to the end. They came close to getting at the inner meaning of ritual. As for Excellency Wang and his sons using canes [?], their actions proved to be excessive!]45

Some readers will no doubt wonder whether Ying had ulterior motives in recounting these stories.46 While it is impossible to say for sure, there are reasons to suspect this in a few cases. Yuan Wei 袁隗, for instance, was a member of Yuan Shao’s clan.47 The aforementioned Grand Commandant Chen Fan had been an ally of Ying’s father, a fact that clearly lay behind Ying’s praise of him.48 Given that Ying’s praise, as well as his attacks, were politically motivated, surely improper conduct in mourning—like marital infidelity in some societies—could become fodder for defamation. With such importance placed on mourning, it is not surprising that Ying and his contemporaries would not only scrutinize (or even lie about) the ways in which others mourned, but would also keep score.

EXPLANATIONS

What would explain why members of the Eastern Han elite were more prone than their Western Han predecessors to speak of how their contemporaries mourned? Historian Yang Shuda has argued that the new visibility of mourning in the Eastern Han reflected changes in imperial policies that encouraged elite men to observe the custom of three years mourning.49 Before arguing against this view, it is worth noting the virtues of Yang’s hypothesis. Emperor Ming 明 (r. 56–76) was perhaps the strongest supporter of three years mourning, as Eastern Han proponents of the practice were fond of mentioning. According to them, Emperor Ming personally observed three years mourning upon the death of his father, the Guangwu 光武 emperor (r. 25–56).50 In addition to Emperor Ming’s actions, there is further evidence that subsequent Han courts encouraged three years mourning. Officials were at times required to observe the practice during periods when the court was under the control of the Deng 邓 and Liang 梁 consort clans, specifically between 116 and 121, and from 154 to 159 CE.51

While imperial policies may very well have played some role, they alone cannot explain the new visibility of mourning in the Eastern Han. For one thing, as the Qing historian Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727–1814) correctly notes, Han official policy on mourning was inconsistent, even in the first and second centuries.52 The Guangwu emperor, for one, reversed earlier Han policies that had allowed officials of any rank to take mourning leave.53 Emperor Ming similarly was known to have blocked a Grand Commandant, Zhao Xi 趙喜 (3 BCE–80 CE), from leaving his post to wear mourning.54 Furthermore, after the empress dowager’s death in 121, the court prohibited officials from wearing mourning, following the proposals of Zhu Feng 祝融, the Director of the Imperial Secretariat (shangshuling 尚書令), and a certain Meng Bu 孟布.55 A final ban
on high- and mid-ranking officials leaving office to wear mourning went into effect in the spring of 159, though it is not clear who instigated it, or why.56

The best way to explain the new visibility of mourning—and indeed, the general preoccupation with mourning—is in terms of how the elite men and women of the Eastern Han defined filial obligation. As will be shown presently, the first and second centuries saw a subtle reinterpretation of the meaning of filial obligation. While the Warring States and Western Han discussions detailed in the previous chapter stressed that earning fame through official service was the ultimate way to express filial piety, Eastern Han court discussions of filial duty revolved around observance of three years mourning.

The earliest evidence that members of the political elite redefined—or challenged—older notions of filial obligation is found in an early-second-century memorial by the female historian Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 48–120).57 Ban's memorial was forwarded to the court in 110, when Empress Dowager Deng Sui 鄧绥 (81–121)58 denied mourning leave to her brother, General-in-Chief (da jiangjun 大將軍) Deng Zhi 鄧肅 (d. 121).59 This refusal prompted Deng Zhi to enlist Ban's powers of persuasion. Her memorial reads,

[Your maidservant has heard that there are no virtues greater than the customs of modesty and retirement. Thus, the ancient documents of historical records describe their perfection as [causing] the spirits and gods to send down their blessings. In ancient times, [Shu] Qi and [Bo] Yi took leave of their states [and withdrew from public life], and all under Heaven submitted to their unsullied loftiness.60 The imperial uncle Taibo also went into exile from Bin.61 Confucius referred to this last man as the one who retired three times [i.e., refused his right to rule the realm].62 This is why his moral excellence was illuminated and his name was proclaimed to posterity. The Analects observes, “To be able to rule the state with the rites and by retiring—what problems could there be in his governance?”63 From this way of saying it, we see that when one sincerely declines an office, such an act brings far-reaching benefits, indeed! Now, the four uncles [i.e., Deng Zhi and his brothers] have held fast to the principles of conscientiousness and filiality, and wish to leave their posts to retire. Yet because the borders are not pacified, they have been refused and not allowed [to retire in order to mourn]. If later there is only a small addition [to these problems], they sincerely fear that they will not be able to achieve fame for being modest and retiring.]64

Notably, Ban Zhao's memorial challenged older premises that equated filial obligation with official service. This becomes more evident when we compare
the particular rhetoric of this passage with that found in descriptions of Zhai Fangjin (see chapter 1). For Han chroniclers, as we have seen, Zhai’s unwillingness to leave office to wear mourning for his stepmother demonstrated his impartiality and his commitment to public service. If anything, his refusal to mourn enhanced his reputation and standing among his peers. In contrast, according to Ban, Deng Zhi’s inability to retire from public life to mourn would have damaged his name. For Ban, a good man—especially if he was the uncle of the emperor—should have been willing to forego the pleasures and advantages of office. And while Ban was a long way from saying that all officials, let alone all men, should mourn, she was perhaps the first to question the premise of earlier definitions of filial piety: namely, that a good reputation was equated with official service.

Ban Zhao was not alone in challenging earlier notions of filial piety. Liu Kai (d. 124), a member of the imperial clan and the Minister Over the Masses (situ 司徒), also attacked the idea that the population could be well served by men such as Zhai Fangjin—men who had failed to mourn their parents fully.65 In defense of the empress dowager’s proposal to require all officials to leave office to wear mourning, he wrote,

[At present, inspectors uphold the standards of each region. Officials with salaries of two thousand bushels are the models for a thousand li [miles]. Their duties reside in making clear [the standards] to the hundred surnames, in propagating and elucidating customs. They ought to venerate the canonical rituals by personally putting them first. Yet critics have not inquired into the root of the matter, and the situation has progressed to the point where it is said to be inappropriate for inspectors and administrators [to leave office to observe three years mourning]. This is like muddying the source and expecting the stream to run clear, like bending a shape but wanting the shadow to remain straight—it is impossible.]

Although he did not go so far as to say this explicitly, Liu’s choice of analogy—“muddying the source”—suggests that putting aside personal feelings to impartially uphold the public order ultimately was considered to do more harm than good. In other words, the personal obligation to wear mourning should not be set aside, even by an official, because personal acts of filial devotion represented the source (yuán 源) or even the beginnings (duān 端) of good governance.

In addition to challenging older notions, some thinkers articulated a different view, one that made three years mourning a crucial component of filial obligation. In his memorial, Liu Kai also noted that “the imperial edict was to fix the rules of wearing mourning, to educate the masses by elevating customs...
and [thus] widen the way of Filiality.” Although Liu did not say that observing three years mourning was tantamount to being a filial son, his support for the empress’ policy suggests that he believed it to be essential. Some of his contemporaries were less bashful about promoting this view. A decade later, Chen Zhong (fl. 114–119), a member of the Imperial Secretariat, also supported the empress dowager, asserting that it was imperative for officials to observe three years mourning:

[Your servant has heard that the *Classic of Filial Piety* observes that one starts by loving parents, and ends by expressing grief [when parents die]. From the Son of Heaven down to the unranked commoner, there is a single duty for the honored and the low, the noble and the base. Now, a son is to his father and mother as “different breaths of the same breath” and “different parts of one body.” And it is only after three years that a child ceases to be held by his parents.] Like Chen Zhong, Xu Gan (see chapter 1) also underscored the importance of three years mourning by emphasizing the obligation to observe the practice. “Three years mourning,” he wrote, “applies to everyone, from the Son of Heaven down to the commoner. There is no one who should not follow three years mourning. The emperors and kings transmitted it, but there were none who knew from whence it arose.” Similarly, the scholar-official Xun Shuang (128–190), freshly appointed as a Gentleman of the Interior (*langzhong*) in the capital, wrote a still more combative memorial in 167, opposing court policies that prevented officials from leaving their posts to observe three years mourning. He declared three years mourning as nothing less than the ultimate way to express filial devotion. “When after losing a parent, one exerts oneself to the utmost in mourning,” he stated, “this is the ultimate in filial piety!”

The notion that three years mourning was an important component of filial obligation was not unique to the aforementioned memorialists of the Eastern Han. As discussed in chapter 1, some classical authors had indeed emphasized the importance of the practice. What was noteworthy about these Eastern Han discussions, however, was the extent to which three years mourning had become an overriding consideration; as shown above, it was so important that sons ought to choose to leave office to wear mourning rather than continuing to serve. Those who did so, Chen Zhong stated bluntly, were good sons who “care[d] about returning the generosity of their parents.” According to Chen not only should sons choose to wear mourning, but also the court should not ask a man in mourning to serve. As he declared:

### Chinese text

> 以春秋臣有大喪，君三年不呼其門，聞子雖要紛服事，以赴公難，退而致位，以充私恩，故稱：君使之非也，臣行之禮也。周室陵遲，禮制不序，夢我之人作詩自傷曰：殤之罄矣，惟懮之恥。言己不得終鏡子道者，亦上之恥也。
[This is the reason why, when the ministers of the Spring and Autumn period [771–453 BCE] encountered an occasion of great mourning, their lords would not call at their gates for three years. Although he wore a mourning sash, Master Min [Min Sun] nevertheless undertook his official work in order to rescue his lord from calamity. He then retired from office and vacated his position in order to fulfill his personal obligation [to his parents]. Thus it is said, “Although it was inappropriate for the lord to dispatch him with a charge, for the minister to have carried out his duties—this was in accord with ritual propriety.” When the Zhou house was in decline, it did not follow ritual regulations. As the subject of [the ode entitled] “Thick Tarragon”—who created the ode from his pain—observed, “That the cup should be empty is a humiliation to the jar.” This says that because he was not able to fulfill the way of the child, it was shameful to those above.]

Chen Zhong was not, of course, the first to comment on this episode from Gongyang’s Commentary; as seen in chapter 1, the authors of Luxuriant Dew of the Annals and the Garden of Persuasions also mentioned this problem, but drew a very different conclusion. They maintained that a minister, even one faced with far less dire a situation than Min Sun, ought to fulfill his mission, unless recalled by his lord. Chen, however, took a different view of the matter, and his choice of words reveals a strident message. It was not just unfortunate for men in mourning to serve in office; it was inappropriate—even wrong (fei)—for Min’s lord to ask him to serve, even under the circumstances. To ask or force a man in mourning to serve, Chen emphasized, was to bring shame upon the dynasty.

Some advocates of three years mourning even suggested that the dynasty faced dire consequences if it continued to prevent officials from observing the practice. As the aforementioned Xun Shuang argued,

[The Han dynasty is composed of the virtues of fire, and fire is generated by wood. Wood is ascendant over fire. Thus, the Han’s virtue is filial piety. . . . The Han regulations have caused all under Heaven to recite the Classic of Filial Piety; and in selecting officials, they have elevated those who are filial and incorrupt. . . . In cases in which the lords and nobles of [high rank], reaching down to the rank of two thousand bushels, encounter a situation requiring them to observe three years mourning, however, they are not permitted to take leave. This is not the way to exalt the Way of Filiality and to be worthy of the virtues of Fire.]
of the Han. Nor was he the first to claim that dynastic fortunes depended on promoting filial conduct, as we have seen. These positions had been articulated possibly by the mid-Western Han, as early as Emperor Wu’s reign (see chapter 1). Furthermore, Xun was most certainly not the first to claim that the ritual forms, including those of mourning, derived from larger, cosmic patterns. By many accounts, the *Xunzi*, which is attributed to Xun Shuang’s ancestor, the thinker Xun Qing (ca. 310–ca. 219 BCE), also argued that ritual forms were everlasting and united as one with cosmic patterns. What was new in Xun Shuang’s argument, however, was the employment of received wisdom and even court rhetoric to make the specific point that officials should leave their posts to observe three years mourning. Unless these officials were permitted to do so, Xun thought, the court would not be in harmony with the patterns that regulated the cosmic and social order. Unless the court conformed, he hinted, there would be no way to forestall dynastic collapse.

**WHY DID MOURNING BECOME CENTRAL TO FILIAL OBLIGATION?**

In the pages above, I have aimed to explain why accounts of mourning became more prominent in the biographies, documents, and inscriptions of the Eastern Han political elite. Such visibility was not a mere historiographical illusion; rather, it represented a rise in the importance of a particular understanding of filial piety that placed great emphasis on personal obligations, particularly the obligation to wear extended mourning for parents. But not all members of the political elite embraced this view of filial obligation, as not every elite son wore extended mourning. In fact, a handful of men opposed three years mourning and attempted to place a ban on the practice. Although the understanding of filial obligation emphasizing three years mourning was controversial, it represented an important alternative to the view of filial piety discussed by Max Weber, which held dynastic service to be an extension of the father-son relationship. While the latter stressed the seamless fit between filial obligation and official duty, the former emphasized conflict between the two. To put it differently, in the view emphasizing three years mourning, a man might not only have to choose between dynastic service and the personal obligation to wear mourning, but also might have to place personal obligations above dynastic prerogatives.

At this point, it is worth analyzing the possible reasons why some members of the Eastern Han political elite stressed mourning obligations while others did not. Factional divisions within the Eastern Han court provide one way to explain this conflict. By most accounts, the Eastern Han court was divided between the inner court, which included the emperor and eunuchs, and the outer court, composed of the consort clans. Indeed, some evidence suggests that debates about mourning reflected factional strife between the inner and outer courts, as many of the proponents of three years mourning
were members of the consort clans. After all, the Empress Dowager Deng Sui was the first Han ruler to require officials to observe three years mourning. Not coincidentally, Deng Sui, like some of her allies and brothers, is also remembered for how she mourned her parents. The Dengs were not the only consort clan that promoted three years mourning. Another important proponent of the practice was the aforementioned Ban Zhao, who (as students of Han history know) was a member of a consort clan herself. Furthermore, a number of fathers, uncles, and brothers of the empresses dowager were known for their mourning: Ma Yuan (see introduction), Yin Shi 隱氏 (d. 59 CE), Ma Fang 馬防 (d. 101), and Liang Ji 樂冀 (d. 159). The fact that two of the three bans on observance of three years mourning by officials went into effect at times when the influence of the consort clans waned provides further evidence that debates about mourning were connected to factional strife. Specifically, the second ban, instituted during the reign of Emperor Shun 順 (r. 126–145), was issued when the emperor sought to purge the court of the influence of the Dengs. The last ban was instituted not three months before Liang Ji’s political downfall, and although too little survives of the court deliberations to establish a link between the two events, the timing is nonetheless suggestive.

Although there are reasons to support the connection between debates about mourning and factional strife, this approach leaves much unexplained. It does not explain why factions that opposed the consort clans adopted the view that three years mourning was the best way to express filial piety, as this view became prevalent. Indeed, opponents of the consort clans also emphasized mourning obligations. Zhi Yun 齊雲 (fl. 25), who became famous for his refusal to serve Wang Mang (an imperial uncle; see chapter 1), was known for his mourning of his mother, as was Zhou Ju 周舉 (d. 149), who opposed the Liang clan. Even eunuchs, perhaps the bitterest enemies of the consort clans, also wore mourning for their own parents; the eunuch Cao Teng 曹騰 (d. 150), for one, was celebrated by eulogists for the extent and excessiveness of his mourning. Furthermore, the devotion that the court eunuch Zhao Zhong 趙忠 (d. 189) lavished on his father in burial became infamous, and even set off a political crisis.

We must not think that changing beliefs about mourning only reflected factionalism at court, because the preoccupation with mourning was shared by men unconnected to the political divisions of the capital. It is true that roughly one-third of the 173 men known to have worn mourning for their blood relatives in the Eastern Han included those likely to have been involved in court struggles, whether they were members of the imperial or consort clans, eunuchs, the highest ministers of the realm, or well-known dissidents. And nearly half of all male mourners were high-ranking officials of a minimum salary rank of two thousand bushels of grain. Yet quite strikingly, a sizable proportion of these mourners were not major players at court during the Eastern Han. Quite a number of them were men who never held office of any kind,
like the unfortunate Zhao Xuan; or they were like Cheng Wei, who had yet to even break into the commissioned ranks of the bureaucracy. 

Perhaps we can explain the new emphasis on mourning obligations instead in terms of a more fundamental shift in political ethos: by the Eastern Han, the personal (and even the particular) may have acquired a new sort of respectability. Such respectability furthermore may have reflected a more essential change in the balance of power between the Han court and local power holders. Certainly such a hypothesis is difficult to prove, as it is generally risky to link ideas or cultural practices with social or political developments. Difficulties aside, it is worth detailing at length the possible connections between the changes in the practice and discourse of mourning, on the one hand, and larger political developments, on the other.

The values of the Eastern Han political elite arguably offer a striking contrast to those of their Western Han predecessors. As we saw in the previous chapter, the dominant rhetoric at the Western Han court was that of impartiality. Such rhetoric could be considered part and parcel of the dominant paradigm of the Warring States, Qin, and Western Han periods, as defined by Mark Lewis: the belief in the superiority of the universal, or “transcendent whole,” over the part—the part being the individual, the private realm of the household, or even a local region. This emphasis on the whole articulated itself in a number of state policies, including moving the capital of the universal empire outside the local base of the Liu clan to a more neutral location, resettling the old scions of noble Warring States families to the capital, and using a literary language detached from local or spoken forms in bureaucratic communications.

By the end of the Eastern Han, however, the emphasis on the whole had given way to a reaffirmation of the personal and partial. In contrast to many of their Western Han predecessors, who enthusiastically embraced the notion of a universal empire and condemned local customs, the most prominent of Eastern Han thinkers and statesmen, such as the astronomer and poet Zhang Heng 張衡 (78–139), composed treatises and rhapsodies that openly expressed a strong attachment to specific places. Such an emphasis on the personal and specific can also be seen in contemporary discussions of filial obligation. A filial son was not someone who had to transform his partisan feelings or personal affections for his parents into an attitude of impartial public-mindedness; instead, he left office to wear mourning, knowing full well that some personal obligations were at odds with state duties. Finally, this emphasis is apparent in the rise of what sociologist Andrew Walder would call “principled particularism” within the bureaucracy. As historians of the period such as Michael Nylan and Patricia Ebrey have shown, promotion within the bureaucratic system, which relied heavily upon the recommendations of superiors or well-placed ministers, encouraged demonstrations of personal loyalty to superiors, rather than conformity to abstract ideals. Not only could filial sons be rewarded with office for publicly mourning a parent,
but also dramatic demonstrations of devotion to a political patron or former superior also brought tangible rewards, including promotions.96

Although most historians agree that the local elite was far more powerful vis-à-vis the central court in the first and second centuries than during the mid–Western Han, the reasons for this development are debated. Some historians have argued that the decline of central power tipped the balance in favor of local society. These historians cite a variety of factors for the decline, including the financial hardships of the Han court (especially after the disastrous Xiongnu wars of the early second century), factional strife between court eunuchs and members of the consort clans, and two destabilizing millenarian uprisings.97 In contrast, other historians highlight changes to the economic foundations of the empire that fostered the growth of large estates and, by extension, local power. As some have argued, Eastern Han rulers were unable or unwilling to impose strict limits on landholding.98 The imperial usurper Wang Mang may have had something to do with this. Wang had indeed attempted to return to the old economic policies, such as imposing caps on landholding, seizing and redistributing land to the poor, and providing loans to peasants to keep them solvent.99 His efforts, however, met with violent resistance from the large landholders. Wang’s example may have weighed heavily on the minds of the early Eastern Han emperors. Fearful of sharing Wang’s fate, they avoided heavy-handed policies that would have alienated wealthy local families, their base of support.100 By other accounts, the rise of large landholding was also an unintended consequence of new farming technologies, such as seed grain and iron implements introduced during the reign of Emperor Wu. Because the Chinese economy favored economies of scale, the introduction of new technologies enriched wealthy landholders, who could afford the initial investments of capital improvements, further exacerbating the gap in wealth.101 Indeed, as Chen Chi-yun argues, by the end of the Eastern Han large estates accounted for an estimated 65 percent of all land under cultivation, while more than half of the entire population was composed of landless tenant farmers.102

A second explanation for the change in political ethos centers on the constitution of the political elite. Historians have noted that by the Eastern Han, the local elite had come to play a greater role in the administration of the realm. Early in the dynasty, the men who ruled China appear to have been drawn from a limited pool of candidates: members of powerful ministerial families, imperial relatives, or scions of the noble Warring States houses that had been resettled.103 Although it is difficult to point to a single moment at which all of this changed (if such a moment ever existed), there is evidence that Han rulers were dissatisfied with the state of affairs from an early date. In the second half of the second century BCE, Dong Zhongshu (see chapter 1) forwarded a memorial to the emperor, ostensibly complaining about the quality of provincial administrators (zhānglì 長吏). Dong located the source of the problem in the system of recruitment: many of the provincial administrators had been Gentlemen Cadets or relatives of senior ministers.104 As a result,
centuries of tears and woe

provincial administration was dominated by the scions of the imperial clan and by members of great ministerial families. Of course, birth and connections were no guarantee of a man's ability to govern well, as Dong and other statesmen were quick to point out. It is clear that Dong thus was questioning the wisdom of entrusting the provinces to men with broad bases of support, the very men likely to start a rebellion in order to fulfill their own dynastic aspirations. To remedy this dangerous situation, Dong proposed changing the criteria for who could become a provincial administrator and broadening the franchise by moving local men into the bureaucracy through recommendation. In practical terms, Dong's policy seems to have had two effects. First, it worked to limit the power of noble rivals. Second, it represented an attempt on the part of the Han court to reach a modus vivendi with powerful local families, who came to constitute unofficial regional powers. Judging from a variety of sources dating to the late Western and Eastern Han periods, the court did indeed succeed, for better or worse, in this second respect: the ranks of provincial administration came to be dominated by members of the local elite.

Given the changes in the Han body politic, the fact that we would find a strong preference for the personal over the universal is not surprising. In part, the emphasis on the personal reflected the dominant social logic of the world from which many officials emerged. As Mark Lewis has argued, the world of local society—local bullies, gangsters, and retainers, as well as landlords and sharecroppers—was forged from personal connections rather than created through adherence to universal or abstract ideals. Locally powerful men and women intermarried to secure their influence and social standing; they extended aims to kinsmen and neighbors; and they sought personal contracts and friendships with other eminent local families. In this world, the personal was not some social ill awaiting eradication so much as a network of long-standing interactions. Seen from this perspective, it is perhaps ironic that Dong Zhongshu and the other architects of the Han order had attempted to create a universal empire by removing young local men from their element. In doing so, they allowed the logic of the personal to infiltrate the universal empire.
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Mean-spirited complaints can be illuminating, for they often reveal the most important controversies of an age. Ying Shao, the aforementioned scholar and social commentator, lodged one such complaint. Too many of his contemporaries, Ying remarked, admired ridiculous shows of devotion by sons to their natural mothers. Such excessive devotion was epitomized by contemporary veneration of Ding Lan, a mythic figure regarded as a paragon of filial piety. According to one early account, Ding, longing for his mother, carved a wooden likeness of her. When a ruffian insulted the likeness, Ding killed him, and in turn was condemned to death. Before the execution took place, the wooden likeness wept tears of blood. Impressed with the miracle, the authorities released Ding, and his fame subsequently spread.

Ying Shao's complaint raises the question of what was so objectionable about the Ding Lan myth. Perhaps Ying objected to Ding's fame because the man had killed someone. Ding was not alone in this regard. At least one Eastern Han son appears not only to have escaped punishment for killing a grave robber who desecrated his mother's tomb, but also to have won acclaim for it. Yet there is little evidence to support such a reading here, for Ying did not use this incident to launch into a tirade about lawless or rash vendettas (which he did elsewhere). Perhaps Ying simply disliked the emphasis on the mother-son relationship because he worried it might overshadow obligations owed to fathers.

This chapter will seek to contextualize Ying Shao's complaints about the Ding Lan myth. Ying's complaints were neither idle nor idiosyncratic, but somewhat prescient. As I will argue, they reflect the fact that many members of the Eastern Han political elite went out of their way to make public demonstrations of their personal devotion to mothers, while playing down their mourning of lords and fathers. I will explain this shift in emphasis in
terms of a rising cultural stereotype about mothers and sons. Whereas elite thinkers and statesmen claimed that the relationship between fathers and sons was more analogous to official duty, they regarded the relationship between mothers and sons as emotional, personal, and intimate (qin 慈). In this way, the mother-son bond came to represent an alternative to the values encapsulated by slogans about “duty to lord and father” (junfu zhi yi 君父之義), values that asserted the primacy of the paternal, the official, and the overtly hierarchical.5

MOTHERS VERSUS FATHERS

It becomes clear that Ying Shao had grounds for complaint when we compare the number of accounts of sons mourning for mothers with those for fathers. In available sources, accounts of Eastern Han sons wearing mourning for mothers, burying mothers, or expressing grief over their deaths outnumber those for fathers by almost a factor of two and a half to one (see table 3.1).6

The fact that we have more accounts of sons mourning their mothers than their fathers is striking for two reasons. First, members of the Han elite, living in a patrilineal society, would be expected to emphasize the father-son bond far more than that of mother and son.7 Second, classics from the Warring States period focused more on the ritual obligations owed to fathers than on those owed to mothers. To explain this departure from both the classics and common scholarly assumptions, we must examine comparisons between mothers and fathers found in texts dating from the Warring States to the Eastern Han. Such an inquiry will reveal that by the end of the Western Han, many thinkers began to differentiate sharply the roles of fathers from those of mothers.

One of the earliest discussions of the difference between fathers and mothers with regard to a son’s obligations can be found in the texts of Warring States ritualists. For the ritualist, the mourning garment reflected the distinctions between a son’s relationship with his father and with his mother.8 In instructions pertaining only to sons of noble houses, the son (as heir) went through three years of mourning for his father. As we know, the mourner lived in a hut, ate less than usual, and did not work for twenty-five months, all while wearing a white hemp garment with rough or frayed sleeves (zhancui 斩衰).9 For his mother, he also practiced three years mourning, but the garment was different in one crucial aspect: its sleeves were hemmed or smooth (cicui 篆衰) as opposed to frayed.10

Not surprisingly, some Warring States ritualists maintained that the relationship a noble son had with his father took priority over his relationship with his mother. Such an attitude is evident in protocols issued for sons of ruling houses in Ceremonies and Rituals, a text of uncertain date (see introduction and the appendix). If his father still lived, a son was to shorten his mourning period for his mother from the standard twenty-five months to a
mere three months, lest he neglect the living parent. In justifying this rule, the authors observed,

[While the most venerated one is alive, a son does not venture to extend fully his personal veneration (for his mother).]

For a divorced mother, the son should wear no mourning at all. Clearly, in the authors’ minds, the father was the most venerated (zhizun 至尊) member of the household; he also held the highest place in the realm. As a result, a son’s obligations to his father took precedence over any “personal veneration” (sizun 私尊) for his mother.

These views about the mourning obligations owed by noble sons to their mothers reflected prevalent Warring States anxieties about noble mothers. According to chroniclers and statesmen, noble mothers (wives as well as concubines) were dangerous to the household because they tended to serve the interests of their own sons at the expense of the lord and his heirs. Noble mothers spoiled their sons with abundant love, complained the thinker Han Feizi (see introduction), and so sons became degenerate. Lords, he warned, must remember that their sons—and in particular their heirs—were not to be trusted.

The mourning obligations for lower-ranking members of the Warring States political elite were less clear than those for heirs of noble houses. In fact, the “Mourning Rites Fit for Officers (Shi sangli 士喪禮),” a chapter in Ceremonies and Rituals, makes no mention at all of mothers. Nor did other Warring States ritualists address the subject directly, let alone in comparison with personal obligations to fathers.
The lack of clear guidelines for lower-ranking members of the political elite was not an isolated phenomenon. Warring States thinkers devoted little space to theorizing about the different obligations owed to fathers and mothers, or to discussion of the distinctions between the two. The few generalizations that survive from the period indicate that early thinkers did not regard the mother-son bond as fundamentally different from that between father and son. For example, the aforementioned Han Feizi, who perhaps came closest to articulating what he thought was the essence of the mother-child bond, merely observed that “The nature of the [bond between] mother and child is affection.” The propensity of all mothers to love their children, he declared, was surpassed by none, including fathers. As he noted elsewhere, “Mothers love children—twice as much as fathers do,” yet Han was far from claiming that fathers and mothers were essentially different. Fathers—like mothers—loved their children, but only less, presumably because they had children by more than one woman. The relationship between a son and his father was still characterized by the utmost intimacy (zhigin 至親), yet seldom had the intimacy of the relationship between mother and child.

Warring States thinkers instead were more interested in discussing the differences between lords and fathers, who were thought to represent different realms. In the Mencius, a certain Jingzi 景子 reportedly observes,

內則父子，外則君臣，人之大倫也。父子主恩，君臣主敬。

[Within, there are father and son. Without, there are lord and subject. These are the ultimate human relations. Bonds of gratitude govern the relationship between father and son. Reverence governs the relationship between lord and subject.]21

Fathers belonged to the domestic realm (nei 内), whereas lords belonged to the outer, public realm (wai 外). The distinctions between the feelings or attitudes inherent to each of these realms merit further attention. In dealing with his father—and, by extension, all kin—a man is governed by en 恩, a term that denotes the bonds of gratitude that exist among kin. En emphasizes the voluntary and emotional quality of such bonds, which result from kindness or generosity on the part of a parent or superior. In dealing with his lord, however, a subject is governed by feelings of reverence or awe (jing 敬), and as the phrase “being reverent but keeping one’s distance” implies, jing (unlike en) does not necessarily require affection.

