

Rulership and Kinship: the *Shangshu dazhuan*'s Discourse on Lords

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In this paper I examine the *Shangshu dazhuan*'s 尚書大傳 (*Great Commentary to the Shangshu*) discourse on Lords (zhuhou 諸侯).¹ Lords can be loosely defined as a group of hereditary and semi-autonomous rulers who, *in lieu* of the Son-of-Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), ruled over a potentially large swath of territory. By late Eastern Zhou times the Lords, while given credit for helping the early Western Zhou kings rule over outlying areas, were also widely regarded as having caused the collapse of the Zhou order, and were assigned responsibility for the strife and increasingly brutal warfare that followed. The *Shangshu dazhuan*, as an early imperial text, demonstrates the importance of the Lords for the ritual and political order. It does so at a time when some blamed the hereditary Lords for the chaos of the pre-unification period, and others debated how to check their power and influence, especially after the Han dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) reinstated them (zhuhouwang 諸侯王). The *Shangshu dazhuan* builds its case through a commentary on the *Shu* 書 (*Documents*), a collection of historical documents purportedly composed by the sage kings of the past. Even though the *Documents* had attained canonical status well before imperial times, exactly which documents properly belonged to the collection – by Han times usually referred to as *Shangshu* 尚書 (“Supreme Documents”) – was being discussed all through Han times and beyond.²

Some of the arguments the *Shangshu dazhuan* makes in favor of the institution are intrinsically quite interesting, and, in some instances, unique to the text. However, my examination also has two wider goals. First, I would like to show, through a rhetorical analysis of the commentarial modes the text employs in its discourse on the zhuhou, that the *Shangshu dazhuan*, as the earliest known commentary to the *Shangshu*, exhibits features quite different from those usually associated with Han commentaries. Indeed, the discourse on the zhuhou in *Shangshu dazhuan* reveals the presence behind the text of a Master who is intent on using the *Shangshu* to stake out a coherent political vision and does not slavishly subject himself either to the canonical text or to his political superiors. Second, I would like to show that the *Shangshu dazhuan*'s discourse on the zhuhou might, contrary to what is commonly thought, well fit the context of early post-unification Qin 秦.

The *Shangshu dazhuan*, in recent times, has not been the subject of much concentrated study. Whereas scholars might use a fragment of the text to substantiate a point that they are making

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1 When I capitalize the word “Lords” in this article, I am referring to the zhuhou, uncapitalized “lords” refers to hou or related terms.

2 Liu Qiyu 劉起鈞, *Shangshu xueshi* 尚書學史 (Beijing, 1989 (1996)), Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Shang shu 尚書 (Shu ching 書經),” in *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Michael Loewe (Berkeley, 1993).

about one or other specific topic, or might mention the text in monographs on the early history of *Shangshu* scholarship, there are virtually no studies devoted to this text.³ This lack of attention to the text as a whole can be attributed, in part, to its fragmentary nature: current editions of the