The notion that lords and fathers represented different realms is also found in two manuscripts excavated from the fourth-century BCE Guodian 郭店 site (in Hubei Province). The authors of these manuscripts characterized the relationship between a father and his official son as domestic (men-nei 門內), intimate, and based on kindness (ren 仁). In fact, extant Warring States texts often associated kindness (ren) with bonds of gratitude (en). An official’s relationship to his lord, in contrast, was public (menwai 門外), and
based on dutifulness (yi 義) and veneration (zun 尊). According to the Guodian manuscripts, lords do not “share the intimacy of blood and breath (qi 氣) with their subjects.” Officials therefore should not confuse domestic and public relations. In public, considerations of duty sever (zhan 擋) feelings of kindness or concern for fathers. In the domestic realm, however, kindness overrides (yan 恩) the claims of official duty.26

Quite predictably, the divide between lords and fathers was a source of anxiety for some Warring States thinkers. Han Feizi, for one, feared that the intimate bonds between father and son would usually override loyalty to one’s lord.27 In a similar vein, the Guodian manuscripts observe that, in general, an official “does not abandon his father on account of his lord, but will abandon his lord on account of his father.”28

By the middle of the Western Han, however, the way some thinkers characterized the father-son bond had changed. These thinkers began to speak of lord and father in the same terms. As fathers started to resemble lords, the relationship between father and son was described more infrequently as either naturally intimate (qin 息) or of the utmost intimacy (zhiqin).29 For these Western Han thinkers, the father-son relationship involved more than kindness, intimacy, or affection; it also involved reverence and duty. As the Classic of Filial Piety declared, officials “should exert themselves in serving their fathers as they would in serving their lords,” deploying the same attitude of reverence. This idea of associating lords and fathers affected the way ritualists thought about a son’s mourning for his father. Unlike their Warring States and Western Han predecessors, Eastern Han ritualists did not treat mourning for one’s father as a strictly personal affair, or a personal obligation that interfered with official duty.30 Instead, they considered sons’ mourning for fathers analogous to the mourning that subjects performed for lords.31 In mourning their fathers, all sons should wear the same garments, live in the same huts, and mourn for the same period of time as required of ministers mourning their lords. Echoing the official line, the Comprehensive Discussions of White Tiger Hall (Baituntongyi 白虎通義; ca. 79 CE) explained that “a subject is to his lord as a son is to his father.” Both relationships were based on a man’s feelings of the highest veneration (zhizun).32

If ritualists equated mourning for fathers with that for lords at the end of the Western Han, what about mourning for mothers? The chapter in the Book of Rites entitled “Record on Appearances” (Biaoji 表記), compiled around the first century BCE, clearly articulates the differences between mothers and fathers:

母之親子也，賢則親之，無能則憫之。母親而不尊，父尊而不親。

[As for the intimacy of a mother with her son: if [he is] worthy, she is intimate with him; but if he lacks ability, then she shows compassion for him. Mothers are intimate but not venerated. Fathers are venerated but not intimate.]33
In many ways, the comparison of mothers to fathers in the “Record” is a telling variation on the Warring States formula: in the Guodian manuscripts, for example, fathers were “intimate” and lords were “venerable”; but the “Record” describes mothers as “intimate” and fathers as “venerable.” The celebrated scholar and poet Yang Xiong 楊雄 (53–18 BCE) compared fathers and mothers along similar lines in his Modeled Sayings (Fayan 法言). A mother’s breast, Yang observed, was not like a father’s in that it inspired love or affection (ai 愛), whereas his inspired respect or awe (jing 傲).34

As Mark Lewis has argued, some Han thinkers believed that the special closeness of mothers and sons required discipline, as it could potentially disrupt the larger social order.35 One example of this attitude is found in Biographies of Exemplary Women (Lienüzhuan 列女傳) by the statesman and famed author Liu Xiang (see chapter 1). A murder was committed, and two half-brothers—one born of the principal wife and the other of a concubine—were arrested as suspects. Unable to determine which of the brothers had committed the crime, an official called in the concubine mother, who informed the official that the younger brother, her own son, should be executed for the murder. When the surprised official asked her why, she replied: “To kill the elder but preserve the life of the younger brother would be to violate public duty on account of personal love.”36 Liu’s presentation of the tale highlights two relevant points, both of which are recurring themes in the Biographies. First, the mother-son bond not only belonged to the realm of the intimate and personal, but it was also in opposition here to public duty (gongyi 公義). Second, a virtuous mother should be ready to act against her natural instincts. She should put aside her natural love for her children rather than give in to those feelings, if they interfered with public duty or threatened the larger social order. As Anne Kinney points out, surely Liu thought that such virtuous women were too few and far between, especially at court; hence, the need for a manual instructing women on morality and their place within society.37

But not all members of the Western Han political elite were ambivalent about the special bond between mothers and sons. At the same time that Liu Xiang was writing the Biographies, a new rhetoric emerged at court from the larger context of the domination of the powerful Huo 胡, Zhao 趙, and Wang 王 consort clans.38 The imperial usurper, Wang Mang, appears to have monopolized the rhetoric of impartiality (gong) to crush dissent, in part because, as a member of a consort clan, he was otherwise open to charges of having benefited from favoritism.39 Vying for influence at court, members of other consort clans and their allies had recourse to rhetoric on the mother-son bond. The official Shentu Gang 伸屠剛 (fl. 25 CE), for example, reportedly lobbied on behalf of the maternal relatives of Emperor Ping (see chapter 1), who had been cut off from the child-emperor by Wang Mang. In a memorial, Shentu observed,

夫子母之性，天道至親。今聖主幼少，始免襁褓。即位以來，至親分離，外戚杜隔。思不得已，通。
[As for the natural [relationship] between children and mothers, the way of Heaven is that they be extremely intimate. Now, the Sage Lord [i.e., the emperor] is still a small child, and just stopped wearing swaddling clothes. Since he has been installed, he has been separated from the one with whom he is most intimate, completely cut off from his maternal relatives. And so the bonds of gratitude do not connect them.]

At least two key observations about this text can be made. First, it is striking that Shentu would characterize the relationship between mother and son, rather than father and son, as one of the utmost intimacy (zhiqin). Second, the intimate and emotional bond between mother and son was mandated by the Way of Heaven. By this assertion, Shentu was implying that this bond transcended human or political institutions.

Celebrations of the mother-son bond surfaced in the rhetoric of both allies and opponents of the consort clans. For example, during the reign of Emperor Yuan (see chapter 1), Zhang Ziqiao 张子侨, the Grand Counselor of the Palace, submitted a memorial to the empress dowager asking her to discipline her unruly son, Liu Yu 刘宇 (d. 20 BCE). Unlike Wang Mang, Jia Yi, Dong Zhongshu, or Zhai Fangjin (all of whom we encountered in chapter 1), Zhang did not employ the rhetoric of impartiality. Instead, he attempted to persuade the empress to rein in her son by noting the particular intimacy of the mother-son bond. “The relationship between mother and son,” he wrote, “is [like] different breaths of the same breath [qi]; it is constituted by bonds of gratitude between flesh and bone, so how on earth could he not take note of what you say!”

Members of the Eastern Han court also deployed rhetoric on the mother-son bond in factional fights between the eunuchs and the consort clans. After the death of Liang Ji (see chapter 2), the powerful imperial regent, in 159, Emperor Huan 恒 (r. 147–168) issued an edict denouncing him (and the consort clan that Liang had led). The emperor was wary of (if not overtly hostile to) the influence of the consort clans that ruled in place of child-emperors. He not only eliminated the Liang clan, but also subsequently disposed of his second consort, Deng Mengnü 邓猛女 (fl. ca. 154–165), and eradicated her powerful relatives. In his denunciation of Liang Ji, Emperor Huan accused him of violating the mother-son bond:

[[He] caused Us to be estranged from the love between mother and son. [He] separated me from the bonds of gratitude owed [to the one] who reared [Us].]

It is little surprise that the emperor would employ such rhetoric to denounce Liang Ji—who was not his blood relative—and his clan. Emperor Huan, in fact, had been the son of a concubine (see chapter 2), a Lady Yan 女 (d. 152).
Despite the fact that Lady Yan was the mother of the emperor, neither she nor any members of her clan enjoyed any special favor at court. Instead, the court was dominated by the Liang clan, which held power by virtue of the position of the childless empress dowager, Liang Na (116–150).44

Rhetoric on the mother-son bond resurfaced throughout the period; the group of powerful men who opposed the eunuchs during the reign of Emperor Huan also used it in support of the consort clans.45 In 180, a certain Fan Zhong denounced the eunuchs in a memorial to the court, accusing them of causing chaos in the imperial household by alienating the emperor from his mother:

[They severed the bond of gratitude that exists between a flesh-and-bone mother and son. Thereupon they condemned to death [Chen] Fan and [Dou] Wu, Yin Xun [d. 168] and their associates.]46

Rhetoric on the mother-son bond was also prevalent outside the context of fights between eunuchs and the consort clans. Evidence from commentaries confirms that such rhetoric was disseminated from court circles to the broader-based cultural and economic elite in the Eastern Han. In his notes to one chapter of the Book of Rites, the commentator Zheng Xuan (see introduction) protested the unwillingness of Zisi, the grandson of Confucius, to allow his son to mourn for his divorced mother or even to acknowledge their bond. Elsewhere, in his commentary on rules against mourning divorced mothers, Zheng declared that the relationship between mother and son was “of the utmost intimacy” and was inalienable, as it belonged to the Unending Way (wujue dao 無絕道).47

OFFICIAL DUTY VERSUS PERSONAL BONDS OF GRATITUDE

Elite thinkers of the Western and Eastern Han went far beyond affirming the importance of the intimate bond between mothers and sons. Some (although not all) went so far as to question whether the personal obligations of sons to their mothers should be cast aside to fulfill what Ying Shao called “duty to lord and father.” This view can be seen in anecdotes detailing conflicts between official or paternal duty and personal obligations owed to mothers.

Returning momentarily to the Western Han, a founding myth included in the Historical Records (Shiji 史記; ca. 90 BCE) by Sima Qian asserts the ultimate importance of service to the dynastic lord. By Sima’s account, Wang Ling (d. 180 BCE) served as a Han general when the founder of the dynasty, Liu Bang, and his chief rival, Xiang Yu, were vying for supremacy (see introduction). Xiang captured Wang’s mother and kept her as a hostage, but she remained defiant of her captors. In a secret communication, she urged her son not to betray Liu on her behalf; then, in order to encourage him, she
committed suicide. Liu later invested Wang as the Marquis of the Kingdom of An (Anguo hou 安國侯). What is surprising here is that Sima does not dwell on Wang’s grief over the loss of his mother. If Wang regretted the fact that his decision to serve the Han lord ultimately led to his mother’s death, we never hear of it. Of course, Wang did not decide to sacrifice his mother; rather she committed suicide, leaving him, in effect, with no choice but to follow Liu. If anything, Sima Qian portrays Wang Ling and his mother as valiant (as opposed to tragic) figures.48

A case found in the History of the Later Han may comprise a subtle assault on the Wang Ling myth. This case appears in the biography of Zhao Bao (fl. 168–189 CE), the estranged cousin of a powerful but reviled court eunuch. Zhao had served as Grand Administrator in the frontier province of Liaoxi, where he fought in military campaigns against the Xianbei tribes. During one campaign, the Xianbei took his wife and mother hostage; hoping to force Zhao to surrender, they showed him his mother. Zhao broke down in tears upon seeing her, but she urged him to fulfill his duty by disregarding her welfare. He reportedly told her: “Formerly, we were son and mother, but today I am the lord’s subject—when acting in accordance with official duty [yi], one cannot care about personal bonds of gratitude [si’en].” Zhao’s mother then exhorted her son to remember the example of Wang Ling and his mother, and to live up to the principles of “conscientiousness and dutifulness [zhongyi].” The Xianbei did kill both Zhao’s mother and his wife, but he defeated them in battle afterwards, and the court rewarded him in recognition of his sacrifice. The emperor sent an emissary to pay his condolences and bestow upon Zhao a noble title, but Zhao was not so easily consoled. After he returned home to bury his mother, he observed to his neighbors,

食祿而避難，非忠也。殺母以全義，非孝也。如是，有何面目立於天下！

[To live off an official pension and avoid hardship would not have been conscientious. But to kill one’s mother in order to fulfill one’s official duty is not filial. This being so, what face do I have as I stand before all under Heaven!]

After uttering these words, Zhao reportedly “spat blood and died.”49

Before examining this episode, I must voice my reservations about it. First, the story is at least in part apocryphal. Some readers will notice the similarities between this episode and the story about Shen Ming (see chapter 1). In fact, many of the words attributed to Zhao come from the Odes by Han account.50 Second (and potentially more troubling), we cannot say for sure whether the tale about Zhao indeed originated in the Eastern Han.

Putting aside these reservations, the story of Zhao Bao suggests that some members of the Eastern Han elite were ambivalent about privileging official duties over personal obligations (a theme we encountered in the previous chapter). First of all, the story offers a sharp contrast to the Wang Ling
myth. Unlike Wang, Zhao has a dilemma: he finds himself in the position of having to choose between official duty and saving his mother, and he chooses the former. To be sure, his mother tries to make it easier for him, insisting that he fulfill his duty. Unlike the account in the *Historical Records*, this story in the *History of the Later Han* focuses on the tragic consequences of fulfilling one’s official duties; and unlike Wang, Zhao does not take his reward and go on with his life.

If the authors of the Zhao Bao story were perhaps ambivalent, some members of the Eastern Han political elite questioned outright whether official duties should necessarily take precedence over personal obligations under all circumstances. Take, for example, the case of Tian Yi (fl. 25 CE), who had been allied with the Guangwu emperor’s rival, Liu Xuan (the self-styled Gengshi emperor; d. 25 CE). During a military conflict, the Guangwu emperor took Tian’s mother, brother, wife, and child hostage. Tian pressed on, but upon learning of the death of his lord, Liu Xuan, he promptly surrendered. Questioned about his surrender by one of his comrades, Tian observed,

夫人道之本，有恩有義，義有所宜，恩有所施，君臣大義，母子至恩。今故主已亡，義其誰為，老母拘執，恩所當留。

[As for the root of the Way of Men: there are bonds of gratitude and there is dutifulness. Dutifulness has its appropriateness; bonds of gratitude have their application. There is great duty between lord and subject, whereas between mother and son, there is the utmost bond of gratitude. Now, my former lord had perished. For whom should I have acted dutifully? But my old mother was detained in custody. That is where my bonds of gratitude should have stayed.]51

Tian’s comparison of lords and mothers closely parallels those made by the aforementioned Jingzi in the *Mencius* between lords and fathers during the Warring States period. Like Jingzi, Tian divided human relationships into two realms of obligation: dutifulness and bonds of gratitude. But where we would have expected to find fathers—or even a more general term, such as “close ones”—as the recipients of bonds of gratitude (*en*), Tian specifically designated mothers.

Eastern Han lore even went so far as to suggest that duty to one’s father, like duty to one’s lord, could be at odds with feelings for one’s mother. For example, the public demonstration by Zhang Wu 張武 of his extraordinary attachment to his mother made him famous among his contemporaries, and was noteworthy enough to be included in “Biographies of Men of Singular Conduct” (*Duxing liezhuan* 獨行列傳) found in the histories compiled by both Xie Cheng and Fan Ye. Zhang lived sometime during the Eastern Han, probably in the first century, but neither Xie nor Fan mentions his exact dates or who his forebears were. When Zhang was still a child, robbers murdered his father and left the body without a proper burial. Years later, as a student at
the Imperial Academy, Zhang would take his father's only keepsake to the place where he had died, and pour a libation to his father's spirit. For this behavior, Zhang won public acclaim and was nominated as “Filial and Incorrupt.” Zhang's staid execution of the duties owed to his father stood in contrast to the total abandon with which he mourned his mother. When she died, Zhang's excessive mourning weakened his health. The damage done to his own body “harmed his father's luminous spirit [hunling 魂靈] and caused it not to return [to accept sacrifices].” Zhang was shaken by this and died.52 Had duty to father been his first priority, Zhang would have restrained his grief and preserved his health, thereby ensuring that his father's sacrifices would continue. But in the final reckoning, Zhang's attachment to his mother proved too strong, and interfered with his duty to his father.

**NARRATIVES OF LOSS IN INSCRIPTIONS**

It is instructive to review some examples in the histories and compare accounts of mourning for mothers with those for fathers. As Fan Ye reports, when Liu Zhen 劉臻 (d. 156), a member of the imperial family, learned of the death of his mother, he and his brother "spat blood and damaged the corners of their eyes [tuxie huizi 吐血毀目]."53 It was only after they had mourned for their mother that they turned to mourn for their father, who in fact had died earlier; no details of their mourning for him are provided. This case is not unique for men of the Eastern Han. Descriptions of sons mourning for fathers tend to be brief; for example, we hear only that the recluse Bao Ang 鲍昂 (fl. ca. 76) was "emaciated and broken for three years."54 Bao's emaciation was nothing special, as mourners were expected to eat less during the mourning period. Other references to sons mourning for their fathers say even less. Fan Ye only notes in passing that one official, Liu Ping 劉平 (fl. ca. 60), had left office to mourn his father, although the historian does leave a detailed account of how Liu risked death at the hands of robbers in order to look for food for his mother.55

Turning from standard histories to stelae, the fact that second-century eulogists took relatively little interest in how men mourned their fathers is striking. The longest description of a man's grief for his father that I have found runs five short lines, and most are shorter.56 In some cases, the eulogist showed no interest in describing the grief of the mourner, and the description of mourning seems only to serve the purpose of explaining an interruption in an official career. For example, as the eulogist of the former Grand Administrator of Yanmen 蒲門, Xianyu Huang 鮮于璜 (d. 125), observed: “He lost his father and quit his post, and when his period of wearing mourning had ended and the rites were complete, he once again answered the summons of the Three Lords [i.e., the three most senior ministers of the dynasty].”57

Instead of providing vivid descriptions of the grief experienced by sons upon losing their fathers, eulogists preferred to emphasize the mourner's conformity to the rules of ritual propriety. One exception is found in a stele
inscription: in four short lines, the eulogist observes that the son of the Chancellor of Beihai 北海 (d. 143) “was violently shaken; collapsing with feelings of devastation, he could not stay awake, and now he is forever hidden in the Eternal Return [i.e., the abode of the dead].” Yet descriptions like these appear to be anomalies. Commenting on Wang Yuanbin 王元賓 (d. ca. 161), the Magistrate (ling 令) of Fengqiu 封丘, one eulogist noted: “At the time when he was first capped [i.e., came of age], he lost his father, and on account of his filial [conduct], he established his reputation.” More noteworthy is the case of Kong Biao 孔彪 (123–171), the Grand Administrator of Boling 博陵. Kong’s eulogist described his mourning for his father as follows:

At first glance, this description would suggest that Kong Biao had “gone beyond the rites.” After all, he is described as “exceedingly grieved,” having wept profusely. But, as the last lines reveal, Kong did not go too far with mourning: “he was cautious about the old rules,” which not only called for proper displays of grief, but also strictly limited their expression. Such willingness to abide by the rules, finally, is shown by the fact that Kong returned to official life once his period of mourning had ended.

In contrast, eulogists showed great interest in and took pains to depict the subjective experience of loss for sons mourning their mothers. One example is an inscription dedicated to Cao Teng (see Chapter 2), a powerful court eunuch and the “ancestor” of the warlord Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), the founder of the Wei 魏 dynasty (220–265):

In several respects, Cao Teng’s inscription contrasts nicely with Kong Biao’s. Whereas Kong was said to have been careful not to go too far and to observe ritual limits, Cao did go too far: not only did he fail to stop grieving after the period of mourning had expired, but his grief even killed him.
The most detailed, poignant, and sophisticated representations of loss are found in the inscriptions written by Cai Yong on behalf of sons mourning their mothers. Consider the funerary inscription dedicated to Ma Lun 马倫 (122–184), the daughter of the scholar-official Ma Rong (see introduction). On the request of her two sons, Cai captured in words the men's feelings of “hurt and grief.” Below is just a portion of the extended description of the mourners' reactions.

不享遐年 She did not enjoy old age
以永春秋 With long years.
往而不返 She is gone and will not return,
痛鰥大鶩 She has sunken deep into the great darkness.
喟歎哀哉 Alas, sorrowful indeed!
几筵虛設 Tables and mats are set but unused,
帳帷空陳 The curtains and canopies have been put out in vain.
器物猶在 Her things are still there.
不見其人 We do not see her person.
魂氣飄飄 Her ghost drifts about.
焉所安神 How could we pacify her spirit?

Cai’s eulogy is moving even today, partly because he does not just state that Ma Lun’s children were grieved by her death, or merely mention that they fulfilled their mourning obligations. Rather, he focuses on their thoughts and feelings, relating how grief shaped their perceptions of home and environment: “Tables and mats are set but unused. The curtains and canopies have been put out in vain. Her things are still there. [But] we do not see her person.” For Ma Lun’s sons, the ritual of treating the dead as if they were still alive—setting their mother’s place at meals, leaving her bedroom as it was before—further intensified their feelings of loss.

In other inscriptions, Cai Yong attempted to represent the complex feelings of loss that sons experienced when their mothers died. The following is a longer excerpt from such an inscription, which Cai wrote on behalf of the Cui 崔 sons on the occasion of their mother’s death in 161.

人亦有言 There is a saying among men,
仁者壽長 “The kind will be long-lived.”
宜登永年 They ought to have long years,
壽無窮 Become gray and wizened without end.
昊天不毆 Bright Heaven does not pity.
降此殞殃 It visits upon us this cruel calamity.
瘠疾瀆留 Bed-ridden and left with an incurable chronic illness,
[痛]喪悼傷 Her spirit was enfeebled and hurt.
慟怛孝子 Grieved [were] the filial sons.
慟懤其懼 They were very fearful, very worried;
靡神不作 There was no spirit that they did not raise.
There was no medicine that [they] did not administer [to her].
Alas, great sorrow was this, indeed!
At this, the filial sons wailed for such a long time,
That her breath [qi], having been cut off, could be revived.
Crying out and calling, they proclaimed their grief.
They did not know their crime.
May Bright Heaven, Lord on High,
Pity the orphans left behind,
Who seek, long for her roaming spirit.
How can we know where it has gone?
Oh how sad, how lamentable!

What is extraordinary about this inscription is that it attempts to capture the vicissitudes of the mourners’ emotions from the moment of death to the cof-finining, which was usually several days later. Readers feel the mounting despair as the sons realize that medical intervention is useless, and then observe their fruitless attempt to revive their mother by performing a “soul-calling” rite (see introduction). Cai depicts the complex emotions of the survivors as they come to grips with the finality of death. He expresses their initial anger and sense of injustice, directed at providence in ironic statements: “There is a saying among men, ‘The kind will be long-lived.’” Finally, the anger of the sons, exhausted by their attempts to revive Madame Cui, becomes a sorrowful plea, a sense of resignation: “May Bright Heaven, Lord on High, Pity the orphans left behind.”

Why did eulogists and biographers reserve the most poignant expressions of grief for sons mourning their mothers? Obviously, we should not assume that Eastern Han men mourned their mothers more deeply than their fathers. Instead we must ask why the most intimate and private feelings of grief, which some Western Han statesmen had denigrated as merely personal, became so important to the elite men of the second century. As explained in the next section, the expression of personal grief had taken on added significance as a public demonstration of virtue.

LORE ON SONS AND MOTHERS: THE EASTERN HAN AND BEYOND

Public expressions of grief over a dead mother helped to define a man’s public persona. Many acclaimed second-century figures mourned their mothers, including those already familiar to us: Cai Yong, Chen Fan, Yuan Shao, and Fan Ran. As will be shown presently, so important was public grief over a dead mother that it became the stuff from which myths were made.

The belief that a son’s love for his mother moved outlaws as well as emperors began in the Eastern Han. Records of the Han from the Dong-guan Library (Dongguan Hanji; second century) recounts the tale of a filial son named Zhao Zi (fl. 158–182) who encountered robbers...
breaking into his family home one night. Worried that they might startle his mother, Zhao approached the gate and welcomed the robbers with food. He explained his concerns, and the robbers were so moved that they departed without harming the family. Similar tales of Eastern Han men—not only Zhao Zi, but also the official Jiang Ge 江革 (fl. 50–77)—are also told in the biographies by Fan Ye and Huangfu Mi 皇甫譔 (215–282). Even outlaws were devoted to their mothers. In the year 50, Fang Guang 方廣 was in prison for avenging his father's murder when his mother died of an illness. Fang wept and sobbed when the news reached him, refusing food. The devotion of this outlaw to his mother moved his jailer, who felt compassion for Fang and wished to send the prisoner home so that he could prepare his mother’s body for burial. This plan met with resistance from other officials, but in the end, the jailer prevailed. Fang returned home, and after he finished dressing the body, he went back to prison.

Foreigners and monsters could also be filial sons. A Xiongnu prince, Jin Midi 金日䃅, was the favorite of Emperor Wu (see chapter 1). According to Ban Gu and the polemicist Wang Chong 王充 (27–97), Emperor Wu had a portrait made of Jin’s deceased mother and displayed it in the palace. Whenever Jin would go to the palace, he would pay his respects and weep until tears had drenched his garments. A comparable tale is told of the Dou 邓 consort clan in the History of the Later Han. Dou Wu (see chapter 2) had been the brother of an empress dowager. According to Fan Ye, when Dou was born, his mother also gave birth to a giant snake, which the family abandoned in the woods. When Dou’s mother died, however, the giant snake left the woods and made its way to the mourning site. There, the snake behaved just like a human mourner. Fan Ye reported that “with its head, [the snake] hit the spirit bed, spilling tears of blood, prostrating and twisting itself as if it were grieving and sobbing.”

Hagiographers also claimed that filial sons in mourning were capable of transforming bad men from sinners to saints, figuratively speaking. The late–Eastern Han historian Xie Cheng reports such an incident upon the death of the mother of the great teacher Guo Tai 郭太 (127/128–169). At her funeral, a gentleman with a bad reputation, Jia Shu 贾逵, came to the house to pay his condolences. One of Guo’s friends turned him away, but when Guo heard of this, he objected. Xie tells us that Jia overheard Guo’s comment, and that it left such an impression on him that Jia subsequently mended his ways.

The events detailed in such stories may certainly fall under the rubric of miracles. The miraculous tales included in these early hagiographies will no doubt strike readers as fictitious, and indeed should not be taken as accounts of what really was. But like depictions of grief, which stray less from the realm of the possible, miraculous tales are also encoded political expressions of the Eastern Han elite. For all intents and purposes, depictions of grief and these miraculous tales belong to the same genre, and both are found in stelae and histories. Miraculous tales bear testimony to the attitudes and assumptions of
their creators (and possibly their intended audience), who believed that the fulfillment of personal obligation was an emotional and moral imperative.74

An examination of the content of these miracle tales is in order. Sources from the Han and Six Dynasties report the case of Cai Shun 蔡順 (fl. ca. 70), an eccentric old man who lived with his mother. According to a number of accounts, Cai’s mother was afraid of earthquakes. After she died, whenever there was an earthquake, Cai would run to her tomb to comfort her, sobbing and calling, “Shun is here.” Word of this spread, and when one earthquake struck, Han Chong 韓崇 (fl. ca. 64–72), a local official, rode down to the tomb in order to observe Cai’s filial piety for himself. Han then rewarded Cai by appointing him to a local post. Fan Ye provides another story about Cai Shun that may very well have originated in the Eastern Han.75 Before the tomb of Cai’s mother was finished, a fire spread through the village. Cai refused to flee; grasping his mother’s coffin, he called out to Heaven to protect it as flames enveloped the tomb. The fire destroyed the entire village, including the tomb, but Cai emerged alive. Heaven heeded this filial son’s calls, and while everything else was destroyed, coffin and adult child remained intact. Heaven showed its approval of Cai, who had been willing to die in order to demonstrate his devotion to his mother.76

In lore, the filial piety shown by sons mourning for their mothers also had the power to transform the natural realm. Xie Cheng recounts this tale about Fang Chu 方储 (fl. ca. 76–89):

[On meeting the sorrow of losing his mother, he quit his official post and practiced the rites. He carried soil to make the grave, planting more than a thousand pines, cypresses, and rare trees. A phoenix perched on top [of the trees], while white hares played beneath them.]77

The appearance of a phoenix—a magical bird—and a hare, of course, is an auspicious omen that suggests Heaven’s approval of this son’s devotion to his mother.78 Fan Ye tells a similar story of the eulogist Cai Yong. In his youth, Cai was famous for his devotion to his mother. When he was still very young, his mother was plagued by bad health. Concerned about her, Cai would go without sleep for long periods of time (even seventy days, according to Fan). As Fan reports, when Cai’s mother died,

[[Cai] put up a mourning hut beside her tomb, and in motion and stillness, his conduct was in accordance with the rites. Dodders pressed against the sides of the hut, and the wood [there] grew into intertwining trees.79 This was considered extraordinary by those near and far, and many came to observe it.]80

These accounts share with other tales of filial piety the belief that the intimate bond between mother and son had far-reaching effects. According
to Wang Chong, this belief was pervasive in Eastern Han times; popular lore even attributed powers of telepathic communication to the famous pair of Zengzi (see chapter 1) and his mother.

[Zengzi was so filial that he and his mother “shared the same qi.” Once, Zengzi left to gather wood in the wild, when a visitor came to the house. When [the visitor] was about to leave, Zengzi’s mother said, “Please stay, Shen [Zengzi] is just about to return.” She then pinched her left arm with her right fingers, and at that moment, Zengzi felt a pain in his left arm. He immediately returned, asking, “Why does your arm hurt?”]

The account of Cai’s mourning also contains elements of the theory of response (ganying 感應), a popular theory that flourished from the first century BCE. This theory holds that the natural realm responds to the actions of human lords. Heaven rewards good lords with favorable weather, harvests, and bounty, and signals its displeasure with bad lords by sending calamities such as eclipses, droughts, and famines.

These stories, which originated in the Eastern Han cult of maternal veneration, reveal that in the minds of the early imperial elite, mourning for mothers represented the ultimate expression of filial devotion—a devotion so powerful that it could influence the natural (as well as the human) realm. Even the good deeds of exemplary small children, like Cai Yong, affected nature. Cai’s filial piety had the power to cause trees to grow together and move dodgers, creating auspicious omens that signaled Heaven’s approval. Endowed with the potential to work miracles, the act of mourning one’s mother took on mythic proportions.

EXPLAINING THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN ACCOUNTS OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS

We have seen that many members of the Eastern Han political elite conceived of the mother-son and father-son relationships very differently. Whereas the relationship between father and son was often considered in terms of official duty, Eastern Han men claimed that the relationship between mother and son was an intimate, personal bond. And despite what might be expected, members of the Eastern Han elite tended to emphasize their relationships with their mothers through mourning. Mourning for one’s mother—more so than mourning for one’s father or lord—became crucial for building a public reputation during the Eastern Han.

The fact that the Eastern Han political elite emphasized the mother-son bond over that between father and son still does not explain why many (though certainly not all) Eastern Han men chose to make public displays of mourning.
for their mothers. One obvious explanation for this would be that mourning for fathers had become so commonplace by the beginning of the Eastern Han that it was unexceptional. Under these circumstances, there was nothing to gain by mourning one's father. On the other hand, because the Eastern Han political elite did not necessarily expect men to mourn for their mothers, those who did acquired public acclaim.

While this explanation is reasonable, it suffers from three limitations. First, it assumes that early discussions of filial piety revolved around obligations to fathers, an assumption not borne out by the sources. Classics of the Warring States period did emphasize the greater importance of ritual obligations owed to fathers, but this does not mean that the authors of these texts conceived of filial piety primarily in terms of such duties. The *Classic of Filial Piety*, for example, which some scholars argue conceives of filial piety primarily in terms of duties owed to fathers, in fact focuses almost as much on mothers. A search through the *Classic* reveals that the authors refer to *qin* (parents) thirteen times; *fumu* (father and mother) four times; *fu* (fathers) eight times; and *mu* (mothers) six times. Second, there is no evidence to suggest that Eastern Han men were only expected to mourn for their fathers. If anything, judging from Ying Shao's outrage over the case of Yuan Hong (see chapter 2)—a man who had failed to attend his mother's funeral—one's mother was indeed expected. Third, there is little to indicate that mourning for mothers had become popular because people had tired of hearing about mourning for fathers. In fact, there are only five accounts of sons mourning their fathers in the *Historical Records* and *History of the Han*, both of which treat the Western Han (and only six accounts of sons mourning their mothers). This suggests that the Western Han political elite had never been in the habit of making an issue of their mourning for their fathers.

The discrepancy in mourning emphasis may also be explained by the fact that mothers tended to outlive fathers. Such an explanation would not require the assumption that, in the Eastern Han, mourning was worn more frequently for mothers than for fathers. It only presumes that the mourning worn by a son for his mother was more likely to be remembered. After all, the conduct of a mature man who was already an official would be more likely to capture the attention of his contemporaries than a child or even a young man in mourning.

While demographics may have been one factor, they alone cannot explain the greater number of accounts of sons wearing mourning for their mothers. Contrary to presumed expectations, women did not tend to outlive men in premodern China; the life expectancy of an elite woman who survived into adulthood was generally shorter than that of a man, in part because of the dangers inherent to childbearing. Moreover, we should not assume that Han men only observed mourning at the time of their parents' deaths. In fact, a man could observe mourning for a long-dead father (or mother), if he preferred, and this is precisely what a number of Han men did. For instance, Fan
Xian 范願 (second century CE) and Zhao Xi (see chapter 2) waited years to wear mourning for their mothers.\(^90\) The aforementioned Yuan Shao and Liu Zhen, once they reached maturity, even wore mourning for fathers who had died while they were in infancy.\(^91\) Finally, the assumption that a mature man or official was more likely than a child or young man to capture the attention of his contemporaries is unwarranted. There are, in fact, ample cases of men who had not yet become officials—mere boys, really—who purportedly distinguished themselves through exemplary conduct in mourning. This is not surprising when we consider not only the Han cult of the child prodigy, but also the realities of bureaucratic recruitment.\(^92\) As shown in the previous chapter, exemplary conduct in mourning had become an important pretext for recruiting young members of the local elite into the bureaucracy, and as historian Hsing I-t’ien has observed, Han officials were not necessarily men who had reached maturity—many were still in their early or mid-teens when they were first recruited, either as Palace Gentlemen, local appointees, or even Filial and Incorrupt nominees.\(^93\)

Why, then, did Eastern Han men emphasize mourning for their mothers over that for their fathers? As the sources are silent on potential motivations, it is difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at a definitive explanation. Nevertheless, circumstantial evidence suggests that the reason had to do with the different associations that fathers and mothers tended to carry. Beginning in the mid–Western Han, the court and political elite often associated obligation to fathers with official duty. Thus, by mourning his father, a man expressed his “dutifulness to lord and father” and “conscientiousness and dutifulness.” In contrast, mothers inspired in their sons feelings of the greatest intimacy. Obligations to mothers not only fell outside the bounds of “duty to lord and father,” but in the minds of many Eastern Han men, such obligations could be at odds with official duty. This attitude is apparent in the tales told above of Tian Yi and Zhao Bao. But perhaps the best example of this attitude is a story about the aforementioned teacher Guo Tai, reported by Fan Ye. In addition to being a famous filial son, Guo was also a leading man of letters. Not surprisingly, during the troubled second half of the second century, he was summoned repeatedly to office, but refused to serve. For his refusal, Guo won the praise of one of his contemporaries, Fan Pang 范滂 (137–169), another famous critic of the age. As Fan observed, “hidden [from the world], Guo stayed near his mother,” and therefore retained his “purity” (\(zhen\).\(^94\) Guo was not alone in this regard, as other Eastern Han sons purportedly refused summons to office or quit their posts on account of their mothers.\(^95\)

Certainly, the emphasis on mothers is part and parcel of a larger emphasis on personal obligation in Eastern Han elite society. As discussed in the previous chapter, such an emphasis most likely reflected the increasing power of the local elite vis-à-vis the Han court. Yet many of the stories about devotion to mothers seem to reflect something greater than the increasing power of the local elite. These stories, which pit a man’s love for his mother against the
dictates of official duty, also express a certain degree of ambivalence toward service. In a contest between the most innate form of love and public service, which should win? By the Eastern Han, it was not a foregone conclusion that the winner should be the latter.

It is not hard to imagine why some members of the Eastern Han political elite would have been ambivalent about official service. Certainly more than one man must have wondered whether the prestige or promise of broader power and influence was worth leaving familiar surroundings and even a life of ease—or worse, risking life and limb. Yet there is also evidence that such ambivalence was more pronounced in the second century than it had been earlier. This is due to the eruption not once, but several times during the century, of tensions between the eunuch-dominated court and the consort clans (as noted in chapter 2). Of course, the purges of high-ranking and highly regarded ministers, such as Liang Ji and Chen Fan, during the troubled reign of Emperor Huan resulted in displacement of only a fraction of the one hundred thirty thousand Han officeholders. But while the worst conflicts at court may never have touched most Han officials personally, they nevertheless must have dampened (if not eroded) morale. At the very least, such conflicts served as reminders of the potential costs of official service. If even the most impartial of officials could meet a dubious end, perhaps the best option was to stay home and attend to one's mother.
Friends or Subordinates?

At the end of one chapter of his *Comprehensive Discussion of Customs*, Ying Shao attacks the hermit Xu Zhi 徐稚 (97–168) for the way in which he mourned Huang Qiong 黄瓊 (86–164), the former Minister of Works. A few years before Huang died, he nominated Xu, a famous recluse, for office. Xu ignored the summons, but when he heard of Huang’s death, he made a long and arduous journey to attend the funeral. At the grave, Xu made an offering of wine and meat to Huang’s spirit. Then, as mysteriously as he had come, he departed. Xu left without seeing Huang’s family or telling anyone his name.1 Ying Shao angrily denounced Xu for his conduct, complaining that although Huang had treated Xu with generosity, Xu made his exit from the funeral after only a few minutes—“faster than if Huang Qiong had been a stranger on the road!”

While Ying’s criticism of Xu suggests that he believed Huang deserved substantial ritual recognition, Ying did not state explicitly what mourning obligations were owed by Xu to Huang, and the nature of these obligations thus remains unclear. The issue of Xu’s mourning obligations, in any case, is bound up with the larger problem of how he understood his relationship to Huang. Did Xu imagine a hierarchical relationship that was an extension of the duties owed to lord and father (junfu zhi yi)?2 Or did he see his relationship with Huang instead as a bond of friendship? These questions are difficult to answer, as there is no explicit statement in the literature of the period as to what mourning obligations a man would owe to someone who had not been his lord, teacher, or kinsman.

This chapter seeks to sort out such relationships through an explanation, in two parts, of the basis for political relations in the Eastern Han. The first part looks at the corpus of Eastern Han funerary inscriptions, focusing in particular on the language of these inscriptions and the terms of reference usually interpreted as indications of subordination. Were the donors of such stelae the
personal or bureaucratic subordinates of the deceased, or were they considered colleagues, peers, or friends? The second part examines the manner in which the Han political elite mourned their associates, and asks to what extent patern

alistic rhetoric shaped mourning practice. Did elite men mourn their political friends, especially powerful ones, in the same way that sons mourned their fathers? Consideration of the evidence points to the following conclusion: while hierarchical and paternalistic rhetoric did indeed inform political associations among the elite, this rhetoric competed with an alternative rhetoric that emphasized the ostensibly horizontal ties between friends and colleagues.

**SUBORDINATES OR COLLEAGUES?**

What relationship did stele donors have to the deceased? Interestingly, most of them were not members of the deceased's immediate family; of the ninety-one Han funerary inscriptions that contain information about who commissioned them (of 137 extant inscriptions in total), only about one-third list the involvement of kin. This fact has long caught the attention of scholars, beginning with the great Ouyang Xiu (see chapter 2). But who were these donors, if not members of the family? The contents of the donor lists themselves provide answers to this question; as we will see, many of the donors were not the subordinates of the deceased. A reexamination of the terms long assumed by scholars to indicate subordinate status is also instructive. Through these methods of inquiry, Han stele donors will be revealed as a mixed group, consisting of peers and colleagues as well as subordinates or followers.

In his monumental collection of stone inscriptions, Hong Kuo (see chapter 2) remarked that the stele donors were the subordinates of the dedicators. As he explained in his note to one inscription, many Han inscriptions "were commissioned by mensheng [門生] and guli [故吏]." Elsewhere, Hong defined these terms as follows: the former were "those to whom the traditions of learning had been transmitted"; the latter were the aides and subordinates of former government officials. Hong's view has been influential, and has shaped subsequent interpretations of the inscriptional corpus, especially those of modern historians such as Yang Lien-sheng, Nagata Hidemasa, and Patricia Ebrey.

The view that donors were the subordinates of the deceased seems to have some plausibility. As contemporary scholars such as Gan Huaizhen have emphasized, hierarchical relationships were important in Han society. One example is the relationship between a superior and a subordinate in the bureaucracy, which took on the characteristics of the lord-subject relationship, as Yang Lien-sheng and others have argued. More informal relationships between a "master" or teacher and his followers or pupils also existed. Finally, there was the relationship between a local magnate and his retainer, which involved economic dependency: in exchange for room, board, and protection, a retainer performed various duties for his lord. Such a relationship was also a legal one, for the retainer was classified as a member of his lord's household.
The fact that at least one stele was erected almost solely on the initiative of bureaucratic subordinates of the deceased lends credibility to the aforementioned view. The inscription on this stele, discussed in the introduction, is dedicated to a certain Jing, the Chancellor of Beihai (see table 4.1, no. 4 below). As we have noted, the names of fifty-three members of the Chancellor's local staff are inscribed on the reverse of the stele. Yet Jing’s stele—one of twenty-eight that include donor lists—is the exception rather than the rule, as few stelae appear to have been erected solely on the initiative of an official’s local staff.

In many cases, however, the donors were not the bureaucratic subordinates of the dedicatee, at least at the time of his death. As the antiquarian Ye Yibao 葉奕苞 (fl. 1659–1663) noted, in some cases—such as that of Zheng Jixuan 鄭季宣 (129–185), Magistrate of Weishi 魏氏 (table 4.1, no. 27)—the donors were officials serving in other jurisdictions. Some of the donors were equal or senior in rank to the deceased in other cases. One example is the inscription dedicated to the Inspector of Liangzhou 漣州, Wei Yuanpi 魏元丕 (d. 181; table 4.1, no. 24). The reverse side of the stele includes the names of fifteen individuals, none of whom were then members of Wei’s local staff. In fact, the donors included four men who were of equal or higher rank to Wei: two former regional Inspectors and two Grand Administrators from other areas.

In other examples, it is unlikely that the donors had been the bureaucratic subordinates of the deceased at any point in their lives. One-third, or sixteen of the donors listed in the inscription dedicated to the court eunuch Zhou Fu 州輔 (95–156; table 4.1, no. 7) achieved equal rank in the bureaucracy. Lest we imagine that any of these men might have served under Zhou at an earlier stage in their careers, two points must be noted. First, Zhou served in various posts only as a palace eunuch, rather than as a regular official. Therefore the donors—all of whom were part of the regular bureaucracy—could never have been members of his staff. Second, the inscription explicitly identifies the donors as neighbors (xiangren 鄰人) and members of Zhou’s clan (xingzu 姓族). Along similar lines, the History of the Later Han 前漢書 tells of an inscription, now lost, commissioned by four men: Chen Shi (see chapter 2), Li Ying 李瑩 (d. 169), Du Mi 杜密 (d. 169), and Xun Shu 許淑 (83–149 or ca. 100–ca. 167). As Wu Hung points out, both Li Ying and Du Mi were not only high officials, but also leading statesmen at court; the deceased, in contrast, a certain Han Shao 韓韶 (fl. ca. 155), had been a minor official in present-day Shandong 山東.

It was simply impossible for the donors ever to have been the bureaucratic subordinates of the deceased in some cases, namely, when the deceased never held office of any kind, and thus could not have had such subordinates. One example is the case of Lou Shou 倪壽 (97–174; table 4.1, no. 18), who never held office, according to his eulogist. Yet the reverse of Lou’s stele (no longer extant) once listed the names of fifty-eight donors: thirty junior officials and twenty-eight “reclusive gentlemen” (chushi 處士).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE OF INSCRIPTION</th>
<th>TRANSCRIPTION OF INSCRIPTION</th>
<th>TRANSCRIPTION OF DONOR LIST</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meng Xuan canbei</td>
<td>Nagata Hidemasa, Kandai sekkoku shūsei (KSS) 2.266</td>
<td>KSS 2.266</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Yezhe Jing jun mubiao</td>
<td>Hong Kuo, Lishi (LS) 6.1a</td>
<td>LS 6.3a</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yangjia canbei</td>
<td>KSS 2.74</td>
<td>KSS 2.74</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Beihai xiang Jing jun bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.88; LS 6.9a</td>
<td>KSS 2.90; Hong Kuo, Lixu 經繧 (LX) 16.3b</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Wu Ban bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.100; LS 6.11a</td>
<td>KSS 2.100</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Yizhou taishou wuming bei</td>
<td>LS 17.10b</td>
<td>LS 17.10b</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Jicheng hou Zhou Fu bei</td>
<td>LS 17.14a</td>
<td>LS 17.16a</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Jizhou cishi Wang Chun bei</td>
<td>LS 7.1a</td>
<td>LX 12.18b</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Fengqiu ling Wang Yuan-bin bei</td>
<td>LX 19.2b</td>
<td>LX 16.9a (notes only)</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kong Zhou bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.148; LS 7.4a</td>
<td>KSS 2.150; LS 6.5b</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Shanyang taishou Zhu Mu houbei</td>
<td>LS 7.2b</td>
<td>LS 7.8b–10a</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Pei xiang Yang Tong bei</td>
<td>LS 7.15b</td>
<td>LS 7.17b</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Yang Zhen bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.174; LS 12.1a</td>
<td>LS 12.3a</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Kong Biao bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.192; LS 8.14b</td>
<td>KSS 2.194; LS 8.16b</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Yang Shugong canbei</td>
<td>KSS 2.190</td>
<td>KSS 2.190</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Lu Jun bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.202; LS 9.4b</td>
<td>KSS 2.204; LX 20.22a</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Lou Shou bei</td>
<td>KSS 2.208; LS 9.9a</td>
<td>LS 9.10b</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Since we cannot assume that all donors were the subordinates of the deceased, what evidence is there to support Hong Kuo’s view? The best evidence is offered by two terms used commonly in stele inscriptions to refer to donors, mensheng and guli. Extensive discussion of the possible meanings of these terms is necessary in order to evaluate Hong’s argument, with the following caveat: it is not clear whether these terms were chosen by the donors or by the eulogist (or even by some third party—the eulogist himself may not have been responsible for composing the donor lists).

In fairness, Hong Kuo was right about mensheng (literally, “pupil”) being a term of subordination. It is undeniable that Han authors used mensheng to refer to a man’s personal followers, if not his actual pupils. In fact, the social critic Xu Gan (see chapters 1, 2) remarked that some of his contemporaries...
were in the habit of calling themselves mensheng of men from affluent or powerful families.22

Something like the usage of mensheng that Hong describes can be found in the inscriptional corpus; one example is the stele dedicated to Feng Sheng (170–181), commissioned by a group of donors (table 4.1, no. 25). As is true of most inscriptions, this one (cited here in part) relates the circumstances under which it was carved:

He sprouted but did not flower;23
Lifespan can be both long and short,
And there is nothing to be done.
His loving father was wounded with grief.
He restrained his sorrow [as Confucius did] for Hui [his favorite pupil, Yan Yuan] and Li [Confucius’s son].
In the twelfth month of the same year, on the dinyou [34th] day [of the 60-day calendar],
He was laid to rest,
Forever hidden in his earthen tomb.
Dead, he does not persist.
Were moved by the perfection of the three [duties],
Each of which partakes of the same righteousness.
For this reason they collectively cut the stone,
Relating his talents and virtue.
By engraving [his name], he will not decay.

Upon closer examination, the mensheng mentioned in Feng’s stele must have referred to the followers of the family, and not Feng himself. However precocious Feng may have been, it seems unlikely that the eleven-year-old would have drawn a following.26 So what did mensheng mean in this context? Fortunately, the reverse of the stele provides clarification, stating that the two mensheng responsible for erecting the monument, Sun Li and Wang Sheng, were actually mensheng of the Feng household (jia zhi mensheng).27 Feng’s inscription is not the only such example; a further case in point is the inscription (ca. 168) believed by Song antiquarians to have been composed for Yang Zhu (116–168), the former Magistrate of Gaoyang (table 4.1, no. 14). Yang’s eulogist credits mensheng with erecting the stele. But judging from the information presented on the reverse, as Hong Kuo points out in his notes, none of the donors were mensheng of the deceased. Rather, they were mensheng of two of Yang’s relatives: a “gentleman of Pei” (Pei jian 沛君) and the “later lord” (bougong 後公), identified respectively by Hong as Yang Tong (113–168) and Yang Bing (94–167).28
Although Hong was close to the mark on the meaning of *mensheng*, he was wrong about *guli*—at least as the term was used in the inscriptions. As will be shown presently, *guli* was not necessarily a synonym for a bureaucratic subordinate or aide, as it was used to denote colleagues and peers of the dedicatee as well as his subordinates. The term certainly could refer to the subordinate of an individual official in the bureaucracy, and indeed we find it used this way in non-inscriptional contexts (particularly texts from the Six Dynasties like the *History of the Later Han*).

The inscriptional corpus, however, includes examples in which *guli* was not used to refer to the stele dedicatee’s past or present bureaucratic subordinates. One such example is found in an inscription dedicated to a woman whose maiden name was Huang 喬 (d. 169). Her eulogist credits the *guli* of Jiyang 濟陽 county for erecting the monument. There is no question that *guli* here could not refer to the former subordinates of the woman, as she never held an official position. Of course, the woman was the stepmother of Hu Guang (see chapter 2), the highest minister of the realm, and the step-grandmother of Hu Shuo 胡穎 (128–168), the Grand Administrator of Chenliu 陳留, the larger administrative unit that included Jiyang. Naturally, both of these men would have had subordinates working directly under them; thus, it might be fair to suppose that these *guli*—like the *mensheng* mentioned in Feng Sheng’s inscription—were subordinates of the woman’s family. Yet this reading seems unlikely, as extant records reveal that none of Huang’s relatives ever served in Jiyang. (In fact, no one with the surname of Huang or Hu is known to have served in Jiyang as Magistrate, the only county position that would have had subordinates.) Therefore it is doubtful that the stele donors ever served directly under one of these men as staff members or aides in the county.

Another example is found in the donor list of an inscription dedicated to Lu Jun 魯峻 (112–172), the Director of Retainers (sili xiaowei 司隸校尉; table 4.1, no. 17). One of these donors is listed as a *guli* from Henei 河內. The only contact, if any, between Lu and this individual must have occurred when Lu served as an Assistant (cheng 彙) in Henei. As an Assistant, Lu was certainly too low in the hierarchy to make regular appointments to the local staff; thus, this donor could not have been the subordinate of the deceased, in the sense of someone appointed by Lu. A non-funerary inscription dedicated to an official who built a bridge includes one further example. Here the author credits one *guli* with commissioning the inscription for Zhao 趙 (fl. ca. 112), a county Commandant (wei 從) who served in Qingyi 青衣. As was the case with Lu, Zhao had been too low in the hierarchy to make appointments.

If *guli* did not refer to an official’s bureaucratic subordinates, what did the term mean in Han inscriptions? One possibility, suggested in a recent article by Zhang Hequan, is that *guli* referred to men who were the “Filial and Incorrupt” nominees of officials. Most of the donor lists that include references to *guli* did accompany inscriptions dedicated to officials in a position to nominate others. But there are a number of important exceptions that merit consideration. In
the aforementioned case of Zhao, it is clear that Zhao could never have recom-
mended the *guli* for a post, because Zhao had only been a low-level local official
and thus was ineligible to nominate others as “Filial and Incorrupt” (or any
other title). Similarly, according to the *Record of Stone and Bronze* (*Jinshilu*
金石錄) by the antiquarian Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081–1129), the donor list
that accompanied Chen Shi’s inscription also included names of *guli*.34 Chen
Shi, however, would not have been in a position to nominate candidates, as he
never achieved office beyond the rank of Magistrate—and thus remained too
low in the bureaucratic hierarchy to nominate others.35

Of course, it is also possible that *guli* did not necessarily denote a subor-
dinate in the bureaucracy, but instead indicated an informal relationship of
subordination. Admittedly this interpretation is difficult to refute due to the
paucity of extant information about the donors in many cases. Nevertheless,
there is reason to suspect that this interpretation may not be accurate. The
inscription dedicated to the aforementioned Zheng Jixuan is a case in point. In
his notes to the reverse side of the stele, Hong Kuo reports that the line “The
Names of the Reclusive Gentlemen and Guli of Weishi” (*Weishi chushi guli
ming* 賜氏處士故史名) appeared above the donor list. Judging from the posts
that they occupied, a number of the donors clearly were not the past or present
subordinates of the deceased. In fact, one of them was the former Chief Com-
mandant (*duwei* 都尉). This senior minister, whose name unfortunately was
effaced, would have been at the salary rank of two thousand bushels, and thus
would have had considerably greater influence and power than Zheng. Given
his significantly higher status, it seems very unlikely that this donor would
have wanted to lend the impression of being subordinate to the deceased.36

Another possibility, suggested by Robert Hymes, is that *guli* should be
read to mean “friend and official.” Hymes’ reading is based on the fact that *
gu*, which most commentators have interpreted as “former,” can also mean “friend”
in Han texts.37 One advantage to this reading is that it would provide a con-
sistent context for reading another term found in the donor lists, *gumin* 故民.
To date, scholars have interpreted *gumin* as either “a commoner under [the
deceased’s] administration,”38 a “dead commoner,” or even a close synonym
of *chushi* (reclusive gentleman) or *yishi* (worthy gentleman).39 If indeed
the character *gu* in the inscriptions corpus simply means “friend,” then *gumin*
may be interpreted consistently as “friend and commoner.”

Although ingenious, Hymes’ proposal has its drawbacks. First of all, this
reading does not fit well with other usages of *gu*, particularly in terms that pre-
cede the official titles of the deceased in other kinds of funerary monuments.
For example, the inscription on a pillar (*que* 闕) in a Han cemetery in Shandong
refers to the deceased as “a former [gu] Member of the Nanwuyang Bureau of
Merit [gu Nanwuyang gongcao 故南武陽功曹].”40 Because this inscription was
probably commissioned by members of the deceased’s family, *gu* most likely does
not mean “friend” here. Moreover, Hymes’ interpretation does not work well in
cases in which *gu* was used to distinguish between past and present positions.
An entry in a donor list provides the following example: “Secretary Li Sui of Xiabian [county], whose styled name is Zihua, the former [gu] Provincial Officer [zhubu Xiabian Li Sui, zi Zihua, gu congshi 主簿下辨李遂,字子華,故從事].”

How then should we interpret references to guli in Han stelae? Although the answer depends partly on context (as guli is used in at least two different ways), the term does not imply a relationship of subordination. When guli precedes one of the donor’s other official titles, it means “former [fellow] officer” or “former colleague.” The reverse of a stele dedicated to the Chief Commandant Liu Kuan 呂覽 (120–185; table 4.1, no. 26) lists the aforementioned Ying Shao as a guli. At the time that the inscription was carved, Ying was still serving in office; thus guli could not be translated simply as “former officer” here. But it would not be appropriate to read guli as “former subordinate” either, because Ying had not been the subordinate or nominee of Liu.

Guli appears as the sole title of a donor in the majority of cases, and a literal interpretation of the term as “former officer” is best in this context. Gu 故 literally means “former,” and li 史 refers to officials—either centrally or locally appointed—between the ranks of one hundred and two thousand bushels. When the two characters are put together, the compound means former officers or officials. This literal reading was how Yan Shigu 冼師古 (581–645) understood Han usages of the term. Commenting on an edict issued by Emperor Zhao 昭 (r. 5–1 BCE) that called for military officers and guli to be sent to the frontier, Yan noted that here guli simply meant “those who had carried out official business in the past.”

There are certainly advantages to interpreting guli as denoting the former colleagues of the deceased, rather than his former subordinates. If we assume that such terms were used in a more or less consistent fashion in funerary inscriptions, interpreting guli as a title for men who had served the dynasty correlates to how gu (former) should be read in other compounds used for official titles in the donor lists. Such titles include gutaishou 故太守 (former Grand Administrator) and guxiang 故相 (former Chancellor). This interpretation would also be consistent with other compounds that use li in Eastern Han donor lists and inscriptions, such as zhuli 主吏 (head officer), juli 襄吏 (elevated officer), jiuli 郡吏 (commandery officer), and guxiaoli 故小吏 (former minor officer). Interpreting guli as an official title, rather than as a synonym for “subordinate,” would agree furthermore with the tendency in inscriptions (both funerary and non-funerary) to list donors according to their membership in occupational groups. To take a non-funerary example, the reverse of the stele dedicated to the magistrate Zhang Qian 張遷 (fl. ca. 194) lists the names and titles of forty-one individuals, including thirty guli, one former head (guzhang 故長) of Anguo 安國, and three former assistants of the commandery (gubouling 故守令). Given that most scholars interpret the other terms (which appear frequently in donor lists) as official titles, it would make sense to understand guli to mean “former officers”—a class of individuals who were the deceased’s colleagues.
In summary, an investigation of stele donor lists reveals that there were at least two classes of donors. The first consisted of men whom Hong Kuo and others have rightly called the “subordinates of the deceased”: mensheng and bureaucratic aides. The second was composed of other officials or former officials, as well as men living in retirement: the social peers or colleagues of the deceased.

CAMARADERIE AND FRIENDSHIP

Turning to the question of how the donors understood their relationship to the deceased, many inscriptions indicate, interestingly, that they saw themselves as colleagues, peers, and even friends of the stele dedicatee.

An example of an inscription commissioned by a colleague or peer is that dedicated to Liu Min (d. 146). Liu had been a local “Filial and Incorrupt” nominee at the time of his death. According to his eulogist, Liu’s family had been too poor or proud to provide him with any grave markers. Moved by regard for the man (or disgust with the family), one of his neighbors erected a stele with the following inscription on Liu’s behalf:

_in the first year of the Jianning reign [168–172],
the county head, who was [recommended for office] the same year [as Liu Min],
and who was from Jianwei, a dependent state,
One Zhao Taigong, was indignant [about the situation].
Longing for the righteousness of plain silk [i.e., mourning garments],
in the second year [i.e., 169], the tenth month and jiazi day [first day of the 60-day calendar],
He erected a stele for the gentleman,
Which will transmit [his name] for ten thousand years.
Judging from the inscription, Zhao was certainly not a subordinate of the deceased. If anything, he was most likely a peer or colleague of Liu, as both men were nominated as “Filial and Incorrupt” in the same year.

Eulogists tended to speak of donors as the deceased’s friends, peers, or colleagues, especially in the case of court critics. The critic Zhou Xie (110–159) disapproved of the powerful regent Liang Ji (see chapter 2) and boldly refused to serve him. Cai Yong, who admired Zhou, wrote an inscription for him some years later, emphasizing the feelings of shared loss experienced by the stele donors (presumably including Cai himself) when Zhou died:

Far and near sighed in sorrow.
Their pained hearts lost their intentions.
And together they set up a stele, carving an inscription,
To mark his excellence.
The relationship between the donors and deceased is described in a similar manner in the inscription dedicated to Guo Tai (see chapter 3). Guo’s death, like Zhou’s, was mourned by many, as revealed by another inscription written by Cai:

All men who equally approved of him
Will forever long and grieve . . .
On this occasion, we erect this stele to mark his grave,
Clearly inscribing his great conduct
So as to spread his achievements to a hundred generations,
And [make] his good reputation known without end. ⁵⁶

Here, the inscription carries no hint of subordination on the part of the donors. Cai only suggests that the donors were motivated by their common love or admiration for Guo, and even friendship with him.

Eulogists described donors as friends, peers, or colleagues not only in inscriptions for men who had failed to acquire power, but also even when the deceased had been an elite official. A number of inscriptions dedicated to members of the commissioned corps provide examples. The circumstances surrounding the carving of an inscription for the Magistrate of Junyi were described by one eulogist as follows: “the men of the area [guoren] and all of [the deceased’s] friends [zhuyou], harboring feelings of grief and bereavement, together evaluated and recounted [his life].” ⁵⁷ Similarly, we hear that the passing of the military officer Guo Zhongqi and the aforementioned Lu Jun caused grief among the other virtuous men, or the “multitudes of gentlemen [bai junzi].” ⁵⁸ Most striking is the case of an inscription dedicated to a eunuch, Qiao Min, which reveals that eunuchs celebrated friendship as much as those contemporaries who maligned them:

Of his comrades and family,
There were none that did not lose their voices [in their wailing].
Tears doubly flowed.
And on this occasion, they erected a marker to vent their anguish. ⁶¹

Perhaps the best example of an inscription commissioned ostensibly by a peer (or even a friend) for an elite official is that dedicated to Hou Cheng. By the time of his death, Hou had risen to the rank of Acting Magistrate (shouzhang) of Jinxiang: ⁶²

He met with illness and died,
Oh pitiable, how sorrowful!
Because of this, from far and near, the gentlemen and virtuous ones
Numerous, came to the courtyard of his house,
Gathering like clouds.

They wailed in pain, issuing forth their grief.

Tears were wept copiously.

He will leave the bright sunlight,

And go to his new home in the dark realm of the yin.\(^63\)

Those of similar commitments have all arrived.

Those wearing mourning white filled the streets.

In life, he had a manifest reputation,

And in death, his merit survives.

If his spirit has awareness,

May it find pleasure in this glory!

On this occasion, the classicists went hand-in-hand in droves.

Remembering his form and image,

They erected an inscribed stone

To extol his marvelousness.\(^66\)

It is striking that the inscription mentions no mensheng, disciples (dizi 弟子), or officials of any kind. Instead, it focuses on the reactions of those in the deceased's larger social network, a network unconnected to relationships of superior and subordinate, or teacher and student. This network included gentlemen and “virtuous ones” who had sworn friendship and thus were gathered “like clouds” to wear mourning and participate in ritual wailing.\(^67\) It also included the nameless “classicists” (rulin 儒林) who collectively erected the stele in order to better instruct and guide the masses.\(^68\)

The fact that some eulogists represented the donors as the friends or colleagues of the deceased is less surprising when we consider that this is how some members of the Han political elite referred to their political associates—even those associates with less power or prestige. Quite naturally, this rhetoric of friendship was subject to exploitation (as Han social commentators were keenly aware).\(^69\) Indeed, Ying Shao lamented that his contemporaries were only willing to claim friendship with powerful men who could recommend them for office. As Ying complained, “When those who had nominated others [i.e., senior ministers in the bureaucracy] suffer a fall in name or position, [and] have no descendants to continue their line, most of the nominees are unable to bring themselves to treat them as intimates [qin]!”\(^70\) While the rhetoric of friendship and collegiality no doubt concealed what were often, in fact, relationships between individuals of unequal power, the significance of such rhetoric must not be overlooked, as it reveals that members of the Eastern Han elite preferred to speak of their relationships in terms other than “duty to lord and father.”

NEITHER LORD NOR FATHER

As we have seen, funerary inscriptions represented the relationship between the stele donors and the deceased in various ways. An examination of the
manner in which elite men mourned their “friends” will further reveal the extent to which paternalistic and hierarchical discourses shaped political associations in the Eastern Han. Did elite men mourn their friends, especially powerful ones, in the same way that they mourned their lords or fathers? Did they wear hemp garments with frayed sleeves (zhancui) for twenty-five months, as some scholars have claimed?71

There are several possible reasons why scholars have assumed that elite men mourned friends and benefactors as lords and fathers. Ying Shao’s comments constitute one of them. In one chapter of his Comprehensive Discussion of Customs, Ying attacked Zhou Cheng 周乘 (fl. ca. 150), Grand Administrator of Yuzhang 豫章, for his absence from the funeral of the man who had recommended him for office. Zhou thus failed, in Ying’s eyes, to “manifest the virtues of revering either lord or father.” In addition, at least one Han official regarded his “Filial and Incorrupt” nominees as sons. According to Ying, Zhou Jing 周景 (d. 168), a former Minister of Works, would tell the relatives of his nominees that he had “made sons out of subjects [i.e., appointees].”72

The assumption that men mourned powerful friends as they did lords or fathers appears to be supported by the content of a few stelae. Three stelae—one dedicated to one of the Three Lords (sangong); one to a member of the imperial family, the former Magistrate of Suanzao 酋, Liu Xiong 劉熊 (ca. second century); and one to the Chancellor of Beihai—refer to the dedicatee as “father” (fu 父). In the first case, the eulogist refers to the man as the “father of the commoners (min zhi fu 民之父).”73 And in the last inscription, which we encountered in the introduction, the eulogist observes,

民[ . . . ]思慕 The commoners [ . . . ] longed for him,
遠近搖首 Far and near scratched their heads.
農夫興末 The farmers let go of their plows.
商人空市 The merchants deserted the markets.
隨軒飲淚 They followed his carriage, choking on their own tears.
奈何朝庭奪我蔭父 What can be done about the court taking our kind father away?
去官未旬 It was not ten days after he left his post
病乃困危 That his illness became critical.74

Attention readers will notice that the eulogist here has assumed the voice of the commoners, the same individuals usually regarded as requiring the guidance of court officials. It is they, and not officials or the local men of learning (shì), who refer to the Chancellor as “our kind father.”

Yet surviving records suggest that Han men did not often mourn their political friends, however powerful, as lords or fathers. For one thing, other comments made by Ying clearly indicate that he disapproved of mourning men who were not kin in such fashion, regardless of relationship. One example is his condemnation of Xuan Du 宣度, General-in-Chief of Dunhuang 敦煌. Xuan mourned Zhang Huan 張奂 (d. ca. 181), who had been his teacher
(shi 師), in the same manner in which a son mourned his father. In doing so, Ying complained, Xuan had treated his teacher exactly as if he were his own father.75 Xuan, however, was unusual in this regard, as few men bothered to observe three years mourning for someone unrelated to them (see table 4.2). Of the few cases that are known, only one other case in which an elite man mourned someone unrelated to him by wearing garments with frayed sleeves—the garments worn when mourning one’s lord or father—can be confirmed.76 After the defeat and death of Liu Xuan (see chapter 3), a contender for the imperial throne, the official Guo Dan 郭丹 (24 BCE–62 CE) observed three years mourning with frayed sleeves (zhancui). Guo’s choice of clothing demonstrated his belief that Liu Xuan, and not the future Guangwu emperor, was the rightful imperial successor. In other words, Guo was stating that their relationship was not merely that of a man and his friend or benefactor, but that of lord and minister.

With so much discussion of fathers, extant records indicate, interestingly, that at least some (but certainly not all) elite men mourned their friends and benefactors in the same manner that sons mourned their mothers. When Former Minister of Works Yuan Feng 袁逢 died in about 178, two officials who had been appointed by him, Zi Meng 季孟 and Xun Shuang (see chapter 2), left office to wear mourning for three years (see table 4.2, nos. 6, 7).77 These mourning garments, however, had hemmed—as opposed to frayed—sleeves.78 Skeptical readers may ask whether such an act may have merely reflected the men’s ignorance of mourning protocol. Unfortunately, we know too little about Zi Meng to say for certain. In the case of Xun, however, it is clear that he must have known what signals his mourning garment was sending. As Ying Shao himself noted, Xun was a member of one of the oldest and most illustrious families in the Eastern Han. He was also one of the greatest ritual experts of his day: not only did he publicly defend three years mourning (as discussed in chapter 2), but also his biography in the History of the Later Han reports that he wrote a famous treatise on mourning protocol. There is no reason to suspect that Xun did not know that by wearing the hemmed-sleeve mourning garment, he was treating his friend and benefactor like his mother.79

The foregoing evidence forces us to reconsider whether hierarchical or paternalistic rhetoric shaped the way in which the Han political elite mourned powerful men unrelated to them. An examination of two factors may answer these questions: first, which members of the Eastern Han political elite were mourned; and second, how the Han elite understood their relationships with friends, especially vis-à-vis lords or fathers.

First of all, Han men often mourned those who had not been their lords or even their superiors, but simply peers they had known or admired. A couple of representative examples illustrate this point.80 When the former Grand Administrator Wang Min 王旻 died in prison during the reign of Emperor Ling 嘉 (r. 168–189), General Huangfu Gui 皇甫規 (104–174), a man described by Ying Shao as Wang’s friend (guren 故人), quit his post to put on mourning
Table 4.2. Accounts of Men Who Mourned Non-Kin for Three Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOURNER</th>
<th>PERSON MOURED</th>
<th>TYPE OF MOURNING</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Li Xun 李恂 (fl. 107)</td>
<td>Li Hong 李鴻 (fl. ca. 80)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Nominee and recommender</td>
<td>History of the Later Han 51.1683.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feng Zhou 濮周 (fl. ca. 130)</td>
<td>Li He 李郃, Minister of Works (fl. 107–125)</td>
<td>Three years mourning of the heart (xin sannian 心三年)</td>
<td>Follower (menren 門人) and teacher</td>
<td>History of the Later Han 82A.2718.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Stele donors Jing 景, Chancellor of Beihai (d. 143)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Self-proclaimed pupils (mensheng 門生) and teacher</td>
<td>KSS 2.88.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Xun Shuang 蘇爽 (128–190)</td>
<td>Yuan Feng 袁鳳, Minister of Works (d. ca. 178)</td>
<td>Hemmed-sleeve mourning (cicui)</td>
<td>Nominee and recommender</td>
<td>Ying Shao, Comprehensive Discussion of Customs 3.147; History of the Later Han 62.2057.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Zi Meng 曾孟 (fl. ca. 178)</td>
<td>Yuan Feng 袁鳳</td>
<td>Hemmed-sleeve mourning</td>
<td>Nominee and recommender</td>
<td>Comprehensive Discussion of Customs 3.147; History of the Later Han 62.2057.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Xuan Du 宣度</td>
<td>Zhang Huan 張حز (d. ca. 181)</td>
<td>Frayed-sleeve mourning</td>
<td>Student and teacher</td>
<td>Comprehensive Discussion of Customs 3.141.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Huan Dian 恒典 (d. 201)</td>
<td>Wang Ji 王吉 (d. 179)</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>History of the Later Han 51.1683; Ban Gu et al., Records of the Han from the Dongguan Library 16.9a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and escort the body back to the deceased's home village. The best-known case of men mourning someone who had been neither a benefactor nor a superior is perhaps that of the aforementioned Chen Shi. According to contemporary sources, He Jin (d. 189), the all-powerful brother of the empress dowager, came to pay his condolences upon Chen's death. More important, two prominent and high-ranking officials, Xun Shuang and Han Rong (d. 196), along with five hundred other men, wore mourning for Chen.

Moreover, many members of the Han political elite believed that the relationship between friends was distinct from the relationship a man had with his lord and father. As Ying Shao's comments reveal, friends inspired feelings of intimacy (qin). In contrast, lords or fathers were supposed to inspire feelings of the greatest awe and veneration, as opposed to intimacy, personal gratitude, or particular affection (as discussed in chapter 3). Unlike the relationship a man had with his lord, superior, or father—a relationship that was subject to the demands of public duty—the relationship between friends was constituted (at least in theory) by personal bonds of gratitude (si'en). Statements made by a number of Eastern Han social commentators attest to this belief. In his complaints about political cliques and nepotism, the polemicist Wang Fu (ca. 90–165) frequently alluded to the bonds of gratitude between friends, which often were expressed to the detriment of the public good. Ying gave a similar view in his critical remarks about Wu Kuang (fl. 146–164), another man nominated by the aforementioned Huang Qiong. Wu left office to wear mourning when he should have been attending to the “great affairs of the state.” As a result, Wu neglected state duties in favor of honoring a personal bond of gratitude. In less strident (or at least less angry) tones, the commentator Zheng Xuan voiced similar views about the nature of friendship: “Although friends are not kin [qin], they are [owed] the same bond of gratitude.”

Narratives of Friendly Devotion

Although friendship was distinct from the relationship a man had with his lord and father, at least some members of the Han political elite believed that it was important to fulfill obligations—especially mourning obligations—to friends. Two examples support this point. First, when court eunuchs murdered Chen Fan (see chapter 2), Zhu Zhen (d. 168), one of his friends (youren), quit his official post and wailed publicly. He then buried the body himself and sent Chen's son into hiding. Not surprisingly, the eunuchs had Zhu arrested, tortured, and summarily executed. A second, less tragic, story surrounds the death of Grand Commandant Li Gu (94–147). Li (along with another powerful man) had run afoul of the regent Liang Ji, and was executed upon his orders. Not satisfied with merely ordering his enemy's execution, Liang had Li's body exposed on the streets and forbade anyone to bury it, warning that those who did would share the dead man's fate. Despite
FRIENDS OR SUBORDINATES?

this warning, Guo Liang 郭亮, one of Li’s disciples, pleaded with officials for the body. The officials admonished him, but Guo refused to leave the body and wailed publicly for Li. Dong Ban 童班, who does not appear to have been Li’s disciple, also came out into the streets, wailing. Both men were taken into custody, but the empress dowager—Liang Ji’s sister—relied, either moved by the bravery of the pair or afraid of public condemnation. She released the men and allowed them to bury the body.88

So important were the ritual obligations owed to friends in the minds of the Han elite that even the least cultivated beings were believed to mourn their friends. The death of Grand Administrator Zhang Gang 張綱 (109–144) was mourned by a horde of former robbers led by Zhang Ying 張慶 (d. 145). While serving in Guangling 廣陵 as an official, Zhang Gang had met the fierce and murderous Zhang Ying, who had not been brought successfully into the imperial fold by the court. Ying went to Gang’s home alone with the intention of establishing a personal relationship. According to the historian Fan Ye, Ying was impressed with Gang’s sincerity and kindness, and agreed to surrender; the next day, the official and the outlaw feasted together at the former outlaw’s home. When Zhang Gang died, Zhang Ying and his followers put on mourning garments, escorted the coffin to the graveyard, and raised earth to build a tomb.89 The death of the virtuous not only had the power to affect the least cultivated of men, but also caused them to express their grief like gentlemen, in a ritually correct manner.

In addition to being morally efficacious, friendly devotion transcended the grave, according to popular lore. The future Grand Administrator of Lujiazang 劉江, Fan Shi 范式, had been extremely close to his friend Zhang Shao 張劭. Zhang always hoped for Fan's visit. While they were separated, Zhang died; he appeared to his friend (you 友) in a dream. “Juqing [Fan Shi], I died the other day and I will be interred shortly, returning for all time to the Yellow Springs. You have not forgotten me, but how will we see each other again?” Fan awoke from his dream in tears. The next day, he asked his superior for permission to take mourning leave. Fan’s superior, though skeptical, admired his solicitude and allowed him to go. The other mourners were already preparing Zhang’s body for interment before Fan arrived at the tomb, but they were unable to force the inner coffin into the outer. Zhang’s mother suspected that her son was somehow causing this and delayed his final burial. Then she saw Fan arrive, wearing mourning garments for friends (pengyou zhi fu 朋友之服), crying out and wailing. He addressed the coffin: “Go! The living and the dead travel different roads, and it will always be like this from now on.” Fan thereupon pushed the inner coffin into the outer coffin successfully.90

OTHER DIRECTIONS

Returning to the initial question, in what terms did members of the Eastern Han elite speak of their relationships to other men? Were the terms strictly
hierarchical, as some scholars have long argued, or ostensibly horizontal? The answer was something of both, as we have seen. In some cases, the Han elite related to their political associates as subordinates who owed their bureaucratic superiors or teachers the same duty a man owed his lord or father. But in many other cases, they associated with unrelated and even more powerful men as peers, colleagues, and even friends.

Why did some members of the Eastern Han elite prefer to speak of their associates as colleagues and friends? One possibility is that Han political discourse was directly inspired by actual social morphology: the rhetoric of friendship and collegiality reflected the importance of horizontal linkages in local society. This is not to say that local society lacked hierarchy or relations of inequality. But as Robert Hymes has suggested, the hierarchies within local society were arguably less formal than those found in the bureaucracy, “where each member occupied a relatively clear position in relation to others.” In contrast, local hierarchies were “ambiguous, multiple, subject to varying readings, and constantly under construction.”

Furthermore, horizontal connections were arguably as important in local society as vertical structures. As Mark Lewis has recently argued, local power holders went out of their way to form horizontal linkages with each other, because such linkages represented important strategies for survival. They entered into compacts of friendship, and swore oaths—all of which were viewed by conservative commentators like Ying Shao with a mixture of fear and disdain. Finally, they arranged marriage alliances, thereby using the exchange of women to enhance their standing and cement ties with each other.

The rhetoric of friendship and collegiality also may have flourished precisely because a discursive alternative to paternalistic rhetoric was needed. Such rhetoric had come to represent something of an official line, a common but tired refrain in court circles. It may be imagined that rhetoric on friendship and collegiality, in contrast, had a fresh allure. This rhetoric, furthermore, better expressed relationships that fell outside the parameters of duty to lord and father—relationships outside the bureaucratic hierarchy of superior and subordinate that were becoming especially important in the troubled last decades of the Han.

The need for discursive alternatives is perhaps seen clearest in the aforementioned case of Xun Shuang. Why did Xun choose to mourn his powerful friend as a mother? The question cannot be answered definitively, given the nature of our sources and the general difficulty of pinpointing the causes behind changes in discourse. That said, by utilizing some of the insights developed by sociologist Julia Adams, an educated guess may be made. In her study of the lord-father analogy in early modern Europe, Adams argues that discursive alternatives to paternalistic rhetoric always loomed on the horizon:

Nevertheless, suppressed alternatives always haunt political regimes, and in this case, these alternative visions could be expected to cluster around and to take their tone from the patriarchal nucleus in patrimonial politics. There
was a language of political opposition from below, but it was still predominantly familial in the old regimes, as many writers have pointed out. Those unhappy with the monarch first called upon him to be a better, more benevolent father, and then, more radically, urged their fellow brothers-in-arms to depose him. “Liberty, equality, fraternity” were the historic watchwords and not just in revolutionary France. . . . My working hypothesis is that one key to this revolutionary transformation—ultimately to the emergence of the idea of equality and shared fate—lay in the elite pacts and related interactions that took place under the sign of hierarchical paternity. Once this had happened, it opened the discursive door to the possibility of anyone’s being considered an equal and a fellow human being—even women, people of other religions, or those who were currently held as slaves.  

Returning to the Han evidence, we can imagine the various ways in which paternalistic rhetoric carried within it other discursive possibilities, to paraphrase Adams. If fathers had come to be associated with the hierarchical and the realm of officials, why not emphasize the mother-son relationship—a relationship depicted in contemporary portrayals as intimate, personal, and less hierarchical? Indeed, going a step further, the mother-son relationship could be used as a template for all relationships that fell outside the bounds of “duty to lord and father.” After all, as Hymes has suggested, it was mothers and daughters who helped forge horizontal connections, embodying the alliances between powerful families. Thus, it is not surprising that mothers would come to symbolize relationships that were intimate and personal, rather than official or impartial. I would not argue that all members of the Han elite adopted this strategy. But such possibilities were certainly recognized, at least by a handful of leading statesmen (such as Xun Shuang) who chose to mourn their powerful friends as they would their mothers.  

What happened to those repressed alternatives? While the French Revolution seems to prove that they ultimately carried the day in Europe, subsequent developments in China are less clear. But it is worth pointing out that the practice of erecting stelae was certainly not unique to the Eastern Han political elite. Educated and powerful members of the elite in the Six Dynasties, Tang, Song, and even the late imperial period inherited the practice from their Han forebears. Of these later inscriptions, the same questions might be asked: Did later men imagine their political associates as superiors and subordinates, fathers and sons? Or were they also able to tease out the hidden rhetorical possibilities of family metaphors? And finally, were they able to re-envision their associates as peers, colleagues, and friends?
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Six years into the Proscription, a stele was erected to commemorate the death of Wu Gong 吳公, a man of no special significance. Unlike the majority of Han stele dedicatees, Wu had never been an official, even a low-ranking one.

As Wu was not an official, his eulogist might have described him as a virtuous recluse (chushi) or gentleman in retirement (yinshi or yimin). After all, his obscurity could have been interpreted as a sign that he had not been covetous of worldly honors—clear proof of his untainted purity. Indeed, because the figure of the recluse was already an old trope by Han times, a eulogist might understandably have been tempted to make a virtue out of a personal decision or failing.¹

Wu’s eulogist, however, made a surprising choice. Instead of painting his subject as a recluse, he emphasized that Wu had been engaged in political affairs. If we can believe the inscription, Wu appears to have been a leader in his local area. “Without going against the wishes of others,” the inscription notes, “[Wu] led according to principle.” Moreover, like a virtuous official, Wu took charge in his hamlet, providing social welfare by granting loans, taking orphans into his own home during a famine, burying the dead, and finding wives for young men. “He spread his generosity throughout the province and villages,” his eulogist wrote. “When those far and near sought his help, he would not say that he had none to give. In all seasons, he would lend without interest, and give without end.”²

If we assume that premodern eulogists (and by extension, the premodern elite) before the Song dynasty imagined one of two roles for any man of education and means—service to the dynasty as a loyal minister, or complete withdrawal from political life as a virtuous and unworldly recluse—Wu’s inscription confounds expectations. Furthermore, Wu does not appear to fit either of these roles. First of all, he was not a dynastic official; in fact, the eulogist
never mentions the dynasty in the inscription, even to say that Wu did not want to serve. Second, given Wu’s role in his local area, he cannot be described as politically disengaged. As a result, it is possible that the eulogist had yet another role in mind—a third option—when he wrote Wu’s inscription.

This chapter reviews the options available to Wu’s eulogist in portraying him, by examining representations of personal merit in Han funerary stelae. As will be shown, members of the Han political elite held at least three competing visions of personal merit. The first focused on dynastic service and stressed the deceased’s relationship to the dynastic house. The second celebrated political withdrawal and spiritual purity, and often denigrated the importance of court accolades. The third, which we find in Wu’s stele, reaffirmed the importance of political participation and even official service while de-emphasizing a man’s relationship to the dynastic ruler or his superiors, instead highlighting service to the population. Most strikingly, in this view, popular recognition became the ultimate gauge of political merit.

WHERE DID ALL THE LOYAL MINISTERS GO?

What sorts of men were commemorated in Han funerary stelae? Not surprisingly, most of them (126 of 137, or 92 percent), like Wu Gong, were adult males at the time of their deaths. But unlike Wu, an overwhelming majority (100, or 73 percent) had been officials of one variety or another. Many of the dedicatees (46, or 34 percent), furthermore, had been high officials at or above the salary rank of two thousand bushels of grain (dachen 大臣, or “great officials”). Given the profile of most dedicatees, it would be expected that eulogists generally would have depicted the deceased as loyal ministers of the dynastic ruler. Such a depiction would not have required much effort on the part of the eulogist; at most, it would have meant adding a few perfunctory lines mentioning the deceased’s service to the dynasty. But did eulogists actually portray their subjects in this fashion? As will be shown presently, many, in fact, did not.

Of course, some inscriptions do fit the aforementioned expectation, as eulogists praised the deceased official for loyal service to the dynasty. As Cai Yong declared of the former Minister of Works, Yang Ci 楊賁 (d. 185), “He truly embodied complete service to the lord, and attained the highest level of [his position as] a minister.” Similarly, we hear that the Former Grand Administrator of Shanyang 山陽, Zhu Mu 朱睦 (d. 164), “served as the pillar of support for the emperor.” Other eulogists boasted that the court had depended on the deceased; for example, a eulogist noted of Kong Zhou 孔宙 (103–163), Chief Commandant of Taishan 泰山, “The emperor relied upon his meritorious service.”

Highlighting the imperial recognition of the deceased was one way in which eulogists depicted their subjects as loyal ministers of the dynasty. Cai Yong’s inscription for Yang Bing (see chapter 4), the former Grand Commandant (and father of Yang Ci), provides one such example:
When the Emperor desired to manifest his might to the four directions,

Our lord then assisted him.

At times, when the ruler's path diverged,

Our lord then helped him.

Respectful at dusk and dawn

He did not dare idle;

In order to recompense the Son of Heaven [for his position],

He gave glory to his royal charge.

The Son of Heaven considered his accomplishments great?

Because of this, the [emperor] conferred nobility and bestowed upon [Yang] an estate,

Making him Lord over Linjin.

Whereas subjects are merely described as conscientious ministers (zhongchen) in the vast majority of inscriptions, Cai here highlights the personal relationship between the emperor and Yang Bing. Cai says that Yang was the personal mentor and teacher of the younger emperor, one who would assist the emperor when he was misguided. Yang carried out his duties not just to benefit the population, but also to “recompense” (duiyang) the emperor for favors shown. Such loyalty and personal devotion were recognized by the emperor himself: it was he, and not the court or another official, who promoted Yang in rank.

Eulogists also depicted the deceased as loyal ministers of the dynasty by focusing on the imperial recognition they received at death (see table 5.1). When Yang Bing died, the emperor—who apparently had benefited so much from the dead man’s tutelage—reportedly mourned him with deep emotion:

When the one bestowed with the imperial charge had fallen,

The Emperor was shaken with grief

And grasping his documents he wept,

And ordered the Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace of the Left, Guo Yi, to draw up a document

To bestow upon our lord the seals and silk ribbons of the General of the Cavalry on Alert and Lord of Linjin;

And at the same time announced the special elevation [in rank],

And the conferral of a posthumous name, “Illustrious Service.”

And the conferral of a posthumous name, “Illustrious Service.”
Most inscriptions show less dramatic flair, simply recording the offerings bestowed upon the deceased by the court. For example, when Hu Guang (see chapter 2) died in 172, Cai Yong noted: “[The emperor] had a document drawn up to bestow upon him a eulogy, and a posthumous title of Cultured and Respectful. [His bestowals] were like those of ceremonies for former tutors, but he added to them according to the dictates of ritual.”

Interestingly, inscriptions emphasizing loyal service to the dynastic house are not in the majority. Of surviving inscriptions, only 28 percent mention any kind of imperial recognition, even in passing, despite the fact that most of the dedicatees were members of the elite commissioned corps and thus had a direct connection to the dynasty. Still fewer inscriptions describe the relationship between their subjects and the dynasty in more than one or two lines—that is, in any length or detail. These figures suggest that although most dedicatees had been officials, their association to the Han dynasty as seen through stele was surprisingly weak.

Even fewer inscriptions (13 percent) mention a funerary offering from the court, the most obvious sign that the deceased had been a loyal minister (see table 5.1). But is this figure significant? After all, were not most of the dedicatees too low in rank to merit a gift at death? This explanation fails for two reasons. First, eulogists recorded gifts made to officials of all ranks, high and low. If such offerings solely reflected the deceased’s rank, then offerings would have been recorded for all Grand Administrators, for example, as they were high officials. Instead, as shown in the table, the inscription for only one Grand Administrator (of nine in total) includes mention of a gift from the court (table 5.1, no. 16). Equally problematic is the fact that eulogists mentioned gifts made to lower-ranking officials in three cases (table 5.1, nos. 2, 7, and 12). Second, according to the History of the Later Han, high officials at the salary rank of at least two thousand bushels received bestowals from the court as a matter of course. As noted above, forty-six (or 34 percent) of dedicatees were high officials of this rank; therefore these dedicatees (approximately one-third of the total) should have received such bestowals.

Not only do many inscriptions fail to mention court accolades, but some explicitly deny the importance of imperial recognition. This is clear even in inscriptions dedicated to the politically engaged. Writing about Zhang Xuan 張玄, a humble county clerk, Cai Yong observed that the deceased “did not seek after glory or official stipends—for this reason he was rich in Heaven’s noble ranks though lacking in human titles.” Surely by stressing Zhang’s indifference to court accolades, Cai was just working with the hand he was dealt, as an undistinguished career—usually seen as a sign of personal failure—could conversely become proof of virtue and spiritual purity. Similar themes, however, can be found in the inscriptions of men who were considerably more successful. For example, the inscription for Hou Cheng (see chapter 4) asserts—not once, but twice—the deceased’s indifference to imperial recognition: “Happy, he put into practice the true; content with his poverty, he took pleasure in the Way, and disregarded temporal glory.” In closing, the eulogist again reinforces
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEDICATEE</th>
<th>POST</th>
<th>SALARY LEVEL (IN BUSHELS)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Liu Yao 刘曜</td>
<td>Superintendent of the Imperial Household (guangluxun 光禄勋)</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Guo 郭</td>
<td>Gentleman of the Interior (langzhong 郎中)</td>
<td>200–300</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Hu Guang 胡广 (91–172)</td>
<td>Grand Commandant (taiwei 太尉)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Yuan An 袁安 (d. 92)</td>
<td>Minister Over the Masses (situ 司徒)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Yang Bing 杨秉 (94–167)</td>
<td>Minister of Works (sikong 司空)</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Zhu Mu 朱穆 (100–163)</td>
<td>Inspector (cishi 刺史)</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lady Jia 贾, née Jiang 姜 (d. 106)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Qiao Xuan 欽玄 (110–184)</td>
<td>Councillor of the Palace (zhongdafa 中大夫); formerly Grand Commandant</td>
<td>1000–2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. [...] Yuanbin [...]元賓 (112–159)</td>
<td>Consultant (yilang 誦郎)</td>
<td>200–300</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Jing 景 (d. 114)</td>
<td>Imperial Messenger (yezhe 謁者)</td>
<td>2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Liu Kuan 劉寔 (120–185)</td>
<td>Grand Commandant</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Yang Zhen 杨震 (d. 124)</td>
<td>Grand Commandant</td>
<td>10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Cao Teng 曹騰 (d. 150)</td>
<td>Regular Palace Attendant</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Feng Gun 樊囂 (d. 167)</td>
<td>Chariot and Horse General (cheqijiangjun 車騎將軍)</td>
<td>2000</td>
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the point: Hou Cheng “tranquilly disregarded worldly honors.”12 The inscription dedicated to Fan Min (120–203), former Grand Administrator of Ba commandery, provides one further example. Fan’s eulogist emphasized the former official’s indifference to external sanction by recording that he “treated lightly [imperial] favor and denigrated glory as base.”13

**POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT?**

If, in a majority of cases, the deceased were not praised for loyal service to the dynasty, how were they portrayed in funerary inscriptions? One aforementioned possibility is that they were celebrated by their eulogists for being recluses, men who had withdrawn from political life altogether in order to protect their integrity in an age of decline.

A prime example of this type of portrayal is the inscription dedicated to Lou Shou (see chapter 4):

| 父安貧守節 | His own father was content to be poor and guarded his lowly status, |
| 不可名以祿 | And could not be deluded by official stipends. |
| 先生童孩多奇 | As a child, the former master had been remarkable. |
| 厝翁有志 | A prodigy with his own aims. |
| 頭形傳業 | When he reached the age of coiling his hair [i.e., young adulthood], he took up the enterprises of his forebears. |
| 好學不倦 | He was fond of studies and unflagging [in his efforts to learn].16 |
| 不敟煩隅 | He did not cultivate punctiliousness, |
| 不動小行 | And did not mind small matters. |
| 温然而恭 | Warm and yet respectful, |
| 慷慨而義 | Generous and yet righteous, |
| 善與人交 | He was good in associating with others; |
| 久而能敬 | And even after long periods, he was able to treat [others] with reverence.17 |
| 榮且隨之捐耕 | He honored [Chang] Ju and [Jie] Ni for ploughing and being yoked as a team.19 |
| 甘山林之杏藻 | And he was willing [to dwell] in the remote quiet of the mountain forests. |
| 匡世無間 | Having escaped from the world, he was without sorrows. |
| 悠然無票 | He was tranquil while hidden, pure in his silence. |
| [...](surface) | He was relaxed within the gates of his humble dwelling, |
| 下學上達 | And "got from below in his studies and penetrated what was above."22 |
He “had friends who came from afar.”

[Officials] in caps and girdles, numerous, came to hear him lecture and study at dawn and at dusk, and took pleasure to such an extent that they forgot their worries.

The commandery and county governments invited him with great ceremony, but to the end, he did not look back.

High positions and generous stipends did not move his heart.

His garments were rough, made of coarse hemp. His food consisted of glutinous grains, beans, and greens.

He had a humble dwelling with thatched eaves, where the hinges were made with curved strips of wood, and window created from pottery shards.

“He delighted in Heaven and acknowledged destiny.” Truly, he could not be uprooted.

In his seventy-eighth year, in the third year, first month, jiazi day [first day of the 60-day cycle] of the Xiping reign [174], misfortune fell upon him.

The men of the area together recounted his virtues and designated a posthumous name. Engraving this stone they made an inscription. The words read, Magnificent, was this former master. We cherish his virtue as his brilliance. Excellent was his mastery of the Spring and Autumn Annals.

In silence and stillness, he had accomplishments. He knew that lowly status was honorable, and with his era, he had no strife.

He was relaxed within the gates of [his humble dwelling]. With respect to rituals and dutifulness, he was resplendently pure, and not lax with the toiling commoners.
As it is Heaven who knows us,

Though his body is no more, his fame continues
uninterrupted.31

As the language of Lou’s inscription is opaque, a detailed explanation of how it celebrates political disengagement is in order. Lou’s inscription, in contrast to Yang Bing’s, does not glorify dynastic service; this is clear from the way in which Lou’s lack of interest in official appointments is emphasized. Not only did Lou repeatedly refuse summons to office, but he also admired two recluses from antiquity, Chang Ju and Jie Ni. Not coincidentally, Chang and Jie are the same two who are reportedly condemned by Confucius in the Analects for their unwillingness to seek office. Moreover, Lou rejects the life of the official, with all of its pomp and ease. The importance of such a choice is obvious from the attention devoted to the subject by the eulogist: we not only hear about Lou’s austere diet and rustic living quarters, but also the simplicity of his dress. (“His garments were rough, made of coarse hemp.”) The description of Lou’s dress is significant, because one of the defining characteristics of officials was their fine robes.

The celebration of political disengagement by Lou’s eulogist is most explicit in his reworking of a Warring States motif that pits the secular world (renwei) against the realm of Heavenly ranks (tianjue). Like the sage in the Mencius, Lou maintained an unmoved heart even when facing failure and disappointment. (“ Truly, he could not be uprooted.”) In addition, Lou “delighted in Heaven and acknowledged destiny [le tianzhi ming],” like the sages praised in the Appended Sayings to the Changes (Xici), a text dating perhaps to the late Warring States period.32 In other words, Lou accepted the necessity of withdrawal in an age when the Way did not prevail.

The most dramatic example of an inscription celebrating political disengagement is that dedicated to Chen Shi (see chapters 2, 4). Like many stele dedicatees, including the aforementioned Yang Bing (whose inscription highlighted loyal service to the dynasty), Chen encountered political troubles early in his career. Due to the Proscription, he was forced to relinquish his position as Magistrate of Taiqiu.33 After the Proscription was lifted, however, Chen found himself aggressively recruited by He Jin (see chapter 4), the powerful brother of the empress dowager.34 According to Cai Yong, He and the Minister of Finance sent other officials to court Chen, with the message: “We want especially to honor you so you can be admired and elevated to Executive Attendant [changbo] and rapidly promoted to the Three Lords, bound and girded with gold seal and purple sash, to shed glory on the court and to leave behind meritorious achievement.” Acclaim notwithstanding, Cai stressed Chen’s indifference to court accolades. He claimed that Chen, like Lou Shou, was one who “delighted in Heaven and acknowledged his destiny.” “Hidden and in poverty,” the end of the first inscription reads, “he abandoned glory and embraced disgrace.” Yet Chen had not been
without some measure of glory: “He was not ashamed of his low station, for lofty did he appear.”

As we have seen, stele inscriptions included at least two contrasting visions of merit, one that involved dynastic service and another that celebrated political disengagement. The first emphasized the values of empire. In such inscriptions, eulogists praised their subjects for loyal service to the dynastic house and highlighted the personal relationship between lord and minister. They also emphasized the importance of court accolades and other forms of imperial recognition. In this vision, the court—and especially the emperor—composed the source of value. Accordingly, a good man was not only a loyal minister who helped the dynastic house bring peace and prosperity to the population, he was also famous and well compensated. In contrast, the second vision inverted the system of value as defined by empire. In this view, poverty, obscurity, and disengagement (as opposed to prosperity, fame, and active or loyal service to the dynasty) were sure signs of merit. The fact that an undistinguished (or nonexistent) official career could become proof of personal virtue suggests that, in the eyes of some eulogists, the court was not necessarily the only source of value.

POPULAR HEROES

Does the fact that most eulogists failed to highlight dynastic service mean that they placed little value on political engagement or participation? In other words, did eulogists for the political elite need to choose between portraying the deceased as loyal ministers of the dynasty or as recluses, as scholars have long assumed? Or were they allowed a third option—namely, to represent a dead official as a political participant without highlighting dynastic service or his esteem in the ruler’s eyes? As will be shown presently, many inscriptions demonstrate that eulogists were able to envision political participation and official service as separate from loyal service to the dynastic ruler. This kind of participation involved a man’s service to the population or to a local area, in such actions as defending against attack, organizing famine relief, providing moral leadership and social welfare, and even protecting commoners against the encroachments of the court. More significantly, inscriptions of this type emphasized the ultimate importance of popular recognition.

A brief explanation of the conceptual vocabulary used in this discussion will establish the basis for our reading of these inscriptions. There are several reasons for my choice of “popular” or “population” rather than the more standard “local” or “community” (or “local community”). Interestingly, the latter terms are used by Chinese and Japanese historians, as well as scholars working in Western languages, particularly in discussions about forms of political association outside official channels. A lengthier discussion of this problem is not feasible in the present context, but it is worth noting that “community”—or kyōdōtai 共同體 in Japanese—commonly serves as a translation of Gemeinschaft,
a concept developed by sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936). While Tönnies’s own theory of Gemeinschaft is subject to competing interpretations, it is fair to say that the term has come to be understood to mean a form of traditional social organization. In contrast to Gesellschaft, the “modern” capitalistic or civil society, Gemeinschaft reflects a state of organic solidarity based upon kinship, physical proximity, common language, and affective ties rather than an association based on common interest or ends. Furthermore, Gemeinschaft is typified by rural villages or tribal societies, in which members of extended families reside together.

There are a number of good reasons for rejecting the use of “local community.” Needless to say, some distance from the evolutionary framework implicit in the use of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft—or other associated categories, such as “traditional” and “modern”—is desirable. More concretely, “local community” (insofar as it is understood to be a translation of Gemeinschaft) is inadequate for expressing the social relationships described in Han funerary inscriptions. First of all, the mourners mentioned by many eulogists were not necessarily inhabitants of any single locale, thus making it difficult to imagine that they were bound together by affective ties of kinship, physical proximity, or even language. The mourners mentioned in the inscription dedicated to the aforementioned Kong Zhou, for example, lived hundreds of miles apart, often in different commanderies if not different provinces. Indeed, the standard word choices of eulogists suggest that mourners belonged to an expansive group that included men living at distances from each other, such as “those close and far” (erjin 近), “men of the territory” (bangren 鄂人), “men of the state” (guoren 國人), “those from the province and locality” (zhou-dang 州黨), and “all of the hundred surnames” (fanbai 百). Mourners were also described simply as men of conscience or moral and cultural achievement, united on occasion because of their similar interests or political commitments. Terms for these men include “officials” (jinshen 郎), “literati” (rulin 學), and “the outstanding” (ying 英).

To return to the actual contents of inscriptions, one way in which eulogists emphasized the ties of the deceased to the larger world was through lengthy description of his service to the population. The following inscription is dedicated to Pan Qian 潘乾, Magistrate of Liyang 漯陽 (d. ca. 181), who was not a native of the area in which he served.

即仕佐上... And having taken an official position, [Pan Qian] assisted those above.

郡位既重... His office in the commandery already weighty,

孔武超著... He was valiant and renowned for bravery.

疾惡義形... Detesting evil, he was righteous in assigning punishments;

從風征暴... He would swiftly respond by attacking the unprincipled,

執訊獲首... “Binding the culprits and capturing the chieftains.”

除曲阿尉... He was appointed as a guard in Qu county.
He caught the treacherous and eradicated the crafty, and marauding ceased with his good governance.

He followed in the footsteps of the incorruptible Gu Zhu. He followed the example of the untarnished Gongyi (Xiu).

Nominated as “Incorruptible,” he was appointed to this post. Initially harsh, he became pure and solemn. He bestowed the customs of humaneness and uprightness; he cultivated the ways of . He drew close the worthy and prized the knowledgeable, advanced the upright and dismissed the perverse. And as his governance spread with “gentle harmony,” his manner became impressive, his countenance peaceful. The prisons were without the laments of the wronged; the wilds were without the distressed beating their breasts. He pitied the orphaned, cared for the elderly; he praised the filial and held fast the moderate. He considered righteousness weighty and profit small, and in his governance of six hundred households, he saw to it that there were no taxes or corvée, and did not demand it [from the population] but took it on himself. The hearts of the hundred surnames rejoiced.

The eulogist’s focus on Pan’s service to the local area is clear in his description of his subject’s personal development. By the eulogist’s account, young Pan fit the mold of a “harsh official” (kuli), an impression that is reinforced by two details. First, the eulogist plainly states that Pan “assisted those above,” a reference to his service to his bureaucratic superiors in the commandery. Second, he refers to Pan’s willingness to exercise his powers to eradicate crime and corruption (“He was valiant and renowned for bravery . . .”). Although he paints the young Pan as harsh and incorruptible, the eulogist does not seem to find him particularly admirable. Instead, it is the older man—the Pan who came to resemble the aforementioned local leader Wu Gong—whom the eulogist celebrates. Although the younger man was eager to prosecute wrongdoers, Pan later would exemplify benevolent and efficacious rule. (“The prisons were without the laments of the wronged; the wilds were without the distressed beating their breasts.”) Moreover, like Wu, the older Pan was interested in caring for the population (“He pitied the orphaned, cared for the elderly”). Pan even took it upon himself to relieve the local population of the tax burdens imposed by the court.
Pan Qian was not the only official who won praise from eulogists for his service to the area he administered; another example is provided by the inscription dedicated to Zhang Shou 张寿 (89–168), a Chancellor stationed in the kingdom of Zhuyi 竹邑. Zhang’s eulogist credited him with improving the lot of the local population by bringing order to the territory under his jurisdiction, a feat that won him the love and admiration of the commoners. According to his eulogist, when Zhang attempted to leave public life, “even the old and weak went hand in hand, and those who followed and held onto his carriage amounted to more than a thousand.” Such devotion reflected Zhang’s wholehearted sincerity of purpose and political efficacy. “The [regional] courts did not have treacherous officials,” his eulogist noted, “and the wilds did not have wanton marauders.” Moreover, Zhang aided the population by disseminating agricultural knowledge: “He instructed the commoners in planting and cultivating the Three Kinds of Agriculture [i.e., on flatlands, in mountains, and by streams] and the nine grains. And what they reaped and sowed multiplied.” Most impressive was his power over nature; so virtuous was he that “the country did not have portents of disasters and the yield for the year was bountiful.”

It may be asked to what extent eulogists credited their subjects for both their loyal service to the dynasty and their contributions to the local areas under their administration. Only a handful of inscriptions (five, by my count) mention both. In each of these cases, the eulogist chose to stress the dedicatee’s service to the local area above his dynastic service. The eulogist of the aforementioned Kong Zhou allotted only a single line for praising his subject’s loyal dynastic service. The same eulogist, however, went on to highlight Kong’s role in the region, ascribing to him nothing less than charismatic leadership. Kong had been able to pacify alien tribes in his area without force; “with culture,” observed his eulogist, “he cultivated them, and within ten months, all of them put down their arms and submitted [to his rule].” Kong also was able to make fertile fields out of barren wasteland, and the officials under his charge reportedly ate and drank from gardens established there. The territory was free of crime, so merchants could “in their travels take the dangerous road.” Similarly, the eulogist who wrote the inscription for Wang Chun 王纯 (103–161), the Inspector of Jizhou 冀州, devoted only one line to the recognition given to him by the Han court. Yet he described at length Wang’s local service, which entailed not only battling hostile alien tribes, but also protecting the peasants against the harsh rule of one Minister of Agriculture.

In addition to describing the deceased’s popular service, a eulogist could emphasize his subject’s ties to the population by highlighting the world’s reaction to his death. A number of inscriptions—including that of a Grand Administrator whose styled name was Ziyou 子游 (d. 115)—claim that the deaths of their subjects caused the commoners “to be grieved and bereft, and far and near [to feel] the same pain.” Similarly, news of the death of Zhai
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翟, a recluse, was met with extreme expressions of sorrow: “the hundred surnames and officials were grieved, and they wept tears of blood.”60 Other inscriptions, invoking the classic Book of Documents (Shangshu 尚書), compare the deaths of their subjects to that of the sage-king Shun 舜.61 On the occasion of the death of Xia Cheng 夏承 (106/116–170), Magistrate of Chunyu 淳于, his eulogist observed, “Those in the vicinity were caused to be shaken and sorrowful; the hundred surnames called out. It was as if they had lost their father and mother.”62 Finally, when Gao Biao 高彪, Magistrate of Waihuang 外黃, died in 184, “his comrades were pained with grief, and the hundred surnames were profoundly wounded by [the sight of] the coffin and spirit coffin returning to his home.”63

So important was it to stress the popular reaction to a subject’s death that some eulogists devoted considerable space to this end. The inscription dedicated to Bi Feng 費鳳 (112/113–177), Magistrate of Tangyi 唐邑, provides one such example. As we read, his sudden death left the population bereft:

| 拟夫釋耒耜 | The farmers let go of their plows; |
| 道阻且長 | The road was “difficult and long,” |
| 望遠淚如雨 | And the mourners, gazing afar, wept tears like rain. |
| [策] 神馬鳴大路 | Driving their horses, they followed along the great road, |
| 摘裳而涉流 | “Lifting their garments to wade through the Wei . . .” |
| 黃鳥集于楚 | The orioles gathered on the thorn-bush. |
| [端端]之翟[六] | Shaking with dread, we drew near the tomb-hole |
| 送君於厚土 | To escort the gentleman into the deep earth. |

This inscription conveys popular grief in three separate passages. In the first, the eulogist observes that Bi’s passing disrupted the activities of daily life (“The farmers let go of their plows; the women who gathered mulberry threw down their hooks and baskets.”).69 The second describes the population weeping profusely as they make their journey to bid a final farewell. The third involves a reworking of a theme from the Book of Odes. The ode evoked, “The Oriole” (Huangniao 黃鳥), describes the anxiety and dread felt by worthy men about to be executed in order to follow a Zhou lord to the grave. “But as he drew near the tomb-hole,” the ode reads, “The limbs [of this worthy] shook with dread.”70 The same words are repeated, with slight variation, in the ninth line of the inscription, where they refer instead to the mourners who approach the tomb “to escort [song 送] the gentleman into the deep earth.” Here, the eulogist exploits the ambiguity of the word song (to escort). In Han times, song often referred to the act of removing the corpse from a house and interring it in a vault. Yet another sense of the term—to be buried with the dead—is consistent with the themes found in the original ode. In other words, the grief of the mourners who interred Bi Feng was such that they experienced the same dread as if they were to be buried with him.
Eulogists placed so much emphasis on popular reactions that these descriptions sometimes overshadowed the feelings of the deceased’s family. In the case of Sun Gen 孫根 (111–181), the Chancellor of Anping 安平, a eulogist observed,

- 有哀孝嗣  There was a grieving filial heir.
- 夙夜不食  At dawn and dusk, he would not leave the site.
- 嚮父孝孫  He was the filial grandson of this stern father.
- 臨喪禮服  He kept watch over the coffining in ritual clothes.
- 承侯庭有感…  After his [duties] were performed, he was still moved . . .
- 冠 […] 奔赴  The officials […] who rushed to mourn
- 充衢塞庭  Filled the streets, blocking the courtyard;
- 同[舍]猶痛  Those of the same womb were pained,
- 淚涕遂零  Sobbing and shedding tears, they collectively moaned.
- 旁子[呱呱]  Young boys bawled.
- 鳴鳥失聲  And lost their voices crying out
- 故吏門生邦人  Among the former officers, pupils, and men of the territory,
- 咸曰令聞弗替  . . . All stated, “Is his good reputation not inscribed? . . .”
- 乃立石碑  They then erected a stone stele
- 昭名不朽  So that his manifest reputation would not perish. 71

The description of the deceased’s grandson in mourning is fairly perfunctory, especially when compared with other such descriptions of family members seen in previous chapters. We hear, of course, that Sun’s grandson carried out his obligations to his grandfather properly. And there is an oblique reference to “those of the same womb” (perhaps the members of Sun’s extended family) weeping tears of sorrow. But these descriptions pale in comparison to the detail lavished on the reactions of the population—their hurried movements, the clamor of their grief, the sight of mourners filling the streets and the courtyard of the Sun household, not to mention the collective decision of Sun’s peers to erect a stele. Furthermore, the eulogist reserves the most dramatic images of the desperation caused by grief for these other mourners: “young boys bawled. And lost their voices crying out.” Their perspective serves as the focus of the inscription, and their grief, rendered in the most vivid language, overshadows the emotions of Sun Gen’s rightful mourner and heir. This focus is not surprising; after all, the mourning of the population—rather than the heir or family—served as proof of Sun’s eminent standing.

Some inscriptions went so far as to suggest that the mourning of the population, as opposed to that of the court, provided the ultimate proof of virtue. The most dramatic example is an inscription dedicated to Yang Zhen 楊震 (d. 124; table 5.1, no. 15), composed more than four decades after his death. Yang was formerly the Grand Commandant, but his eunuch enemies at court instigated his demotion, and he committed suicide in anguish. The inscription relates the circumstances of Yang’s passing:
At this time among the ministers and officials, and all of the multitudes, there was none that did not sigh and shed tears. They grieved that he who had been conscientious had met with royal displeasure. Heaven watched and manifested [the truth of the matter], and so a divine bird escorted him to the grave. Moved, the royal house awoke, and the fawning and treacherous were executed. His magnificent achievements were then proclaimed, and his great merit was posthumously recorded. [The royal house] consoled [the survivors] with documents carrying the imperial seal, and was generous in its bestowals.

At first glance, this inscription, like those dedicated to other Yang men including Yang Bing and Yang Ci, seems to reaffirm the importance of loyal service. After all, it tells us that the court subsequently (albeit posthumously) rehabilitated Yang Zhen and bestowed upon him all of the usual honors at death. But as the eulogist makes clear, the dynastic house required an extraordinary sign from Heaven before it understood the truth. Although Yang’s virtues were not apparent to the dynastic rulers, they were plain enough to the population, which appears to have comprised all men and women in the realm. By contrasting the blindness of the court with the perceptiveness of the population, the eulogist calls attention to the fact that the reactions of the latter provided a more reliable measure of Yang’s record of service.

Although some inscriptions portrayed their subjects as loyal dynastic ministers, many others de-emphasized the connection between the deceased and the Han dynastic house, instead focusing on the subject’s relationship with the population. Such depictions can be found in inscriptions for men who had been officials (even high-ranking ones), as well as for those who were merely, as Robert Hymes would put it, “local gentlemen.” More than gifts from the court presented at death, extreme expressions of popular grief bore testimony to the deceased’s virtue. So important was such proof of virtue that eulogists reserved the most artful language—the most vivid imagery—for conveying the world’s grief.

POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THE DIVERGENT MESSAGES OF INSCRIPTIONS

The foregoing discussion raises the question of how to explain the divergent messages found in Han inscriptions. In other words, why would some inscriptions emphasize popular recognition over dynastic service? An examination of several possible explanations will reveal that the divergent messages reflected the mixed backgrounds of the donors.
A simplistic explanation would be that the conflicting messages of the inscriptions were the product of actual differences in the beliefs and political priorities of the deceased dedicatees. Perhaps Cai Yong portrayed Yang Bing and Yang Ci, for example, as loyal ministers simply because they had, in fact, been loyal.

While it is possible that at least some inscriptions provide reliable portraits of the dead, it is also clear that the truth generally presented few obstacles to eulogists. As Hans Bielenstein correctly notes, eulogists were willing not only to exaggerate the virtues of the deceased, but also to push the limits of plausibility (if not to lie outright); some eulogists even went so far as to conceal criminal records. To consider a less extreme scenario, we might think that it would only be plausible for a eulogist to highlight imperial recognition if such a relationship actually existed between the emperor and the deceased, as in the case of the aforementioned Yang Bing. Yet the example of Xianyu Huang (see chapter 3), the former Grand Administrator of Yanmen, clearly shows that this was not necessarily true. His inscription, which dates to 165, is translated by Kenneth Brashier as follows:

| 王人嘉德 | The people of the royal house regarded him as excellent and virtuous, |
| 司命齋善 | And the highest offices regarded him as worthy of occupying the side mat. |
| 嚴將軍育 | As for the wriggling Hunyu tribe, |
| 萬邦作寇 | In the ten thousand states they carried out banditry. |
| 黄土荒鎔 | The soil of Ji was barren and cropless, |
| 道塁相望 | And on the road emaciated corpses stared at one another. |
| 帝宗君謀 | The Emperor consulted this gentleman's plans, |
| 以延平中拜安邊使 . . . | And in the Yanping reign period [105–106], the Emperor appointed him as a certified pacification officer . . . |
| 罡貶貪枉 | [Xianyu] corrected and censured the greedy and perverse |
| 清風流射 | Until his gentle influence flowed forth, |
| 有卿伯述職之稱 | And he was praised at court as a Duke of Shao [i.e., an ancient paragon]. |
| 賢上珍撫 | The sage Emperor treasured Huang's good conduct, |
| 墨符追假 | And he subsequently granted documents with the imperial seal to [Xianyu] Huang. |

At several points (lines 1–2, 7–8, 11), the eulogist claims that the emperor, as well as his highest ministers and family members, recognized, appreciated, and rewarded Xianyu Huang for his meritorious service. All of this, however, could not literally have been true with respect to the emperor, as Emperor Shang (r. 105–106) was only an infant. Given this situation, why did the eulogist state
that Xianyu personally received the imperial seals from the emperor? Although this could be seen as a standard way of referencing an official appointment or promotion in Han times, other evidence suggests the contrary. In fact, eulogists had considerable discretion in how to describe such matters. A comparison of Xianyu’s inscription with that dedicated to Kong Biao (see chapter 3) makes this clear. Like Xianyu, Kong had been a Grand Administrator, and his eulogist discusses his career history at length. But Kong’s inscription never mentions members of the dynastic family or the court appointing him. As in many inscriptions, Kong’s various posts are listed in the passive tense: “raised up [jiu 舉] as Filial and Incorrupt, he was selected as a Gentleman of the Interior, then [made] the Magistrate of Bochang . . . he was elevated [qian 遡] as the Grand Administrator of Boling.” Xianyu’s eulogist, like Kong’s, clearly could choose whether or not to mention the dynastic house with regard to his subject’s appointment as an official. Thus, it becomes clear that mention of the dynasty is included ultimately as a point of emphasis: it serves to reinforce the connection between the dedicatee and the dynastic house.

Although inscriptions may not accurately portray the deceased or even his beliefs per se, the way in which the deceased was depicted by his eulogist corresponded to his official rank. Just as a eulogist would not have been able to portray a high-ranking minister as a recluse, he likewise would have had difficulty representing someone who had never held office as a loyal minister. Furthermore, eulogists tended to represent men with little or no success in office as recluses, and highlighted the deceased’s ties to the population when he had been a relatively low-ranking official. Finally, high officials were depicted as loyal ministers.

But was the depiction of the deceased a reflection of his status within the bureaucracy? With this question in mind, I have divided all extant funerary inscriptions, including fragmentary ones, into four categories: (1) inscriptions that emphasize loyal service to the dynasty; (2) those that emphasize the deceased’s relationship to the population; (3) those that emphasize political disengagement, or belittle the value of court accolades; and (4) those with no discernible political message (often fragmentary). In identifying the values emphasized by an inscription (in order to classify the inscription as per the categories above), I looked for the presence or absence of four criteria: description of local service; description of popular mourning; mention of imperial recognition of the deceased’s service; and mourning of the deceased by the court.

The four categories are not discrete; as noted above, a handful of inscriptions mention both imperial recognition and local service. Therefore I have categorized the inscriptions according to what values were emphasized most by the eulogist. In addition, I have erred on the side of caution: in the few cases in which it is not clear whether service to the dynasty or local service is emphasized, I have placed the inscription in the loyal dynastic service category.

By analyzing the content of inscriptions by the rank of the deceased within the bureaucracy, it becomes clear that the way in which the dedicatee
was represented had little to do with his actual status. Had status determined the depiction, all or nearly all high-ranking officials would have been represented (or at least praised in passing) as loyal ministers. But as table 5.2 shows, high-ranking officials were described in a variety of ways: some, such as Yang Ci and Xianyu Huang, were depicted as loyal ministers; while others, such as Fan Min and Sun Gen, were portrayed exclusively as popular heroes. Equally problematic is the fact that lower and low-ranking officials, including an unranked clerk, were depicted by their eulogists as loyal ministers.

Another way to account for the divergent messages of inscriptions is to view these messages as reflections of the political attitudes of the eulogists. It is tempting to think that many inscriptions de-emphasized service to the dynasty because the eulogists who wrote them were alienated politically from the dynastic court. There is reason to suspect that eulogists would have been alienated; after all, judging from the History of the Later Han, two-thirds of Han eulogists lived during the second half of the second century (see table 2.2). Indeed, some evidence suggests that at least a few eulogists were disaffected from the court. A handful, including Lu Zhi 盧植 (d. 192), Zhang Sheng 張升 (121–169), and Huangfu Gui (see chapter 4), were at least peripherally involved in the events leading up to the Proscription of 166.

Surely the political alienation of the eulogists may have been one factor affecting the messages they chose to highlight in their inscriptions. Yet this factor alone cannot account for the de-emphasis of loyal service in favor of popular recognition. Furthermore, the fact that a man had once been politically alienated does not mean that he remained so for long. To cite an aforementioned case, Yang Ci was banned from office, only to be lured back subsequently into public life. Flexibility with regard to messages, rather than ideological rigidity, can also be seen in the corpus of Cai Yong’s inscriptions. Some, such as those written for Hu Guang and Yang Ci, glorify service to the dynastic house; but others, like that for Zhang Xuan, denigrate court accolades.

What about the potential alienation of the stele donors? This theory begs the question of how the donors’ alienation could be known. The period of time during which most stelae were erected provides the best evidence to support this theory. As we saw in chapter 2, 53 percent of all funerary stelae that can be dated were erected in the single eighteen-year period of the Proscription, a period when many officials were banned from office. The Proscription proved to be disruptive to many bureaucratic careers not only because officials and their clients or allies found themselves unable to serve in office, but also because many senior officials, who had been responsible for hiring and promoting younger men from various localities, were purged from power. In this climate, it is not surprising that inscriptions may have served as channels of political expression when the usual official channels were unavailable. Furthermore, it is understandable that some men who no longer enjoyed the prestige of holding office would question the ultimate importance of court recognition, asking whether a man should be judged by his relationship to the dynasty.
Table 5.2. Dedicatees Analyzed by Rank and Message Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SALARY LEVEL (IN BUSHELS)</th>
<th>NONE, UNRANKED, OR UNKNOWN</th>
<th>100</th>
<th>200–300</th>
<th>300–400</th>
<th>400</th>
<th>600</th>
<th>600–1000</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>10,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyal Ministers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Heroes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recluses</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No discernible message</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of dedicatees</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although this possibility is enticing, there are nevertheless a number of drawbacks to this theory. The Proscription was certainly bad for morale, but it affected only a small fraction of the entire bureaucracy directly.86 A few inscriptions indeed were dedicated to leading figures who were banned from office or loosely associated with those affected by the Proscription, such as Chen Shi and Guo Tai (see chapters 2, 3). And a number of inscriptions do emphasize the importance of political withdrawal in an age of decline. Had the primary motivation for commissioning inscriptions been to question whether a man should be judged by his relationship to the dynasty, however, we would expect that donors would have chosen to commemorate figures such as Lou Shou and Guo Tai, men who refused to serve. On the contrary, donors chose overwhelmingly to commemorate officials (and even many high officials) instead.

How, then, can the divergent messages of inscriptions be explained? To a certain degree, conformity of message should not be expected. Of course, most of the 1,540 recorded stele donors were likely members of the social and economic elite. After all, in a stratified society like the Eastern Han, who would have possessed the means to commission monuments?87 But aside from the fact that the donors were men of means, there were also considerable differences between them. More than one-third were not and had never been officials when the stelae they commissioned were erected. Yet 31 percent were officials, and 27 percent were retired officials of one sort or other. Given the diverse profiles of the donors, they would be expected to have different priorities and relationships to the dynastic house—and thus diverging views on not only personal merit, but also the ideals of political participation.

With the issue of donor diversity thus addressed, we may ponder why so many inscriptions emphasize local service. It may be argued that this emphasis reflects long-standing or classical ideals. Indeed, inscriptions do borrow heavily from the classics, especially the Book of Documents and the Odes by Han. How many inscriptions, for example, compare the death of a Magistrate to that of the ancient sage-king Shun? Furthermore, classical texts root the political legitimacy of rulers in their service to the people. As the Mencius observes: “The people are of supreme importance; the altars to the gods of earth and grain come next; last comes the ruler.”88 Yet the image of the official as a popular hero—unlike that of the loyal minister or even the recluse—has few earlier parallels. Most early texts (including the Mencius), written before the emergence of a full-fledged imperial system, focus on the obligations of the ruler, rather than the official, to the subject population. In fact, the closest analogue to the popular hero is Feng Xuan (馮黯), a well-known figure from the early Han chronicle Stratagems of the Warring States (Zhanguo ce 戰國策).89 Like the aforementioned Pan Qian, Feng forgave the taxes of the peasants without authorization from his lord. But there are important differences between this example and the later popular hero. Like most early literary works, Stratagems does not focus on the official’s relationship to the area he oversees. Instead, it highlights Feng’s relationship to his lord and goes
out of its way to dispel the notion that Feng’s service to the area was anything but an extension of loyal service to the royal house. By forgiving the peasants’ taxes and defying the wishes of his ruler, Feng ultimately served his lord—not only by forcing him to do what ultimately was right, but also by ensuring the loyalty of the population.

The emphasis on service to the population can be explained by the fact that many donors resided in their home jurisdictions. A small number (6 percent) were gentlemen in reclusion or righteous commoners. It is safe to assume that these men were living in their own areas, but they were certainly not the only ones. A second look at the donor lists—particularly at the donors listed as officials—reveals that only 18 percent were elite commissioned officials.90 A larger proportion of the donors (40 percent) were appointees, who were chosen by commissioned officials working either in the capital or (more often) in various localities. Interestingly, with few exceptions, virtually all of the appointed officials listed as stele donors were local appointees. What this means in practice is that most of the donors listed as officials had more in common with reclusive gentlemen than one might initially suspect. Like Wu Gong, these donors lived and worked almost exclusively in their home jurisdictions.91

This emphasis on local service—and, more important, on popular recognition—reveals the complex attitudes held by the local elite toward the empire. Such an emphasis, first of all, discloses the willingness of the local elite to remain within the imperial fold during the Proscription, one of the tensest moments in Han history. As most inscriptions celebrate the work of officials, a surprising degree of interest and even optimism about official service is apparent. Furthermore, this emphasis on service to the population also reveals the increasing assertiveness of the Han local elite, which no doubt reflected their dominance over their home regions. As discussed in chapter 2, the elites who filled the lower ranks of the bureaucracy in their jurisdictions were locally powerful.92 Given their strength and authority, it is not surprising that the local elite would attempt to redefine the meaning of official service. The best official was not necessarily a loyal dynastic minister, but one who served, above all, the interests of the donors.93

**NEW DIRECTIONS**

Han funerary inscriptions disclose not only the existence of disparate views of personal merit, but also competing ideals of official service. Some inscriptions highlight meritorious service to the dynastic ruler, emphasizing the importance of imperial recognition and reinforcing the idea that the Han dynastic lord and his troop of loyal ministers were the sole agents of peace and prosperity. Other inscriptions, however, downplay the relationship of an official to the dynastic house. Instead, these propose good standing with the population, rather than a good relationship with the dynasty, as the ultimate measure of official service. The first vision arguably enshrined the principles
The Politics of Mourning in Early China

of the lord-father analogy as identified by Max Weber—that is, subordination to a lord or superior (see introduction). In contrast, the second vision revealed a sharply different ideal of official service, one focused on the obligations of an official, not to his superior or lord, but to his social peers or even his subordinates. A handful of inscriptions dedicated to men who were not officials take the logic of service to the population a step further, hinting that there could be leadership without subordination to the dynastic hierarchy (*shì er bù chèn* 師而不臣).95

In closing, an anecdote recounted in the History of the Later Han (discussed briefly in the previous chapter) provides an elegant example of the latter ideal. There, the historian Fan Ye tells of an inscription, now lost, that recounts the life of Han Shao (see chapter 4), Magistrate of Ying. During a famine, tens of thousands of refugees poured into Ying. Han Shao took pity upon them, and against the protests of his own deputy, risked punishment by opening the granaries to feed them. Although his actions became known to his superior, the Grand Administrator, Han escaped punishment; however, he died without advancing beyond his low-ranking office. Sometime afterwards, four men from the same county, who were important court critics, erected a stele for Han, commemorating his selfless devotion to the population.96 In many ways, this anecdote neatly encapsulates two of the major themes of this chapter. First, although Han Shao was indeed a Han official, the account, which was most likely based on the lost inscription commissioned by four social peers, does not emphasize his loyal service to the dynastic ruler or his relationship to his superiors. Instead, it focuses on Han's selfless devotion to the population, a group that included men and women from neighboring areas as well as other men of cultivation and means. Second, in the eyes of his contemporaries, Han was not beholden only to his dynastic lord or bureaucratic superior; he was also beholden to the people of his age. It was these people who not only perpetuated his memory, but who also took responsibility for evaluating his worth.
The Song Rediscovery of the Han

子曰：甚矣，吾衰也，久矣，吾不復夢見周公。

[The Master said, "How I have gone downhill! It has been such a long time since I dreamt of the Duke of Zhou."]

—Analects 7.3

今有道史漢時事者，其人偉然甚著，而市兒俚賢猶能道之，自魏晉以下，不為無人，而其顯赫，不及於前者。

[Nowadays, there are those who speak of the affairs mentioned in the Historical Records and History of the Han. The men [in those texts] were outstanding and extremely notable. Even the youths in the marketplace and rustic women are able to speak of them. It is not the case that from the Wei [220–265] and Jin [265–420] periods there were no great men; it is just that their illustriousness cannot rival that of earlier men.]

—Ouyang Xiu, Record of Collecting Antiquities

We have asked whether the Han elite by and large imagined political participation as an extension of the father-son relationship. Certainly some members of the elite did emphasize the importance of "duty to lord and father," but many others preferred to think of the political in other terms. The first chapter recovers one such alternative from the works of Western Han statesmen, who tended to downplay the importance of mourning. This chapter argues that the de-emphasis on mourning in the Western Han reflected the belief of many members of the political elite that sons should demonstrate their filial regard for their parents by becoming impartial public-minded officials, rather than by transferring their feelings of personal loyalty to lords. The second chapter focuses on the proliferation of accounts of mourning in the Eastern Han record. It explains this development in terms of a view of political participation that elevated personal obligations over state duties, rather than equating the two. The third chapter explores the startling attention given to the mother-son
bond in elite mourning practice beginning in the late Western Han, contending that such attention disclosed rhetorical opposition to the political values encapsulated by the lord-father analogy, particularly the assumption of the primacy of hierarchical and paternalistic relationships. Through examination of the donor lists included on funerary stelae, the fourth chapter shows how the rhetoric of friendship, which highlighted horizontal rather than hierarchical ties, shaped political association in the late Eastern Han. Finally, the fifth chapter documents the emergence of a new ethos, as seen in the content of funerary stelae, that defined political virtue in terms of local standing, rather than imperial recognition.

There is, of course, the question of what followed the Han. Were the values expressed by Han elites in mourning practice and funerary stelae shared by later men? Most likely, they were not. Although the practice of erecting funerary stelae (which had been important for disseminating those values) continued through the end of the Six Dynasties period, surviving records indicate that it never attained the same popularity it enjoyed during its Han heyday. Judging from Hong Kuo’s collections and the modern catalogue of inscriptions compiled by Yang Dianxun, far fewer stelae were erected in the third century than in the second. The reasons for this apparent drop in the number of stelae are inexplicable. By some accounts, the decline was the result of a policy promulgated by the warlord Cao Cao (see chapter 3): in 206, Cao issued an edict prohibiting men from erecting new stelae, and embarked on a campaign to destroy existing ones. But it is clear that Cao’s policy was far from efficacious, as the practice continued long after the prohibition was issued, through the end of the fifth century.

In order to determine if the values held by the late Eastern Han elite survived, it is necessary to ask how later men thought about Han stelae. This will require an examination of the Song antiquarians whose efforts to collect and reconstruct Han stelae have informed all interpretations of the period. Of course, one might ask why we should study the Song in particular. Although most standard accounts present the Song antiquarian Ouyang Xiu (see chapter 2) as the father of paleography (jinshixue 金石學), he was not, in fact, the first to take a serious interest in stone inscriptions. As Wu Hung correctly observes, the practice of collecting inscriptions began in the Six Dynasties, with the work of scholars such as Li Daoyuan (see chapter 2) and Yan Zhitui 颜之推 (531–591). Additionally, during the reign of Emperor Yuan 元 (r. 552–554) of the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557), a certain scholar undertook an effort to compile stone inscriptions. The resultant work (now lost), Gems of Stelae (Beiying 碑英), contained rubbings of several thousand inscriptions. Yet there are at least two reasons to focus here on the Song. First, while the antiquarianism of the Song certainly had precedents, it was only in the eleventh century that antiquarianism became a serious and popular scholarly pursuit. As Christian De Pee notes, the publication of Ouyang Xiu’s Record of Collecting Antiquities in 1063 inspired “an enthusiastic following among his contemporaries,
who began collecting and reproducing inscriptions and vessels with abandon.6 Second, as Peter Bol has argued, the late Northern Song represents a watershed in elite attitudes toward antiquity. Whereas leading scholars of the Tang valued the past for its cultural forms (particularly its literary and textual traditions), their Song counterparts were concerned less with the trappings of culture. Instead, leading eleventh-century thinkers were occupied with the problem of how to use the Way (dao 道) of the ancients to transform state and society.7 As we will see, it is this political interest in the past that gave Han values a second lease on life.

Song antiquarianism—and especially Ouyang’s Record—were extremely important for shaping subsequent views of the Han. This ancient dynasty certainly occupied a special place in the imaginations of Song literati and statesmen. In fact, for the Song, the Han came to represent what the Western Zhou 周 (1051–771 BCE) meant to the Han: nothing less than an age of heroes. In the eyes of Song men like Ouyang Xiu, the Han men who came before them, like the founders of the early Zhou, were more than moral exemplars. As the two epigraphs cited above suggest, Han men were also the objects of intense longing, and even the stuff of which dreams were made. Finally, Han stelae were something like the Book of Zhou (Zhouli 周禮), a text thought by Han men to represent the authentic vestiges of a glorious earlier age.8 Just as Han elites regarded the Book of Zhou as containing the blueprints for an ideal polity, Song elites found in Han stelae a roadmap to a more ethical and better-ordered society.

Judging from his comments in the Record, Ouyang admired Han stelae, frequently praising their calligraphy. He described the header of one stele as “Forceful and energetic and something to prize.” In a later comment appended to his entry for the same inscription, he reiterated his admiration: “The brushstrokes are just great and wonderful.”9 He praised another fragmentary stele of controversial date in a similar vein: “The form of the characters is simple and energetic. It could only have been done by a Han man.”10 The extent to which Ouyang admired Han stelae becomes clear when we compare his remarks about them to his comments on inscriptions from other periods. To be sure, Ouyang was able to bring himself to praise inscriptions other than those from the Han on occasion. One example is his remarks on a stele from the Sui 隋 dynasty (581–618) located at the temple of the legendary Laozi 老子. Noting that he recorded the characters because they “approximated the ancient style,” Ouyang went on to pay the calligrapher a backhanded compliment: “The characters of Tang men are not all vulgar. There are those that can be praised.”11 But in most cases, Ouyang found inscriptions that postdated the Han unappealing. Commenting on the Tang calligrapher Xuan Du 玄度, he noted: “On account of his writing, Xuan Du made himself famous during the age. The method of his brush was weak and delicate, and it did not follow the form of former men. Popular opinion, however, mistakenly praises his calligraphy.”12
Ouyang’s admiration for Han stelae also reveals itself in his frustration with the difficulties of finding them, a frustration that betrays a sense of urgency to recover the Han past. To cite a very typical example, Ouyang observed that “[Specimens] of Han clerical script are nowadays so hard to come by. Most of them are eroded. What a pity, indeed!” He expressed similar sentiments in his notes on another Han stele:

[Engraved stones in Han clerical script are nowadays so rare. It is only through my diligence in collecting that I alone have been able to acquire many. This being so, the vast majority are fragmentary and incomplete, and those that I have been fortunate to obtain are but the scattered remnants—this is a real pity!]14

Ouyang’s urgency to recover Han stelae is also evident from comments that reveal his sheer delight in their discovery. One example is Ouyang’s own account about chancing upon a Han stele as a young man some thirty years earlier:

[In youth, my home was in Handong, and in the fourth year of the Tiansheng reign [1025], I was raised up as a Metropolitan Graduate. On my way to attend my position in the Imperial Secretariat and Rites Bureau, on the road out of Huyang I saw this stele, which was standing to the left of the road. I got off my horse to read it, pacing back and forth at the base of the stele for a long while.]15

Worth noting is the way that Ouyang, more than three decades removed from the events described, managed to convey the excitement of this discovery. Interestingly, nowhere in the Record of Collecting Antiquities does Ouyang recount the excitement of finding an inscription dating after the Han. The keen interest seen in the excerpt above is in fact consistent with the account given by Ouyang’s son of his father rushing to the sites of the former Qin and Han capitals every time something was unearthed.16

Although it seems possible that Ouyang’s passion to find Han stelae merely reflected their relative scarcity, this was certainly not the case. Had scarcity been the issue, Ouyang surely would have complained about the lack of inscriptions for the Six Dynasties, but he did not. He only lamented the lack of Han inscriptions, of which he had double the number.17 Furthermore, Ouyang was less bothered by the fragmentary nature of Tang inscriptions, which he appears to have held in higher esteem than those from the Six Dynasties or Five Dynasties (907–960). Of course, the destruction of good inscriptions never pleased Ouyang, as the following entry demonstrates.
[Although Tang men who were good at writing were numerous, those who rivaled this one were few. It is too bad that his name was not transmitted to the age, and that no one today knows about him.]¹⁸

Yet complaints like these—which even lack the grammatical markers (ke 可, er 矣, and you 元) that express intense emotions, as attentive readers will note—are few and far between. In fact, most of the time Ouyang merely described the condition of the stele without expressing any regret whatsoever. To take a typical example, commenting on a Tang inscription that was in bad shape, he merely remarked, “The stele is fragmentary. The lines cannot be made out as text.”¹⁹

The foregoing discussion raises the question of how to explain Ouyang’s urgent desire to preserve Han inscriptions. Was it perhaps the result of his desire to create an objective, historical record? Although this explanation would seem to make sense, it must be noted that Ouyang was a stickler for factual accuracy (which hardly characterized Han inscriptions), as Ronald Egan has shown convincingly. Ouyang refused to unjustly praise the deceased or omit any embarrassing revelations.²⁰ This tendency is particularly clear in the inscription he wrote for his friend Huang Mengsheng 黃夢升 (998–1039), cited here in Egan’s translation:

[Whenever I read through Mengsheng’s works, I come to lament the words of his nephew, Xiang, which say, “Your writing flashed like lightning and shook the world like thunder. Yet now it has ceased as abruptly as a hailstorm. It has passed away into silence.” I invariably repeat the passage aloud and sigh. Alas, Mengsheng! You were no match for Xiang. Your writing never shook or startled the world. Your abilities were constrained and remained in obscurity. Who was responsible for giving you such talents but not giving you a chance to use them? I do not know where the blame should be placed and can only grieve for you, Mengsheng.]²¹

This could not be more different from a Han inscription; a Han eulogist placing too fine a point on a man’s lack of achievement can hardly be imagined. As seen in chapter 5, Han eulogists saw no failure as too dismal to be written up as a success or a sign of spiritual purity. But this was not so with Ouyang, who not only drew attention to Huang’s undistinguished record and undermined his nephew’s attempts to eulogize him, but even went so far as to compare Huang unfavorably to Xiang. If factual accuracy was indeed one of Ouyang’s chief goals, it is unclear what he would have found to admire about Han inscriptions. Ouyang was well versed in the standard histories, and thus did
not have to look far through the corpus of extant Han inscriptions to know that Han eulogists were frequently guilty of errors of omission and commission, if not outright fraud. After all, the best of them, Cai Yong, admitted as much on record.22

If objectivity was not an issue, then can Ouyang’s earnestness be explained in terms of his appreciation for the form and style of stele inscriptions? On the surface, this would seem to be a good explanation, since he praised the writing for its closeness to the unadorned style of the ancients.23 But this explanation falters on several counts. For one thing, high style, good calligraphy, and other signs of cultural refinement were of secondary importance to Ouyang, who privileged the substance of the Way over formal elements of culture. In other words, for Ouyang, cultural patterns were only as good as they were useful for transmitting the timeless values of the ancient sages.24 In addition, it is hard to argue that Ouyang found a stylistic model for his own writing in Han funerary inscriptions. In contrast to Han stele inscriptions, which are as formulaic, allusive, and didactic as the prose of the great Tang literatus Han Yu 韩愈 (768–824), Ouyang’s language is a breath of fresh air. As Egan notes, unlike Han Yu’s inscriptions (or, for that matter, those of Han dynasty stele), Ouyang’s contain little ornamentation. Instead, his writing bears a tone of intimacy, an ease with which mundane matters are broached in a simple and straightforward style.25 Such ease or intimacy rarely made its way into Han stele inscriptions. It is difficult to imagine a Han eulogist disrupting the narrative to introduce his own recollections of the dedicatee, even if he had known him, as Ouyang did in the following example:

予為童子，立諸兄側，見夢生年十七八，眉目明秀，善飲酒談笑，予雖幼，心已屬其夢生。

[I was just a boy when I stood beside the brothers and first looked upon Mengsheng. He was seventeen or eighteen and had bright eyes and dark eyebrows. Already, he was an able drinker and a wit. Although I was young, I could tell that Mengsheng was a cut above others.]26

Perhaps Ouyang’s urgency to recover the Han past stemmed from his interest in Han injunctions for the social and political order. This explanation would be consistent with the aims of antiquarians. Combining the insights of archaeology, epigraphy, philology, and exegetical hermeneutics, Ouyang and his circle attempted, as Christian De Pee notes, no less than “to reconstruct ancient texts, understand their meaning and context, and embody their injunctions in the present.”27 Such injunctions, furthermore, held special meaning for members of the late Northern Song elite like Ouyang, who believed that timeless truths had been realized in antiquity.28 Thus, to investigate and reconstruct the historical remains of the Han past, part of this ancient heritage, represented a crucial step toward a larger goal of these later elite: to realign human civilization with cosmic patterns.29
When we turn to Ouyang’s other writings, the reasons that he would have been interested in the injunctions found in Han stele inscriptions become clear, as such injunctions often resonated with his own values. In particular, Ouyang viewed service to the population as an important measure of the worth of a man. A funerary inscription written by Ouyang for a contemporary, Xue Zhangru 薛長孺 (ca. 1001–1061), contains a description of the man’s contributions to the local population under his administration. Following is Ouyang’s description of the personal courage shown by Xue:

[When the gentleman was in Hanzhou, the prefectural troops, numbering several hundred, killed the auxiliary military official and burned the camp in order to cause chaos. Standing tall, the gentleman went on foot. Making his way through the leveled rubble, he entered the camp. Using [threats] of misfortune and disaster, he said to the riotous troops, “Those who revolted stand on the left! Accomplices stand on the right!” At this time, several hundred men hurried to stand on the right. Only the insurgents, numbering thirteen, fled. The prefecture subsequently had no problems.]30

No doubt this image of the stern magistrate, who protected the local population against corrupt or violent elements, is familiar. It is an image seen in Han stelae that also became increasingly common in late Tang inscriptions, especially those by Han Yu.31 But unlike Han’s inscriptions, Ouyang’s highlighted Xue’s service to his own local area, in a vein reminiscent of Wu Gong’s stele (see chapter 5):

[When he resided in Jiang, Xue remarked, “Jiang is my home village. Its elders are my fathers and teachers. Its sons and younger brothers are like my sons and younger brothers.” He then established a school and got a school official to teach the inhabitants. In governing, he used kindness, and the men of Jiang were greatly pleased.]32

The emphasis that Ouyang placed on popular recognition provides further evidence that his values resonated with those found in Han stelae. In the inscription dedicated to Xue, Ouyang highlighted the deceased’s local standing by describing how the people of the area mourned his loss. Given the archaic tone and style of the final stanzas of the inscription, it is appropriate to return here to the format used for presenting Han stele inscriptions.

In his governance of the village and prefecture,
He was praised by the elders.
When the carriage carrying the spirit coffin returned, The men of his village rushed to it. Memories of him remained with men, And thus they engraved a marker so that his reputation would not decay.33

Attentive readers will notice how close Ouyang came to Han funerary inscriptions in the final stretch of the inscription above. Not only did he invoke the ambience of Han inscriptions in such elements as the people so moved that they carved an inscription to perpetuate the deceased’s memory, or the sight of villagers running to the carriage carrying the coffin, but he broke out of his usual vernacular. In these lines we find couplets of four, with an additional particle (xi -divider) added to alternate lines. Ouyang thus approximated the language and diction of Cai Yong’s inscriptions, a move that effectively collapsed the temporal and linguistic gulf that separated the Song antiquarian from his Han ancestors.

The fact that Ouyang attached great importance to friendship is another indication that he was primarily interested in Han stelae for their content. As he made clear in his celebrated essay, “On Parties” (Pengdang lun 朋黨論), friends were those who united on account of common principles and who came together in times of mutual need.34 Friends not only collaborated in life, but expressed solidarity in death. As Ouyang’s inscriptions reveal, it was one’s friends who donned mourning and assembled at the grave. And if all else failed, they were the ones responsible for recognizing a man’s merit and for perpetuating his memory in an imperfect world. These beliefs find expression in Ouyang’s inscription for Huang Mengsheng:

又遇之於鄧。問常同其平生所為文章幾何，嘆慨然歎曰，吾已識之矣。窮途有命，非世之人不知我，我亦道於世人也。求之不果出，遂飲之酒。復大醉，起舞歌呼，因笑曰，子知我者！

[We met again in Deng. On that occasion, I asked Mengsheng how many pieces of prose and poetry he had written through the years. He sighed and said, “I do not speak about them anymore. One’s fortunes in life are decided by fate, and mine cannot be attributed to contemporaries’ failure to understand me. I am ashamed to express myself to others.” I asked if I could see his writings, but he would not show them to me. Later, I poured out some wine for him and once again he succumbed to its effects. By and by, he arose to dance and sing. Laughing, he turned to me and said, “You are one who truly understands me.”]35

In broader terms, Ouyang’s rediscovery of the Han probably had wide-ranging consequences not only for antiquarianism, but also for the broader cultural practices and values of the late imperial elite. I believe that Ouyang’s rediscovery of the Han was responsible in part for the transformation of shrines dedicated to worthies (shengci) during the Southern Song. Such
shrines, as Ellen G. Neskar has argued, celebrated local heroism, service, and standing; they promoted voluntary and local initiative as the key to achieving a well-ordered society. Of course, these were all values that formed the central tenets of a movement known as Learning of the Way (Daoxue 道學), or neo-Confucianism, which arguably gave rise to one of the most significant ideologies of late imperial China.

Of course, I am not the first to suggest a link between Han stele inscriptions and Song shrines. The first to do so in fact was Sima Guang 司馬光 (1018–1086), statesman, historian, and contemporary of Ouyang. “The rite of enshrining those who are no more arose in the Han,” Sima wrote. “In some cases, the prefectural and commandery officials who had governed the people compassionately have been given ‘living enshrinements.’ Although this was not an institution of the former kings, it nevertheless emanated from the fond memories of men and thus should not be abrogated.” Sima’s assessment of the link between present and past was echoed nearly a century later by Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237), another scholar. “Ever since the Han dynasty,” Wei noted, “ru have had this notion of making sacrifices to former sages, teachers, worthies, and elders. Thus, in recent generations, shrines to ru ‘formers’ have spread throughout the commanderies and counties.”

Objections to this hypothesis may be raised on the grounds that the spread of shrines celebrating local heroes should not be attributed simply to the publication of Ouyang’s Record. Perhaps the spread of such shrines instead reflects the basic transformation of elite society that was under way during the Song. As Robert Hymes puts it, elites—initially defined through their relationship to the state in the Northern Song—increasingly came to be a “locally rooted and largely self-ratifying” group in the Southern Song. The reasons for this change are complex. They include the expansion of extra-bureaucratic wealth, the spread of classical education to men and women outside the bureaucracy through print culture, great population growth without an accompanying expansion of the bureaucracy, and the decline in power of the Song court on the eve of the Mongol conquest of 1279. In addition, one might wonder whether there was much of a connection between Ouyang’s Record and the spread of these shrines. After all, as Sima Guang’s aforementioned comments reveal, the practice of erecting worthies’ shrines predated the publication of Ouyang’s collection. Indeed, there is even evidence that this practice began as early as the Tang dynasty.

Certainly these objections are worth consideration; everything should not be chalked up to the publication of Ouyang’s Record. Social factors indeed played a role in determining which sentiments were pervasive at the time. Yet they alone cannot explain why Song elites favored worthies’ shrines, a medium they associated with the Han. Social factors also cannot account for the striking thematic similarities (to be discussed presently) between Han stelae and Song shrines even after the publication of the Record. In addition, the timing of Ouyang’s Record does not present a serious challenge to our hypothesis.
As Ellen G. Neskar has argued convincingly, the shrines erected by Northern Song men were different in character from those erected by their Southern Song counterparts, that is, men living in the century after the publication of the Record. Unlike Northern Song shrines, which largely highlighted an official’s connection to the dynasty, those of the Southern Song tended to emphasize many of the values celebrated by Han eulogists: “a glorification of more modest local and individual accomplishments.” Such a change in emphasis, Neskar further remarks, “suggests a change in elite self-conceptions: gentlemen had come more and more to define themselves in terms of their service to the local population.”

The most compelling reason to suspect a link between Han stelae and many Southern Song shrines is the strong thematic resemblances between the two. One example is a shrine erected for a Mr. Lin in 1087, emphasizing the official’s contributions to the local area. The author of its inscription, Zhu Changwen (1039–1098), celebrated the man’s efforts to improve the economic welfare of the local population:

> [At the time, the people of the county were ignorant and did not know to learn. His Excellency opened new schools and personally instructed the population, and one by one they followed him. As a result, customs and practices changed greatly. He exhorted the population to study farming and sericulture, to dredge ditches and irrigation channels. Whenever he sent down instructions, old and young hailed him. After governing for more than a year, he was promoted as the Governor of a neighboring area.]

Zhu was not alone in praising his subjects for their service to the population. The essayist Xie Ke 謝邈 (d. 1116) also wrote an inscription for a shrine dedicated to a governor named Zhai 賈, who was known for his benevolent administration. Zhai softened the tax burden of the population by extending the term of payment, meted out lenient punishments to prisoners, and made instructions easy to observe.

The similarities between Eastern Han stelae and Song shrine inscriptions go beyond a tendency to glorify a man’s service to the population: shrine inscriptions also emphasize popular esteem. An inscription by Sima Guang for a Prime Minister Han 韓 provides one such example:

> [Han was in Wei for five years when he was transferred and made Assistant District Magistrate of Xiangzhou. The men of Wei shed tears, standing in his way for several days before allowing him to go. The men of Wei longed]
for his Excellency, and yet they were unable to see him. And so they collectively erected a shrine at the site of the Xining Chan Monastery. They molded an image of his Excellency and served it [i.e., made offerings and paid obeisance to the image]. Two years later his Excellency passed away in Xiangzhou. When the men of Wei heard the news, they vied to rush to the base of the shrine and wail. It was like the gathering of clouds and claps of thunder.49

All of this, of course, is reminiscent of Han inscriptions, with the idea that popular mourning provided the ultimate testimony of a man’s political worth. But the similarities between Han stelae and Song shrines do not end here. In shrine inscriptions, some Song essayists went so far as to suggest that popular opinion represented a more reliable measure of political merit than official position. For this reason, even men who failed to win high office and who suffered the indignities of exile could hope for immortality if they won popular acclaim.50 One example is a shrine inscription written by Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127–1206) to commemorate a certain Huang 黃 (1045–1105). Like the subjects of stele inscriptions from the Eastern Han, Huang was a virtuous man whose virtue went unrecognized by his dynastic overlords. Sent into exile, Huang lived in obscurity and soon died in disgrace. Nevertheless, the people living in the area of his exile understood his worth, and when he died, they mourned his passing and built a shrine to him.51

No doubt, much additional work is needed to demonstrate definitively the links I have only been able to suggest above—and indeed, to evaluate the impact on later cultural and political traditions of the Song discovery of the Han. That said, the parallels between the values of some of the leading statesmen of the Eastern Han and those of the late Northern Song are tantalizing, and lead us to wonder whether the efforts undertaken by Song men to recover the traces of the past were ultimately motivated by the desire to embody the injunctions of an earlier age. If indeed the men of the Song saw in Han artifacts the blueprints for an ideal order, then Han eulogists—who did not hide their desire to provide future men with didactic tools—were more successful than they could have imagined. “Ah, generations to come,” one Han eulogist wrote, “this is your standard, your model!”52 Indeed, if we were to sum up the enduring legacy of the late Han, it would be nothing if not “to clearly instruct future brothers, extending and bestowing upon them a mirror for reflection.”53
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Overview of Han Sources Used for This Study

This appendix is not intended as a comprehensive discussion of the sources from the Han period. The subject is vast, the controversies thorny, and the existing scholarship voluminous. Interested readers should instead consult the 1993 volume edited by Michael Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, which provides extensive discussion of the textual histories of a wide range of pre-Han and Han works. Those interested in issues relating to the textual history of the *History of the Later Han* and other sources for the Eastern Han should consult B. J. Mansvelt-Beck’s 1990 monograph, *The Treatises of Later Han*. Below I will provide a very brief and general overview of the most important sources utilized in this study. The discussion will not include all of the sources consulted; in particular, excavated manuscripts, works attributed to Warring States masters, social commentaries from the Han, and various treatises or inscriptions from the Song dynasty are excluded.

Sources for this study may be divided somewhat arbitrarily into four broad categories, each of which will be discussed separately: (1) the histories, (2) inscriptive material, (3) records of administration, and (4) ritual classics.

THE HISTORIES

The most important histories are naturally those referred to by scholars as “standard histories” (zhengshi 正史): *Historical Records* by Sima Qian; *History of the Han* by Ban Gu; *History of the Later Han* by Fan Ye; and *Record of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo zhi* 三國志) by Chen Shou 陳壽 (233–297). It should be noted that the documentation for the Eastern Han is somewhat richer than that for the Western Han; Rafe de Crespigny’s *Biographical Dictionary of China from Later Han to the Three Kingdoms AD 23–220* contains some eight thousand entries in total.
In addition to the standard histories, a number of alternative accounts are extant. Three titles in particular bear mention; of these, only Yuan Hong's chronicle from the Six Dynasties, *Record of the Later Han*, survives intact. In contrast, *Records of the Han from the Dongguan Library*, by Ban Gu et al., survives in fragments: according to Michael Loewe and Hans Bielenstein, only small portions of twenty-four of the original 143 volumes (juan 卷) are extant today. Fragments of seven other Eastern Han histories survive in a compilation from the Qing dynasty, *History of the Later Han by the Seven Authors* (*Qijia Hou Hanshu* 七家後漢書) by Wang Wentai 汪文泰 (1796–1844). Included in Wang’s compilation are *Continuation of the History of the Han* (*Xu Hanshu* 追漢書) by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (d. 306); *History of the Later Han* by Yuan Shansong 袁山松; *History of the Later Han* by Xie Cheng, *Continuation of the History of the Han* by Xue Ying 薛英; *History of the Later Han* by Hua Qiao 華橋 of the Jin dynasty; *History of the Later Han* by Xie Shen 謝沈; and *History of the Later Han by an Unknown Author* (*Shi shiming Hou Hanshu* 失氏名後漢書) compiled by Zhang Pan 張璠 of the Jin dynasty. With the exception of Xie Cheng’s *History of the Later Han* and Sima Biao’s *Continuation of the History of the Han*, most of these are quite incomplete.

Two other unofficial histories have been used in this study: the fragmentary *Record of Heroes* (*Yingxiong ji* 英雄記) by Wang Can 王粲 (177–217), contained in the *Collected Works of Wang Can*; and *Biographies of Lofty Gentlemen* (*Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳) by Huangfu Mi.

### INSCRIPTIONAL MATERIAL

Besides the histories, inscriptive material represents an important source for this study, particularly with regard to Eastern Han mourning practice. To date, I have collected and catalogued the contents of some 469 inscriptions or fragments with the assistance of Zhang Zhongwei (People’s University) and Zhang Tianhong (Tsinghua University). This catalogue has been incorporated as part of a database of Han officials, available on the research pages of www.yuxie.com. Three points that may not be clear to the nonexpert reader bear explanation. First, not all of the inscriptions are funerary inscriptions; a large number, in fact, were written to commemorate living officials. Second, not all inscriptions are found on stelae. Of the 469 that survive, about 277 are from stelae; the rest have been categorized by scholars as belonging to other genres. Third, inscriptive sources carry a certain degree of geographic bias. Although inscriptive material has been found in most areas of Han settlement, the greatest number of inscriptions come from the population centers of the dynasty: Northeast, North Central, and Southwest China.

As stele inscriptions are central to this study, it is worth noting briefly the collections that have been used. To date, virtually all of the contents of these 277 stele inscriptions have been compiled in four collections: (1) *Compilation*
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of Stone Inscriptions in the Han Dynasty (Kandai sekkoku shûsei 漢代石刻集成) by Nagata Hidemasa; (2) Explications of Clerical Script, compiled by the Song antiquarian Hong Kuo; (3) Supplement on Clerical Script (Lixu 梓鉤), also compiled by Hong Kuo; and (4) The Collected Works of Cai Zhonglang (Cai Zhonglang ji 蔡中郎集), a compilation of the works of Cai Yong. It should be noted that Cai Yong’s inscriptions exist only as transmitted texts. The first mention of Cai Zhonglang ji is found in the History of the Sui (Suishu 隋書) as the Collected Works of Cai Yong (Cai Yong ji 蔡邕集). There, the text notes that in the Liang dynasty, the work circulated in twenty-one volumes. According to the preface to the Sibu beiyao 四部備要 edition, the editors drew upon several earlier editions of the work, including one from the Northern Song produced during the Tiansheng 天聖 reign period (1023–1032) of Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1010–1063).

The histories of most stele inscriptions are complex. As I have argued elsewhere, they were often copied with graphic errors, interpolations, marginalia, and occasionally significant omissions, much like texts written on paper and bamboo. Moreover, in the vast majority of cases (87 percent), most stele inscriptions are what sinologists call “transmitted texts,” as only the contents of the inscriptions (and not the stelae themselves) have survived. (“Scientifically excavated” stelae—or those excavated after 1949—represent about 3 percent of the total corpus.) Readers interested in an in-depth history of stele inscriptions—general problems of authenticity and patterns of transmission, as well as strategies for evaluating their authenticity and representativeness—should consult my forthcoming paper, “How Hard Is Hard? How We Should Read Han Stelae, Whether We Can Trust Them, and Why We Should Care.” The paper will be published as part of a volume edited by Cary Liu, tentatively titled “Recarving China’s Past: Symposium Papers.” An earlier version of the same paper was presented at the Princeton University Art Museum symposium, “Recarving the Past: Art, Archaeology, and Architecture of the ‘Wu Family’ Shrines,” held on April 30 and May 1, 2005.

Aside from collections of extant inscriptions, another important source of information about the Han practice of commissioning inscriptions (and especially stelae) is found in the Classic of Waterways. The Classic comprises two parts, a geographical work called the Shuijing 水經 (Book of Waterways), written by an unknown author around 265; and Li Daoyuan’s commentary, which probably dates no later than 527. As the eminent May Fourth scholar Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) notes, the text is not without its problems, two of which were identified by Textual Authentication (kaozheng 考證) scholars of the Qing dynasty: the current version of the text lacks five chapters; and the work was transmitted for millennia with the text of Li’s commentary intermingled with the earlier portion—a situation only identified and partially remedied by the Qing scholars. A full catalogue of all Han inscriptions discussed in the Classic of Waterways can be found at www.yuxie.com.
To a lesser extent, records of administration written on bamboo and wooden slips, numbering in the tens of thousands, have been consulted in this study—particularly for information about mourning practice in the Western Han and Xin periods. Until the mid-1990s, available information about local governance in the Han was limited to four frontier colonies in the northwest: Wuwei, Juyan, Xuanquan, and Dunhuang. Since then, an impressive cache of administrative records from two sites (Zhangjiashan and Yinwan) in China’s interior and coastal regions has been published. Needless to say, my interpretation of these documents owes much to the work of Michael Loewe (1967, 2004), Liao Boyuan (1998), and Xie Guihua and Li Junming (1987).

For my understanding of classical ritual prescriptions, I have relied heavily upon two classics, the Book of Rites and Ceremonies and Rituals. The former includes various treatises on the meaning and evolution of numerous ritual protocols, as well as ritual prescriptions; the latter contains mostly ritual prescriptions. The histories of these texts are complicated, and the discovery of the Guodian manuscripts (fourth century) has done little to put to rest questions about their dating and authorship. Although I will not stake a position in these debates, especially those about the Book of Rites (which are of little relevance to my study), it would nevertheless be instructive to mention a few pertinent points. Most scholars agree that the Book of Rites is heterogeneous in origin. They also agree that while some portions of the texts included in these two works date from the early Warring States and even the late Spring and Autumn period, others perhaps date as late as the late Warring States or even the early Western Han. Furthermore, some scholars argue that it is difficult to provide dates for what are now considered to be single works, because of the ways in which texts were edited and sometimes radically reconfigured during the Warring States and Western Han.
INTRODUCTION


2. Yuan Hong, *Hou Hanji* 11.299. There, Geng Gong (fl. 58 CE) reportedly observes: “Gong’s mother has perished, and I regret that I was unable to touch the jades in her mouth [zi hen bude qin fanhan 自恨不得親飯嘮].”


5. Xiaojing zhushu, “Shizhang” (1999), 2.3b.


23. For recent discussions that emphasize the mediated nature of Han paleographical sources, see Cary Liu, “Wu Family Shrines” (2005); Nylan, “Addicted to Antiquity” (2005), and Brown, “Wu Stelae in Context” (2005).
35. de Crespigny (private correspondence, in author’s possession 2/27/06).
40. See the appendix.
41. _Li ji zhushu_, “Wensang 間喪,” 945; cf. _CZLJ_, “Jibei xiang Cui jun furen lei 調北相崔君夫人謚,” 6.6b–9a. The latter example is discussed extensively in chapter 3 (“Narratives of Loss in Inscriptions”). Based on his reading of the _Yili_, Wu Hung (1992b) argues that the ancient Chinese did not consider death to have occurred until three days after breathing stopped.
42. For a general discussion of the soul-calling rite (zhao hun), see Yü, “O Soul” (1987), and Hawkes, _Songs of the South_ (1985): 219–220.
43. _CZLJ_, “Yilang Hu gong furen aizan,” 4.15b.
44. _Li ji zhushu_, “Dasangji ｄℋὸ,” 761.
45. _Li ji zhushu_, “Wensang,” 945.
46. _Li ji zhushu_, “Wensang,” 945.
47. _Li ji zhushu_, “Wensang,” 944.
51. Ibid., 89–91.
52. To the best of my knowledge, all Han officials who wore mourning had to first leave their posts (quguan باء), only returning after they had removed their mourning garments. For a few representative examples, see _HHS_ 25.874, 26.921, 29.1019, 39.1294, 39.1296, 41.1411, 41.1418.
53. _Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan_ 15.2a–b.
56. Ban, _Baihutong shuzheng_, “Sangfu,” 2.514.
57. _HHS_ 24.828.
58. _HHS_ 26.917.
60. _HHS_ 26.917; cf. _HHS_ 45.1807; Wang Wentai, _Qijia Hou Hanshu_ (Sima Biao Xu Hanshu) 4.401–2.
62. _HHS_ 84.2796; cf. Li Daoyuan, _Shuijingzhu beilu_ 10.433; _HHS_ 84.2799–80, 2974; Yuan Hong, _Hou Hanji_ 7.188.
63. *HHHS* 84.2796.
67. *HHHS* 84.2792.
68. The court gave cash grants to the families of deceased officials above the rank of two thousand bushels. See *HHHS* 31.1111, 3152.
71. See, for example, one case preserved in *FSTY* 3.166.
72. See, for example, *FSTY* 3.142–43.
75. I follow Nagata (*KSS* 2.89), and Gao (1993: 71 n. 41) in making textual emendations.
77. *KSS*, “Beihai xiang bei,” 2.88. 78; I follow Nagata (*KSS* 2.89) in making textual emendations. Here, I read *ying* 豵 as a graphic variant of *ce* 策 (policies); and *jumo* 居謨 (to settle or square plans).

### CHAPTER 1: WHERE DID ALL THE FILIAL SONS GO?

1. For the prohibition of singing on days of wailing, see *Liji zhushu*, “Quli shang 此立上,” 3.54; *Lunyu zhengyi* 7.10: 260.
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recruitment of the “filial” into the Han bureaucracy, see Lao, “Handai chaju” (1948); Houn, “Civil Service Recruitment” (1966); de Crespieny, “Recruitment System” (1966); Dou, “Cong lidai” (2003); Mou, “Handai chaju” (2000).


8. For the sole case of someone quitting—rather than taking a short leave of absence—to mourn, see HS 83.3394.


10. HS 92.3714.

11. HS 99A.4078.

12. For discussion of Han administrations, especially pertaining to the conduct of officials, see Hulsewé, “Fragments” (1990).


14. For interpretations of this edict, see Zhang Yongxiu (1999): 135–36; and especially Ding, Zhongguo sangfu (2000): 238–40. Some scholars, such as Zhang, believe that the court rigorously enforced three years mourning for the ruling elite in the early Western Han, and therefore see Wen’s edict as a major overhaul of court protocol. Such a view, as historian Wan Sitong 魏斯同 (1638–1702) first noted, relies heavily upon an unsubstantiated remark made in Fang Xuanling’s Jinshu 金書 (20.618) to the effect that the Han inherited from the Qin the policy of requiring everyone in the empire to observe three years mourning for the emperor. As Wan argues, not only is there little evidence for such a policy, but also the evidence of mourning practice among the early Western Han emperors that does survive suggests the contrary. In fact, for Wan, Emperor Wen’s edict represents the first attempt on the part of the court to formalize or initiate state-mandated mourning for the emperor.


16. For references to the rules concerning wailing for the chief mourner, see Yili zhushu, “Sangfu 嫡服,” 338. I found no mention of the length of hemp sashes and belts in the ritual classics, but as Ding (2000: 36–38) has found, Zheng Xuan notes that the sashes and belts were to be seven and nine 仞, respectively.


19. Zhangjiashan ersiqi hao Hanmu zhujian zhengli xiaozu (2001): 227; for a duplicate entry, with no mention of potential punishment, see p. 184. For a general
introduction to the sources of Han law, see Hulsewé, “Qin and Han” (1997): 207–21. Some questions remain as to whether this case dates to the Qin or the Han; however, the same code is found in a document from the same tomb that is dated to 186 BCE. For discussion of the dating of the quoted document, see Yan Buke, *Pinwei yu zhiwei* (2002): 164; Peng Hao, “Tang Qin Yanshu” (1995); Li Xueqin, “Qin Yanshu” (1995).


22. For Han discussions of death pollution, see *Lunheng jiaoshi* 24.986–87; and Zheng Xuan’s commentary in *Liji zhushi*, “Tangong,” 171–72.


27. SJ 107.2843; HS 52.2379.


30. This is not clear from the edict itself, but Chen Zhong, when referring to Emperor Xuan’s memorial in his own memorial of 116 CE (*HHSS* 46.1560), explains that the edict pertains to military officers.

31. HS 8.250–51.

32. HS 11.335; for the small number of erudites (109) that are known for the entire Western Han, see Yan Buke, *Chaju zhidu* (1991): 448.


34. For ritual prescriptions concerning stepmothers, see *Yili zhushi*, “Sangfu,” 351.

35. HS 83.3394.


37. HS 83.3395.


45. This is not to say that the authors believed that a son should entirely neglect the mourning of his own parents. Although an official may not wear mourning for parents, some measure of accommodation should be made for the mourner, as he should be allowed to return home in the mornings and evenings to wail and prepare the body for burial. Nevertheless, the official is obliged to return to the lord’s house once he has prepared the body. See Liji zhushu, “Zengzi wen xia,” 19.533–34; cf. “Bensang 奔喪,” 938.

46. For the murky dates of Gonygang’s Commentary, see Cheng, “Ch’un ch’iu” (1993): 67–76.

47. Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan 15.2a–b.

48. Chunqiu fanlu yizheng 5, “Jing hua 經華,” 89. The *Chunqiu fanlu* must be used with care, as the later portions (pian 17–82) are considered by most scholars to postdate Dong Zhongshu. For issues relating to the *Chunqiu fanlu*, see Davidson and Loewe, “Ch’un ch’iu” (1993): 77–87.


53. Xiaojing zhushu 9.1a–3a.

54. Xiaojing zhushu 1.3a–3.1a, 2.3b.

55. Xiaojing zhushu 1.2a.


60. Han Ying, *Hanshi waizhuan* 1.21; cf. Hightower, *Han-shih wai-chuan* (1952): 29. I translate *si* (private, particular, selfish, personal, partial) as “personal” rather than the more common translation, “private,” for the following reasons: First, I hope to distinguish between the two uses of the English term—that is, something done outside the purview of bystanders (“in private”); and something having to do with oneself (“personal”), which may be expressed in public. Second, I have opted to translate *si* as “personal” in order to avoid the Habermasian connotations usually associated with “private” or “particularistic.” For a recent discussion of these issues, see McDougall, “Particulars and Universals” (2002): 5–10; Goldin, “Han Fei’s Doctrine” (2001).


62. Han Ying, *Hanshi waizhuan* 10.16a–17a, tr. Hightower, *Han-shih wai-chuan* (1952): 233–34 (translation modified). For a similar dilemma, see the case of Shi She (*Hanshi waizhuan* 2.9a; cf. Hightower, *Han-shih wai-chuan* (1952): 52–53). Shi She, a judge, ended up pursuing a criminal on the road. When he realized that the criminal was his own father, he turned around and returned to court, informing his lord of the situation. Shi thereupon demanded his own execution on the grounds that he had been both unfilial for turning his father in to the authorities and lax in his official duties by failing to take his father into custody. Shi’s lord refused to punish him, but he committed suicide, declaring (like Shen Ming) that he had been neither conscientious nor filial. This motif can also be found in the Analects. Unlike the earlier Analects account, which condemns Shi for turning in his own father, the *Hanshi waizhuan* praises him for his conduct. For the Analects account, see *Lunyu zhengyi* 13.18: 536–38.

63. For discussion of other Warring States texts that deal with the conflict between familial obligation and state duty, see Nylan, “Confucian Piety” (1996): 3–4.


68. HS 48.2234.

69. SJ 118.3075–81.

70. SJ 118.3080; cf. HS 44.2144.

71. Ban Gu (*HS* 99A.4065) attributes a similar speech to Wang Mang, who justifies the execution of his son. Emperor Wen, upset about his brother’s death and acting
against the advice of his tutor, then invested Liu Chang’s son, Liu An (fl. ca. 174–122 BCE), with the kingdom of Huainan 南. Upon achieving adulthood, Liu An would in turn rebel against Emperor Wen’s successor (and his own nephew), Emperor Wu, before committing suicide in 122 BCE. For these developments, see Vankeerberghen, “Family and Law” (2000); Loewe, Biographical Dictionary (2000): 242–44.

72. See also SJ 43.1824, 60.2119, 106.2821; Loewe, Biographical Dictionary (2000): 70–73.


74. HS 7A.1332.


76. HS 54.3419.

77. HS 69A.4047. See also HS 54.3419, 69A.4065.


80. HS 54.3419.

CHAPTER 2: CENTURIES OF TEARS AND WOE

1. The child was the son of Hu Shuo 胡硕 (d. 168), the Grand Administrator of Chenliu. For Hu Shuo’s inscription, see CZLJ, “Chenliu Taishou Hu Gong bei 陳留太守胡公碑,” 6.7b. Hu Shuo was Hu Guang’s son.

2. Judging from what follows (two lines of five characters each), it appears that a character is missing after jiu 就. Given the context—loss and eternal separation—I would guess that jiu is part of a two-character compound, jiubian 就便 (convenient, expedient).

3. This is most likely a reference to the boy’s maternal relative, although no mention of Li Tao 李陶 exists in the dynastic histories.

4. I read fanghua 芳華 here as a graphic variation on fanghua 芳華 (blossom).


8. These figures were totalled from a variety of available sources (see the appendix). I am excluding cases in which children (primarily sons) commissioned inscriptions commemorating the virtue of their parents, most likely years after their deaths, as opposed to expressing grief over a more immediate loss or describing any of the rites of mourning and burial. For all examples of such inscriptions, see KSS, “Jia Wuzhong qi Ma Jiang muzhi 賈武仲妻馬墓志,” 2.44; LS, “Zhongchangshi Fan An bei 中常侍范安碑,” 6.21a; LX, “Sikong Kong Fu bei 司空孔扶碑,” 11.1a.

10. For parents (fu 父, famu 父母, mu 母, and houmu 後母) alone, the proportion is roughly the same: 56 percent of all accounts of mourning can only be traced back to a Six Dynasties source.


15. *HHS* 62.2067. An account dating to the Eastern Han survives in the form of a funerary inscription. While this account does attest that Chen Shi’s funeral was well attended, it also suggests that the Six Dynasties biographer, Fan Ye, exaggerated the scale of the funeral. According to the Han account, there were one thousand, not tens of thousands, present at the funeral that day. See *CZLJ*, “Chen Taiqiu bei 陳太丘碑,” 2.7b.

16. *HHS* 42.1725, 1730–1 (Six Dynasties); Wang Wentai, *Qijia Hou Hanshu* (*Xie Cheng Hou Hanshu*) 3.3a/79 (Eastern Han).

17. Except for Yuan Hong’s *Hou Hanji* and *HHS*, all histories of the Eastern Han survive only in fragments (Mansvelt-Beck (1986): 17).


19. These men included Ban Gu, Cui Shi, Cai Yong, Lu Zhi 陸稽 (d. 192), and Yang Biao 楊彪 (142–225). According to *HHS* (14.558), Empress Dowager Deng ordered that a chapter on filial sons be incorporated into the *Dongguan Hanji* by Ban et al.

20. For a classic formulation of this problem, with respect to the Song inscriptive corpus, see Bosssler, *Powerful Relations* (1998): 11–34.


27. To the best of my knowledge, only three extant inscriptions mentions its author. See *CZLJ*, “Chushi Hun Shuze ming 處士桓叔則銘,” 2.17b; *Lishi*, “Tangyi ling Bi Feng bei 唐邑令費鳳碑,” 9.18a; “Bi Feng bie bei 費鳳別碑,” 9.20b.
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28. See the appendix for more on this document.

29. That is, thirty-two to thirty-four of 116 Han stele. The higher figure results from correlation of the Zhou Bao (州版) stele with the Zhou Fu (州附) stele in Lishi, and counting as extant the Yuan An and Li Gu steles. The possibility that the Zhou Fu and Zhou Bao stele may be the same was suggested to me by Rafe de Crespigny (private correspondence, 5/18/2005).

30. I read xian 前 here as ken 肯 (to be willing, to consent).


33. CZLJ, “Wei Chenliu taishou shang xiaozi zhuang (校外), 8.4a–5a.

34. HHS 66.2160; for a brief discussion from another angle, see Kinney, Representations of Childhood (2004): 116–17. Unfortunately, as in the case of Cheng Wei, little else is known of Zhao Xuan and his family. One example of a young man appointed for extraordinary devotion (as seen through mourning) was Gu Chu 卜初, who was appointed by Zhi Yun 齊倫; see HHS 29.1032.

35. This phrase is an allusion to Mengzi zhengyi 4A.26:532.


38. For a more favorable account of Yuan Hong, see his biography in HHS 45.1525. See also Huangfu Mi, Gaoshi zhuang 111. For a neutral account that is largely consistent with Ying’s, see Yuan Hong, Hou Hanji 22.600–1, 623. For scholarly discussions of Yuan Hong, see Nylan, “Ying Shao’s” (1982): 40, 201–2; and Vervoorn, Men of Cliffs (1990): 181, 291, 298.


40. Allusion to Xiaojing zhushu 9.3a.

41. FSTY 3.161.

42. FSTY 3.142–43.


44. Commentators appear to be perplexed by this character; its meaning here is unclear.


46. There is only one reference to Xue Qin in HHS (66.2159), where he is mentioned as a friend (you 友) of Chen Fan’s father from the same native place. Considerably more information is provided in HHS about Wang Gong 王磐, with a biography (HHS 56.1819–21). Wang, like Chen, belonged to the same political circles as Ying Shao’s father, Ying Feng 董裕 (d. ca. 170). Given the limited information that survives, it is difficult to see what ulterior motives Ying Shao would have had for attacking Wang.

47. For Ying Shao’s relation to Yuan Shao, see Nylan, “Ying Shao’s” (1982): 20, 29–36.
51. See Ying Shao’s comments to the same effect in HS 87.3569.
52. Zhao Yi, Nian’ershi zhaji jiaozheng 1/3.68–70.
53. The first ban on such policies was imposed by the Guangwu emperor; the last two were imposed in the second century, in 121 (overturned in 154) and 159. See HHS 5.234; 7.299, 302, 304; 46.1560–61. Interestingly, none of these bans occurred in periods during which consort clans exerted great influence. For the potential significance of this, see the final section of this chapter.
54. HHS 26.915; Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 13.12b–13a.
55. With the exception of this memorial, little is known of Meng Bu, whose personal name is sometimes written as Xi 希. Of Zhu Feng, slightly more information survives; for details, see HHS 46.1566. Zhu Feng is also known as Dai Feng or Duo Feng (both 劉飈).
57. For general discussions of Ban Zhao’s works, see Raphals, Sharing the Light (1998): 7–8, 23, 26, 70, 107–9, 115–17, 235–36, 252–54; Swann, Food and Money (1950). For the biography of Ban Zhao, see HHS 84.2784–91.
58. For references to the empress dowager’s life and influence, as well as a description of her own mourning, see Nylan, “Golden Spindles” (2000); HS 10A.418–35; cf. “Reconstruction of Mourning Protocol” in the introduction.
59. HHS 10A.615.
60. Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齊 were two ancient sages who starved to death in order to demonstrate their loyalty to the Shang 商 dynasty (ca. 1500–ca.1045 BCE) in the face of the Zhou takeover. See SJ 61.2121–30.
61. Taibo 太伯 (also written 楚伯) was the eldest son of the Zhou ancestor, Tai-wang 太王. When Taiwang decided to pass over Taibo for succession, instead making Ji Li 季歷 (the father of King Wen 文 of Zhou) his heir, Taibo went into exile in the south and founded the state of Wu 吳.
64. HHS 84.2785.
65. Liu Kai was the great-great-grandson of Emperor Xuan (see chapter 1). For his genealogy, see HHS 39.1303.
66. HHS 39.1307.
67. HHS 39.1307.
68. No such passage exists in the extant version of the Xiaojing.
70. *HHS* 46.1560–61. The last phrase is an allusion to *Lunyu zhengyi* 17.21: 700–5. Although Chen Zhong supported Empress Dowager Deng Sui in this case, it is unclear how deep his ties to the consort clans ran. He opposed the special favor shown to the foster mother of Emperor An 安 (r. 107–126; see *HHS* 46.1562–63); furthermore, his father, Chen Chong 陳宠 (d. 106), had opposed the Dou 黃 faction at court (*HHS* 46.1543). It is possible that the Chens took the Dengs’ side in factional struggles.


72. *HHS* 62.2051.

73. For references to such passages, see chapter 1.


75. *HHS* 46.1560. For discussion of the expectation of retirement while in mourning, see “Reconstruction of Mourning Protocol” in the introduction.

76. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 5, “Jing hua 精華,” 89.

77. *HHS* 62.2051.


79. The issue of how the *Xunzi* conceives of the relationship between rituals and the patterns of the cosmos has recently emerged as a subject of some debate, which lies strictly outside the scope of this study. Some scholars (Puett 2000, Cheung 2001) have argued that the *Xunzi* sees human culture and morality as united with cosmic patterns. Others have taken a very different view. Kurtis Hagen (2000) has stated that the *Xunzi* sees the ritual order as entirely a human invention, one based solely on pragmatic considerations. Attempting to strike a balance between these views, Eric Hutton (forthcoming) most recently has asserted that the *Xunzi* sees morality and culture, including ritual forms, as human innovations that were inspired by—but ultimately distinct from—cosmic patterns.

80. Three sons who refused to observe mourning were Deng Yan 鄭寅 (fl. 58–76), Yuan Hong (see above), and Ding Hong 丁鴻 (fl. 25). See Ban et al., *Dongguan Hanji* 17.1b (cf. 33.1153), 15.1b; *HHS* 37.1263; Yuan Hong, *Hou Hanji* 13.385.

81. For a more philosophical discussion of these problems, as posed in early texts, see Zhu Fengxiang, “Zhongxiao buneng” (2003).

82. See Bielenstein, “Institutions” (1986): 288; Yang Lien-sheng, “Great Families” (1956); Yü, *Trade and Expansion* (1967); de Crespigny, “Political Protests” (1975). For a more idealized picture of court factions, and particularly the Proscription, see Kawakatsu, “Rokuchô chûki” (1987). Kawakatsu characterizes attacks on eunuchs as an expression of “Confucian” beliefs about a just and fair state, beliefs that brought together all segments of society and transcended personal and class interests.
83. For Deng Sui’s own mourning, see HHS 10A.418; for that of her relatives, see HHS 10A.615, 44.1495; cf. “Reconstruction of Mourning Protocol” in the introduction.

84. Like the Dengs, the Bans had been a consort clan at the end of the Western Han. But Ban Zhao’s brother, Ban Gu, was executed in the year 92 at the instigation of court eunuchs, after the downfall of his powerful ally, Dou Xian 賤憤. The Dous, also a consort clan, competed with the Dengs for influence at the first-century court.

85. HHS 14.858, 32.1129, 34.1180, 69.2245; Yuan Hong, Hou Hanji 11.310.

86. One of the authors of the second ban, the aforementioned Zhu Feng, had personally opposed the influence of the Yans 論, another powerful consort clan. When Emperor An acceded to the pressure of the Yan consort clan to set aside his only son and heir in 124, Zhu and twenty other high officials protested.

87. HHS 29.1023, 61.2029.

88. HHS 48.2523. For details of the case of Zhao Bao 趙苞, see HHS 81.2693.

89. LS, “Biting hou Cao Teng beiyin 費亭侯曹騰碑陰,” 15.3a; see also LS, “Zhongchangshi Fan An bei,” 6.21a. The obligation to mourn for eunuch “fathers” must have become even more important after Emperor Shun issued an edict permitting eunuchs to adopt heirs in 129. Eunuch “lines” exerted great influence and competed with other families in the Eastern Han; the military general and founder of the Wei 魏 dynasty, Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), was none other than the adopted grandson of the powerful court eunuch Cao Teng. The practice of eunuchs adopting heirs, however, predates Shun’s edict. Previously, emperors (like Emperor Shun) allowed favorite eunuchs, such as Sun Cheng 孫程, to adopt male heirs (HHS 78.2518). For edicts permitting eunuchs to adopt heirs, see HHS 6.264; for Cao Cao’s “descent” from court eunuchs, see Chen Shou, Sanguo zhi 1.1.

90. HHS 43.1470. Zhao Zhong bestowed a jade suit upon his father, an act that was illegal, as such gifts were reserved for only the highest ministers of the realm and the imperial family. For the rules on who could receive jade suits, see Brown, “Did the Ancient Chinese Preserve Corpses?” (2002b): 216.

91. Of the 173 men known to have worn mourning for blood relatives, four mourned more than one relative. Another four, whose names and ranks are unknown, wore mourning for children. In addition to these 173 men, there are eleven women known to have worn mourning and four other men who wore mourning for their wives.


94. Ibid., 239.
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104. *HS* 56.2512.


CHAPTER 3: SONS AND MOTHERS

1. *FSTY* 3.139.

2. Cao Zhi (191–232) in Shen Yue, *Songshu* 22.626, tr. Wu Hung, *Wu Liang* (1989b): 283–84. There appear to have been several competing legends about Ding Lan. The earliest may be found in fragments of the *Biographies of Filial Sons* (*Xiaozi zhuan*孝子傳), attributed to Liu Xiang (see chapter 1). See *FSTY* 3.140 n. 6 for this legend, which is quoted by Wang Liqi 王利器. In this version, Ding Lan’s veneration of his mother leads him to punish repeatedly his wife, who insults the wooden likeness. Another version of the story also survives in the Wuliang 武梁 shrine (a shrine complex with pictorial reliefs and stelae inscriptions dating to the middle of the second century), but this version seems to represent a separate tradition associated with Ding Lan’s father: the relief found in the shrine depicts Ding Lan and his wife kneeling in front of the wooden likeness of his father (see Wu Hung, *Wu Liang* (1989b): 282). The accompanying explanation, found on the cartouche, states that when neighbors came to borrow things from him, Ding Lan would make a report to the wooden image before lending anything. There is no mention of a mother, a
murder, or a miracle. Naturally, it may be questioned whether Ying Shao was referring to traditions concerning Ding Lan's veneration of his mother rather than his father. My reason for suspecting that Ying here is referring to the former has to do with the larger context in which he brings up Ding, providing complaints on two levels. On the more specific level, Ying is complaining about his contemporary, Chen Ziwei 許子威, who met an old woman of the same age and surname as his mother on the road and took her home, longing for the mother he never knew. On the more general level, he is complaining about the overemphasis on natural mothers that led many of his contemporaries to misunderstand the nature of the mother-son relationship: according to Ying, a mother was simply someone who “filled the vacancy left behind by the wife of one’s father [ji fu zhi shi zcze 父之室].”

3. *HHS* 81.2684. Unfortunately, I cannot trace this story back to an earlier source. Eastern Han sources, however, contain several accounts of the filial devotion of Li Chong 李充 (d. 125) to his mother. See Wang Wentai, *Qijia Hou Hanshu (Xie Cheng Hou Hanshu)* 6.1a; Ban Gu et al., *Dongguan Hanji* 19.27.


5. FSTY 5.231–34.

6. For a list of the sources used to generate these figures, see the appendix; this table includes accounts that cannot be traced earlier than a Six Dynasties source.


9. See *Yili zhuoshu*, “Sangfu 喪服,” 346. This passage prescribed the mourning obligations owed by the noble heir to his father, and not those all members of the political elite owed to their fathers. For the mourning obligations of ordinary men, see *Liji zhuoshu*, “Wenzhuan 同傳,” 953–56.


15. In “Fei ru 非儒” (p. 187), the Mozi xiangu complains that ru 人造 mothers and maternal relatives on par with fathers and paternal relatives in mourning—a complaint that, on the surface, suggests some discussion by ru 人造 about mothers in general. In Mozi’s view, ru 人造 undercut the hierarchical distinctions between mothers and fathers in doing so. Mozi’s complaints, however, concern only the positions of ru 人造 on mourning by nobles.

16. Detailed accounts of noble mothers are few and far between before the Qin period. The apparent lack of discussion of the differences between mothers and fathers is consistent with what some scholars have identified as a lack of notions of gender difference in early China. See Nylan, “Golden Spindles” (2000a); Raphals, *Sharing the Light* (1998): 168, 192; Goldin, *Culture of Sex* (2002).
17. *Han Feizi jijie,* “Ba Shuo” 428.
18. *Han Feizi jijie,* “Liufan” 418.

20. *Han Feizi jijie,* “Waichu shuo,” 745. The inherent closeness of fathers and sons is a recurring leitmotif in Warring States and Western Han texts. For similar conclusions, see Wang Bo, *Jianbo sixiang* (2001): 156–75. A search through the Chinese Ancient Text database (CHANT) reveals that numerous examples of this motif can be found in such sources as the *Liji zhushu; Chunqiu Guliang zhuan; Xunzi jijie; Zhanguo ce; Lushi Chunqiu jiaoshi; Lu Jia, Xinyu jiaozhu; Shuoyuan;* and *Hanshu.*


22. The above applies to all fathers except for noble fathers. Noble fathers would be both “intimate” (qin) as well as “the most revered” (zhizun).

25. See, for example, *Liji zhushu,* “Sangfu sizhi,” 1030.

29. For similar findings, see Lin, *Sangfu zhidu* (2000): 300–41, especially 301, 307. I have found only three Eastern Han examples of characterization of the father-son relationship as having the utmost closeness. See IHHS 60B.1997; Ban, *Baihutong shuzheng,* “Rui zhi 瑞毓,” 359; Huan Tan, *Xintun* 3.8.
33. *Liji zhushu,* “Biaoji 表記,” 912. As with most parts of the *Liji,* the date of this passage is difficult to determine with any certainty (see “Reconstruction of Mourning Protocol” in the introduction). My sense is that this passage is probably considerably later than the parts of the *Liji* discovered at the Guodian site, as the passage following this one invokes the Five Cycles theory to frame effective governance. Scholars (such as Dull, “Historical Introduction” (1966)) increasingly agree that the incorporation of Five Cycles theory into political discussions began in the first century BCE, and so this passage most likely dates from that century.

34. Yang Xiong, *Fayan yishu* 6.127. See also Ban, *Baihutong shuzheng,* “Sangfu,” 508, in which fathers, who are “most venerable” (zhizun), are contrasted with mothers, who are “most intimate” (zhiqin).
39. HS 69A.4047, cf. 69A.4065.
41. HS 80.3322.
42. Bielenstein, Institutions of Later Han (1986): 287.
43. HHS 7.305.
46. HHS 78.2526.
49. HHS 81.2692–93. I have not been able to trace this story back to an Eastern Han source.
51. HHS 28A.974; cf. Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 14.5a–6b (for a partial narration of the same events).
52. HHS 81.2681–82. The story dates to the Eastern Han; see Wang Wentai, Qijia Hou Hanshu (Xie Cheng Hou Hanshu) 5.15a.
53. HHS 42.1426.
54. HHS 20.1023.
57. KSS, “Xianyu Huang bei 銘於璜碑,” 2.156; cf. LX, “Sikong Kong Fu bei 司空孔扶碑,” 11.1b; LS, “Jizhou cishi Wang Chun bei 鄱州刺史王純碑,” 7.1b. There is one other stele inscription dedicated to a father; see KSS, “[…] Lin wei fu zuo feng ji […] 崇為父作封記,” 2.144.
59. LX, “Fengqiu ling Wang Yuanbin bei 封丘令王元賓碑,” 19.2b. According to Huang Gongzhu (1966: 82 n. 7), this would have been the capping at the age of twelve sui (thirteen by Western reckoning).
60. A disciple of Confucius; see Han Ying, Hanshi waizhuan 9.2a.
61. LS, “Boling taishou Kong Biao bei 博陵太守孔彪碑,” 8.15a. Also see LS, “Silixiaowei Lu Jun bei 司隸校尉魯峻碑,” 9.4b. For a very similar example, see CZLJ, “Chen Taiqiu bei 陳太丘碑,” 2.8b.
62. LS, “Bitinghou Cao Teng beiyin 貢亭侯曹騰碑陰,” 15.3b; cf. chapter 2.
63. CZLJ, “Situ Yuan gong furen Ma shi beiming 司徒袁公夫人馬氏碑銘,” 6.5b–6b.
64. Here I follow the Sibu beiyao editors (CZLJ 6.8a) in reading cu 行 (to go) for heng 行.


66. For Cai Yong, see HHS 60B.1980; for Chen Fan, see HHS 66.2159; for Yuan Shao, see HHS 74A.2373 (cf. chapter 2); for Fan Ran, see HHS 81.2689, and CZLJ 2.13b–15b.

67. Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 21.6a.

68. HHS 39.1302, 29.1313.

69. HHS 41.1407; Yuan Hong, Hou Hanji 1.255. See also the biography of Lu Xu 陸贄. According to Xie Cheng and Fan Ye, Lu recognized some food that his mother had prepared for him without his knowledge while he was in prison. His closeness to his mother impressed his jailer so much that he was released; see Wang Wentai, Qiji Hou Han Shu (Xie Cheng Hou Han Shu) 6.15b; HHS 81.2682–83.

70. HS 68.2959–60. See also Wang Chong, Lunheng jiaoshi 3.698. For various versions of this story, see Wu Hung, Wu Liang Shrine (1989b): 297–98.

71. HHS 69.2245.

72. Wang Wentai, Qiji Hou Han Shu (Xie Cheng Hou Han Shu) 4.9b–10. For the story of Jia Shu’s conversion, see the fragment from Xie Cheng’s Hou Han Shu quoted in Yu Yin’s Tongxingming lu 3.9a. For similar accounts, see HHS 58.2229–30; Huangfu Mi, Gaoshi zhu Bian 110A.


74. Ibid., 12–13, 102, 106, 181, 206.

75. I cannot trace this tale back to an earlier source. A similar story, which incorporates many of the same miraculous elements, survives for Gu Chu 古初 in Ban et al., Dongguan Hanji. This is the only miracle story I know involving mourning for a father in the Eastern Han; see Dongguan Hanji 16.21b–22a. For Eastern Han tales of Cai Shun’s devotion to his mother, see Dongguan Hanji 16.22a–b.

76. HHS 29.1312.

77. Wang Wentai, Qiji Hou Han Shu (Xie Cheng Hou Han Shu) 7.16a: 195.

78. According Sun Rouzhi 孫柔之, the sixth-century author of Diagram of Auspicious Omens (Ruiyingtu 瑞應圖), a phoenix is an auspicious omen that appears when familial relations are properly ordered. See HHS 3.152 n. 1.

79. According to Wu Hung (1989b: 240), intertwining trees were an auspicious sign and a symbol of pure and harmonious virtue.

80. HHS 60B.1980. I cannot trace this story back to an Eastern Han source; a very similar tale of filial devotion shown by a small boy to his mother is found in Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 19.14a.

81. For another case of an unusually empathetic son, see the biography of Jia Kui 賈逵 in HHS 36.1240.
82. According to Wu Hung (1989b: 276), the earliest version of this story dates to the Eastern Han. A pictorial representation of the story (or one of its variants) is also found in the mid-second-century Wu Liang Shrines.


85. The earliest proponent of the mature theory of response that we see in Wang Chong’s story of Zengzi appears to have been Jing Fang (77–37 BCE), an expert on the Book of Changes (Yijing; dates unknown) who used omens to criticize the emperor’s patronage of a eunuch. See de Crespigny, “Political Protest” (1975), Dull, “Historical Introduction” (1966).


87. This has been suggested by Wilt Idema in conversation.

88. According to James Lee (private communication, 4/18/04), the overall life expectancy for a woman was lower than that for a man in premodern China. For a woman, the average life expectancy was twenty to twenty-seven; for a man, it was twenty-five to thirty. Members of the elite, furthermore, tended to live shorter lives than peasants for a variety of reasons, such as greater mobility and a propensity to live in urban centers. If a woman survived to the age of twenty, she could expect to live another thirty-four years (compared with another thirty-six years for a man); if she lived to thirty, she could expect to live another twenty-nine years (compared with at least this number for a man).

89. See Kinney, Representations of Childhood (2004): 32–52. For examples of children and youths mourning their fathers, see HHS 21.564, 29.1032, 31.1107–8, 55.1807, 70.2262; LX 19.2b. For mourning of mothers, see HHS 20.741–42, 29.1023, 60B.1980, 80.2613, 81.2671, 83.2773; Chen Shou, Sanguo zhi 11.345, 27.748. For mourning of both parents, see HHS 53.1748, 1759; Yuan Hong, Hou Hanji 10.285; Sanguo zhi 11.358.

90. HHS 41.1407, 26.915; cf. Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 13.14a. For two additional cases of delayed mourning, see HHS 31.1107; FSTY 5.218–19.

91. HHS 74A.2373, 12.1426; cf. chapter 2.


94. HHS 68.2226.

95. See HHS 39.1302 (Jiang Ge), 39.1311 (Zhou Pan 卓磐), 67.2191 (Li Ying 李興); LS 11.19b; cf. KSS 2.172. See Yuan, Hou Hanji 11.299, for a son who refused to serve in order to fulfill his ritual obligations to his mother. For an inscription lamenting that military duties took a man away from his mother’s deathbed, see the Introduction; CZLJ, “Yilang Hu gong furen aizan,” 4.15a–17a; Brown, “Mothers and Sons,” (2003): 157–59. For a purported conversation between Fan Pang and his mother, which touches upon many of the same themes, see HHS 67.2207. For the case of a son who left his post because of his parents’ advanced age, see HHS 79B.2584. To the best of my knowledge, there is no record in HHS of a son refusing office or quitting his post on account of his father alone.

96. For statistics on the number of people affected by the Proscription, see de Crespigny, “Political Protest” (1975): 34. For its effects on morale, see the same article,

CHAPTER 4: FRIENDS OR SUBORDINATES?


4. Of these, twelve stelae were erected by children, and two by adopted heirs. In addition, in six cases (or approximately 7 percent), family members and nonrelatives commissioned the inscriptions jointly. I have included these examples in the total number of inscriptions commissioned by relatives.

5. *OXYQ* (*figulu*) 136.2144.


10. For more information about the inscription dedicated to the Chancellor of Beihai, see chapter 3. For an ambiguous case, see *KSS*, “Pan Qian bei 潘乾碑,” 2.233; cf. Wu Yujin, *Jinshicun* 9.32–37. For the circumstances surrounding the discovery of the latter stede during the Shaoxing reign (1131–1163), see Li Guangying, *Jinshi-wen kaolüe* 2.36a–37b. In this stede inscription, dedicated to Pan Qian, no mention is made of when and where the dedicatee died; therefore some debate exists as to whether this was a funerary stede, or a stede erected during Pan’s lifetime. Although these circumstances are not common among extant Han funerary inscriptions (as a number of epigraphy experts point out), the Pan Qian inscription—if it is indeed funerary—is not unique in this regard. For a list of such inscriptions compiled by Feng Fang (fl. ca. 1523), including the Pan Qian inscription, see Yuan, *Qin Han beishu* (1990): 475. One factor does support the view that the inscription was indeed commissioned after Pan had died. The first line of the inscription refers to the text as a lei or eulogy, which, according to the *Explication of Names* (*Shiming*; ca. 200) by Liu Xi, usually referred to texts written for the dead (see Gao 1993: 448).

11. For clear examples of such cases in funerary inscriptions, see KSS, “Kong Biao bei 孔彪碑,” 2.192; LS, “Guiyang taishou Zhou Jing gongxun ming 桂陽太守周景功勛名,” 4.16b–17b. For another example, see LS, “Yang Tong beiyin 楊統碑陰,” 7.17b–18a.


13. *LS*, “Liangzhou cishi Wei Yuanpi beiyin 涼州刺史魏元丕碑陰,” 10.19a–b; cf. Weng Fanggang, *Liang Han jinsi ji* 16.1a–5a. Regional Inspectors were at the salary
rank of six hundred bushels. For the ranks of various offices in the Han, see Yu Lunian, Zhongguo guan zhi (1992).

14. See also LX, “Danyang taishou Guo Min bei 丹陽太守郭旻碑,” 3.3a, 19.1b. For a similar example of an inscription that mentions a donor of equal rank, see LS, “Zhao xiang Yong Quan beiyin 趙相雍泉碑,” 12.12b. In the case of Yong Quan, he was ranked at two thousand bushels as a Chancellor; one of his donors was a Grand Administrator, also ranked at two thousand bushels. For a donor list that includes men who were not current office holders, see LS, “Qin Jie beiyin 秦繼碑陰,” 17.6b–8a.


17. Wu Hung, Monumentality in Early Chinese Art (1995b): 218. Both Xun Shu and Chen Shi, like Han Shao (mentioned below), only reached the rank of Magistrate; see HHS 76.2458.

18. HHS 62.2063.


22. Xu Gan, Zhonglun 12.9b (236).


24. Here I follow Hong Kuo in reading the interrogative he 何 (what) for he 河.

25. Again I follow Hong Kuo in reading ganji 感激 (to be moved, roused) for ganji 感激.


29. See Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 1.13a; HHS 54.1766, 57.1860; Wang Can, Wang Can ji (Yingxiong ji 英雄記) 7a; Du You, Tongdian 68.1894.


32. LS, “Qingyi wei Zhao jun yangdou daobei 青衣尉趙君羊道碑,” 4.2b–3b.

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34. Zhao Mingcheng, 《jinsbili》 18.5a; cf. chapter 2.

35. For the rules governing who was eligible to nominate others for office, see Houn, “Civil Service Recruitment” (1966): 139–46; Yang Lien-sheng, “Donghan de haozou” (1936): 1031–32; Yan Buke, 《Chaju zhida》 (1991): 1–40. For an analogous case, see LX, “Zheng Jixuan beiyin 鄂季宣碑陰,” 19.7a, in which one of the donors is referred to as a “Former Filial and Incorrupt nominee 《gu xiaolian》.” As the dedicatee’s final post in this case was Magistrate of Weishi—too low in the hierarchy to make such a recommendation—this donor clearly could not have been the deceased’s own “Filial and Incorrupt” nominee.


39. See LS 9.4a, where Hong glosses the term as “wugu zhi min” (a commoner who has passed away); the header of the stele in this case referred to the deceased dedicatee as the “Former commoner Wu Zhongshan 《gumin Wu Zhongshan》; d. ca. 172.” For gumin as a synonym of chushi or yishi, see Morohashi, 《Dai Kan-W a jiten》 (1984): 13161/222.


41. KSS, “Xixia song moya 西夏題摩崖,” 2.186.

42. LX, “Liu Kuan beiyin guli ming 劉見碑陰故吏名,” 12.17a. For Ying Shao’s biography, see HHS 48.1610; for Liu Kuan’s career history, see LS 11.a.


44. For evidence that the category of senior officers (zhangli) could also include officials of the rank of two thousand bushels in Han sources, see discussion of the Yinwan materials in Liao, 《jiandu yu zhidu》 (1998): 90–97; for a different view, see Zhang Hequan, “Dong Han” (1995): 104.

45. HS 7.221 n. 1; cf. Du, 《Tongjian》 2.40. For three further examples of guli as former officers, see Ban Gu et al., 《Dongguan Hanji》 3.2a, 8.3b; CZLJ, “You Ji erzhou cishi 南郡二州刺史久缺疏,” 7.4a.


47. For guxiaoli故吏, see LX, “Beihai xiang Jing jun beiyin 北海相景君碑陰,” 16.3b–8a; cf. KSS 2.90. For several examples of zhubi 主吏, see LX, “Yan Ju beiyin 嚴舉
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For an example of *juli* 哀史, see LX, “Juli Zhang Xuan canbei timing 哀史张玄殡碑文,” 2.3b–4a.


51. The meaning of this phrase is unclear to me.

52. I follow Hong Kuo in reading *ji* 史 as a graphic variant of *ji* 年 (year).

53. *LS*, “Xiaolian Liu Min bei 孝廉柳敏碑,” 8.8b; for discussion of the current stele, which apparently was recarved with many errors sometime between the Song and Qing dynasties, after Hong Kuo transcribed the inscription, see Wu, *Jinsibian* 2.75–79; Yuan, *Qin Han beishu* (1990): 343; Brown, “Wu Stelae in Context” (2005).


55. *CZLJ*, “Runan Zhou Jusheng beiwen 汝南周巨勝碑文,” 2.9a–11a. For details of Zhou’s life, see *HHS* 61.1689.


59. I read *liao* 僚 here as a graphic variant of *liao* 僚 (comrades).

60. I read *qi* 堅 for *qi* 堅 (family) here due to parallelism.

61. *LS*, “Xiaohuangmen Qiao Min bei 小黃門趙敏碑,” 11.7a; Weng, *Li Han jinshi ji* 16.11b; *OYXQJ (Jigula)* 5/136.2147. For another example of an inscription commissioned by comrades, relatives, and followers, see *CZLJ*, “Xuanwen xiansheng Li Zicai ming 玄文先生李子材銘,” 2.16b–17a.

62. I follow Hong Kuo in reading *tsu* 士 as a graphic error for *shi* 士 (gentlemen).

63. Huang Gongzhu (1966: 136 n. 24) interprets *xuanyin* 玄陰 as a metaphor for the tomb.
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64. I follow Huang Gongzhu (1966: 136 n. 15) in reading *bi* as a phonetic loan for *bi Ṃ* (completely).

65. I read *gengjing* as a graphic variant of *xingjing* (form and image).


69. For Wang Fu’s complaints, see Qianfu lun qian jiaozheng 30.334; for Cai Yong’s complaints, see HHS 43.1475–76; for Xu Gan’s complaints, see Zhonglun 12A.

70. FSTY 3.147.


74. KSS, “Beihai xiang bei,” 2.88.

75. FSTY 3.141.

76. There is another possible exception. In his notes to the inscription commissioned for Wang Yuanshang 王元賞 (or Wang Yuanbin; see chapter 3), Zhao Mingcheng (Jinshilu 15.7a–b) complains that a handful of the *mensheng* of the deceased, six in total, wore three years mourning (*zhancui*) for the deceased. Since Zhao did not quote the inscription, and we have no outside confirmation, it is unclear how literally to interpret his remarks. In other words, this leaves the question of whether the eulogist actually wrote that the *mensheng* wore *zhancui* for three years, or whether Zhao (like modern scholars) simply assumed that because the eulogist mentioned three years mourning, the mourners must have worn *zhancui*.

77. FSTY 3.151. The rules of mourning are laid out in the “Sangfu” chapter of *Yili zhushu*, cf. Lai, “Diagram of Mourning System” (2003) (especially Figure 3).

78. FSTY 3.147; HHS 62.2057. By all accounts, sons wore hemmed-sleeve mourning garments for three years exclusively for their mothers. Hemmed-sleeve mourning garments were worn for paternal grandparents as well, but for a much shorter period of time.

79. HHS 52.2051, 2057; cf. chapter 2.

80. For further examples, see HHS 37.1258, 51.1683; cf. Ban Gu et al., Dongguan Hanji 16.9a; HHS 60B.2006, 81.2168.

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82. CZLJ, “Chen Taiqiu bei 陳太丘碑,” 2.7b; HHS 52.2065; cf. Powers, Art and Political Expression (1991): 97; Wu Hung, Monumentality in Early Chinese Art (1995b): 218. Han Rong was the son of the aforementioned Han Shao and an important official with ties to court critics during the reign of Emperor Huan (see chapter 3). Three further examples can be found; see HHS 62.2066, 68.2226, 81.2680.

83. FSTY 3.147.

84. Wang Fu, Qianfu lun qian jiaozheng 30.349; for another reference to friendship (you 友) as incurring bonds of gratitude (en), see HHS 80B.2628.

85. FSTY 3.147. Ying Shao also described the relationship between Huang and Wu as consisting of a bond of gratitude (en); see FSTY 3.166. For another discussion of the passage, see Nylan, “Confucian Piety” (1996): 17. For further descriptions of the bond between friends (guren) as “personal” (si) and intimate (qin).

86. Yili zhushu, “Sangfu,” 397. For discussion of the term en, see chapter 3. See also Yan Buke, Yueshi yu shiguan (2001): 220–21, in which Yan also concludes that Eastern Han political allies and friends saw their relationship as being personal (si) and intimate (qin).

87. HHS 66.2171; cf. chapter 3.

88. HHS 63.2088–89.

89. HHS 56.1819.

90. HHS 81.2676–77; cf. Wang Wentai, Qijia Hou Hanshu (Xie Cheng Hou Hanshu) 5.12a/159. Compare also with the tale of Chen Pingzi 陳平子 (HHS 81.2678). Hong Kuo transcribed inscriptions dedicated to Fan Shi commissioned in the first half of the third century; see LS, “Fan Shi bei 潘氏碑,” 19.16b–18b. Hong also notes another inscription commissioned for Fan that discusses his friendship with both Zhang Shao and Chen; for details, see LS, “Fan Juqing bei 潘巨卿碑,” 20.5a. For another story of friendly devotion involving the scholar Ren Mo 任末, see HHS 79.2572.

91. Hymes (forthcoming), 120–21.


CHAPTER 5: LOYAL MINISTERS, RECLUSES AND POPULAR HEROES


7. I gloss zhongben 忠臣 as “conscientious minister,” as opposed to the more common “loyal minister.” I thus follow Kwong-loi Shun (2005) in interpreting zhong 忠 as a general term that refers to individuals who fully exert themselves in carrying out their responsibilities, rather than as a term that describes those who are loyal to a specific lord.


9. CZLJ, “Hu gong bei 胡公碑,” 4.6a; see also LS, “Biting hou Cao Teng beiyin 貝亭侯曹騰碑陰,” 15.3b; cf. HH5 78.2519–20.

10. HH5 31.1111. Evidence from HH5 suggests that the Eastern Han court was in the habit of making gifts to individuals who were either officials below the rank of two thousand bushels, or individuals with no rank at all. Typical gifts included bestowals of imperial seals, stamps, posthumous titles, grain, jugs of wine, land for the grave, spirit vessels, chariot escorts, silk shrouds, and wood for the outer coffin. HH5 notes eighty-three recorded bestowals to such individuals beyond mere cash grants. For a complete list of these individuals and their ranks, see Brown, “Men in Mourning,” (2002a): 309–11. Such bestowals might have represented an effort on the part of the court—as identified by Masubuchi Tatsuo (1996)—to extend its reach into local society and bring powerful (and potentially threatening) local families into the imperial fold.

11. CZLJ, “Junyuanli Zhang Xuan citang beiming 郡掾吏張玄祠堂碑銘,” 6.3a. For similar themes, see LX, “Chushi Yan Fa canbei 第士燕發碑,” 1.11a–b; KSS, “Ziyou 嗣友碑,” 2.50.


14. The meaning of this line is ambiguous. Here, I follow Nagata (KSS 1.205 n. 6) in glossing ying 聰 as rong 懂, which carries the meaning of being deluded (mihuo 迷惑). This is not the only possible reading; ying also can mean “to do,” and thus the line may also be read, “He could not be made to serve by official stipends.”

15. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.205) here in reading 拷 as fa 髮 (hair).


17. Allusion to Lunyu zengyi 5.17: 189.

18. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.205 n. 15) in reading 併 as Ju 濯 (a personal name).
19. Allusion to Lunyu zhengyi 18.6: 720.
20. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.206 n. 18) in reading yi (hidden).
21. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.206 n. 19) in reading the first of two missing characters as chi (hidden); the second is probably a graphic variant of qi (hidden). Together, I take them to mean something like “to relax.” A similar phrase appears in LS, “Tangyi ling Bi Feng bei 堂邑令費鳳碑,” 9.18b.
23. Allusion to Lunyu zhengyi 1.1: 3.
25. The graphs at the beginning of this line are difficult to decipher and transcribe. I read the first as a graphic variant of li (sticky), and thus as a reference to glutinous grains. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.206 n. 28) in interpreting the second graph, da 犬, which he glosses as “adzuki bean.”
26. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.207 n. 31) in interpreting que 植 as que 砦 (truly).
27. This character is difficult to infer; it is perhaps a phonetic loan for dang 鬆 (faction, local area).
28. Some debate exists as to how to read this line. Gao Wen (1993: 412) takes chungqiu 春秋 as the title of the classic; Nagata (KSS 1.204) appears to read chungqiu more literally as “the years.” If we follow Nagata’s gloss, then the line should read, “Over the years, he became excellent.” Unfortunately, there is insufficient context to determine which reading is best.
29. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.207 n. 39) in reading bei 哪 as a graphic variant of mo 默 (silence).
30. I read chun 醇 here as a graphic variant of chun 湖 (pure).
32. Zhouyi zhengyi, “Xici 轼,” 82.
33. HHS 62.2066; cf. chapter 2.
34. CZLJ, “Wenfán xiànshèng Chen Zhonggong ming 文範先生陳仲弓銘,” 2.4a.
36. CZLJ, “Chen Taiqiu bei,” 2.5b.
37. For the dichotomy between political engagement and reclusion, see Vervoorn, Men of the Cliffs (1990), Berkowitz, Patterns of Disengagement (2000).
38. For arguments that anticipate mine, see Powers, Art and Political Expression (1991): 94 (arguing that court and state were separate in Han China). For a classical formulation of political engagement outside official channels and within the community, see Hymes, Statesmen and Gentlemen (1986); for variations on the same theme, see the articles in Schirokauer and Hymes, Ordering the World (1993).
39. The Pan Qian inscription (discussed below) is not the only Han text that emphasizes the importance of local service. Notably, Cui Shi’s Monthly Instructions for the Four Classes of People also stresses this. For a discussion of its contents and context, see Ebrey, “Estate and Family Management” (1974).
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43. For critiques of evolutionism within sinology, see Brown, “Neither ‘Primitive’” (2006).

44. *KSS*, “Kong Zhou beiyin,” 2.150.


46. I follow Nagata (*KSS* 1.241) in reading *gu* 客 as a graphic variant of *Gu* 客 (a personal name). Gu Zhu 孤竹 was a Shang prince who relinquished his position; see Ying Shao’s note in S/4.115 n. 3.

47. Gongyi Xiu 公儀休 was a Prime Minister (zhengxiang) of the Warring States kingdom of Lu 鲁 who was renowned for his commitment to upholding the legal codes. See S/119.3101.

48. Qizhou 車周 was the state where the ancient Western Zhou court was situated.


50. I read *zhengyao* 正嬴 here as a graphic variant of *zhengyao* 征嬴 (taxes and corvée).

51. The meaning of this line is somewhat ambiguous; I read *ze* 徵 as “to require, demand,” and *bi* 取 as “to take completely.” Another possible reading, suggested by Luo Shaodan (private communication, 9/17/04), is that *bu* 不 should be read as a graphic variant of *pi* 牌; and that *ze* 徵 should be read as graphic variant of *zhai* 擻. The line would then read something like, “he completely took upon himself the debt.”


53. The meaning of *chao* 朝 (regional courts), unlike that of *chaoting* 朝庭 (dynastic or imperial court), is somewhat ambiguous. To be sure, *chao* can refer to the imperial court, but it also has the extended meaning of the bureaucratic offices in the provinces. See Yan Gengwang, *Zhongguo difang* (1961): 77; Gu Yanwu, *Rizhilu jishi*, 1086–87.


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59. The reference to the “hundred surnames” here is ambiguous. It could refer to the commoners, the hundred clans, or the peers of the deceased.

60. CZLJ (waiji), “Zhai xiansheng bei 崇先生碑,” 1.3a.

61. Shangshu zhengyi 3.11a. The date of this work is controversial.


64. Although the graph resembles qi (to abandon), the context of the passage suggests that it should be read instead as sang (mulberry).


66. I read duanduan 端端 as a graphic variant of zhuizhui 聖顇 (shaking with dread).


69. For other examples of this trope, see LS, “Beihai xiang bei 北海相碑,” 6.9b; LS, “Suimin xiaowei Xiong Jun bei 從民校尉熊君碑,” 11.15a–b; LX, “Zhu zhang Yan Xin bei 祝張燕新碑,” 3.6a.


71. LS, “Anping xiang Sun Gen bei,” 10.10b–17b; Ye, Han Wei shike (1997): 706. As Brashier (1997: 181) notes, the reverse of the stele appears to date from the Six Dynasties, as the official titles of the donors postdate the fall of the Eastern Han. While Brashier is suspicious of the discrepancy between the date given for the erection of the stele and the probable date of the reverse, I see no reason to question the authenticity of the entire inscription per se. The donor list could have been carved at a later date, either on the original stone or on a separate surface. Alternatively, the donor list could have been added later to a recut stele inscription. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in a number of cases, the content of an inscription was subject to later modification. For another example in which the mourning of the local population serves as the focus of the inscription, see LS, “Waihuang ling Gao Biao bei,” 10.25a; cf. HHS 80B.2649–50.
72. I follow Nagata (KSS 1.157) in reading ershu 翳書 as a graphic variant of xishu 額書 (documents with the imperial seal).

73. KSS, “Yang Zhen bei,” 2.174; cf. HHS 54.1768. For Xia Cheng’s early-third-century account, see HHS 54.1768; cf. Wang Wentai, Qijia Hou Hanshu (Xie Cheng Hou Hanshu) 3.5a. Yang Zhen’s original stele dates to 168. For a general overview of the history of the Yang cemetery and stelae, see Candace Lewis, “Pottery Towers” (1999): 234–45; Brown, “Wu Stelae in Context” (2005). For problems with rubbings made from this stele, which some claim could not have been made from the original, see Yuan, Qin Han beishu (1990): 343. For two other inscriptions that make descriptions of the populace in mourning the focus of attention (as opposed to loyal service to the dynasty, which is dealt one or two lines), see LS, “Guanghan shuguo hou Li Yi bei,” 9.7a; LS, “Fanyang ling Yang Jun bei,” 9.12b.

74. LS, “Yang Zhen beiyin 舜震碑陰,” 12.6a. See Hong’s note, which reveals that none of the more than 190 donors had official titles.

75. Hymes, Statesmen and Gentlemen (1986).


78. KSS, “Kong Biao bei 孔彪碑,” 2.192.

79. This was suggested to me by William H. Baxter (personal communication, 9/2004).

80. For Lu Zhi’s connection to the Proscription, see HHS 64.2117; for Zhang Sheng, see HHS 80B.2627; for Huangfu Gui, see HHS 65.2136.

81. HHS 54.1779.


83. For a discussion about the trustworthiness of the time distribution of extant stelae and funerary stelae, see chapter 2.

84. For the state of the bureaucracy during the Proscription, see Mansvelt-Beck, “Fall of Han” (1986): 330–34; for the fate of local networks during the Proscription, see Ebrey, “Patron-Client Relations” (1983): 535, 540–41. Also see Liao, Jiandu yu zhidu (1998) for the importance of local appointments as a first step into commissioned office.

85. For the importance of personal morality, rather than one’s relationship to the dynasty, see de Crespigny, “Politics and Philosophy” (1980): 53.

86. de Crespigny, “Political Protest” (1975): 34; cf. HHS 67.2188. For helping me to reconsider—and avoid overly simplistic explanations of—the connection between the Proscriptions and the content of stelae, I am grateful to Rafe de Crespigny.


89. Zhangwu ce 11.1a–2b.

90. See chapter 2. For arguments concerning the origins of commissioned officials, see Liao, Jiandu yu zhidu (1998): 42.
91. For the distinction between commissioned and noncommissioned officials, see ibid. (1998): 3; Yan Gengwang, Zhongguo difang (1961): 51. For exceptions to the practice of appointing local men as staff, see ibid. (1961): 352–53.


93. For these themes in the Six Dynasties, see Tanigawa, Medieval Chinese Society (1985). For the role of writing in creating a parallel textual empire, see Mark Lewis, Writing and Authority (1999).

94. This has been suggested by Yu Xie (personal communication, 10/7/2004).

95. The phrase is from KSS, “Zhao Kuan bei,” 2.226.

96. HHS 62.2063; cf. chapter 4.

EPILOGUE: THE SONG REDISCOVERY OF THE HAN


OYXQJ (Jigulu) 142.2283.

1. For the time distribution of Han inscriptions, see chapter 2, figure 2.1; for inscriptions from the Wei and Jin periods that were known to Yang, see Yang Dianxun, Shike tiba suoyin (1957): 25–30.


3. For bans on stelae issued in the third and fifth centuries, see Wong, Chinese Steles (2004): 34.


5. De Pee (forthcoming), 78.

6. Ibid., 50, 78.


9. OYXQJ (Jigulu) 136.2134.


11. OYXQJ (Jigulu) 138.2180; cf. 137.2173, 2174.

12. OYXQJ (Jigulu) 142.2289; cf. 141.2256, 2278.

13. OYXQJ (Jigulu) 135.2094; cf. 135.2101; 136.2127, 2130, 2132.

14. OXYQJ (Jigulu) 135.2114.

15. OXYQJ (Jigulu) 135.2109.

16. OXYQJ (Jigulu) 134.2062.

17. There are eighty-eight inscriptions for the Eastern Han and forty-three dating from the fall of the Han to the Sui unification of 581 in the Record of Collecting Antiquities. See the table of contents in OXYQJ 222–33.


27. De Pee (forthcoming), 52.


29. De Pee (forthcoming), 52.


32. *OYXQJ*, “Shangshu jiabu yuanwailang zhishi Xue jun muzhiming 尙書駕部員外郎元慰郞知事薛君墓誌銘,” 34.509.

33. Ibid., 34.509. For a discussion of local academies in the Song, see Hymes, “Lu Chiu-yuan” (1989).


41. Ibid., 86–87, 156, 418, 424.

42. Hymes (forthcoming), 117.
43. For the classic iteration of this view, see Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen* (1986) and forthcoming. See also Schirokauer and Hymes, *Ordering the World* (1993).
51. Yang Wanli, *Chengzhai ji* 73.6a–b; cf., “Cult of Worthies” (1993): 126. Of course, the practice of commemorating local heroes for their service to the population and revering them as models of ethical conduct did not end with the Southern Song. Although the phenomenon in late imperial China has yet to be studied systematically, anecdotal evidence attests to the longevity of the practice of enshrining provincial administrators. See Will 1990: 93.
52. *CZLJ,* “Guo Youdao Taiyuan Guo Linzong bei,” 2.2b; cf. *CZLJ,* “Junyuanli Zhang Xuan citang beiming,” 6.3b; *KSS,* “Meng Xuan canbei,” 2.266.

**APPENDIX**

3. For the textual history of Hong’s collections, see Nylan, “Addicted to Antiquity” (2005), Cary Liu, “‘Wu Family Shrines’” (2005).
5. For further details, see Hu, “Note on Ch’üan Tsu-Wang” (1943–1944): 970.
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*FSTY:* See Ying Shao, *Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu.*


*HHS:* See Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu.*


*HS:* See Ban Gu, *Hanshu.*


*KSS:* See Nagata Hidemasa, *Kandai sekkoku shûsei* in next section.


*Liji zhushu* 利記注疏. Shisanjing zhushu.  

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*LS:* See Hong Kuo, *Lishi.*


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The Politics of Mourning in Early China reevaluates the longstanding assumptions about early imperial political culture. According to most explanations, filial piety served as the linchpin of the social and political order, as all political relations were a seamless extension of the relationship between father and son—a relationship that was hierarchical, paternalistic, and personal. Offering a new perspective on the mourning practices and funerary monuments of the Han dynasty, Miranda Brown asks whether the early imperial elite did in fact imagine political participation solely along the lines of the father-son relationship or whether there were alternative visions of political association. The early imperial elite held remarkably varied and contradictory beliefs about political life, and they had multiple templates and changing scripts for political action. This book documents and explains such diversity and variation and shows that the Han dynasty practice of mourning expressed many visions of political life, visions that left lasting legacies.

“Brown’s book is a careful study that masterfully engages its sources: commemorative inscriptions of the Eastern Han dynasty. Not content to accept previous generalizations about these sources, she rereads them with a critical eye and shows that Eastern Han men had a much broader conception of political association and service than previously thought. By looking closely at Eastern Han epitaphs and not being beholden to any previous assumptions about them, Brown successfully throws doubt on many conventional explanations of these documents.”

— Keith Nathaniel Knapp, author of Selfless Offspring: Filial Children and Social Order in Medieval China

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A volume in the SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture

Roger T. Ames, editor

State University of New York Press
www.sunypress.edu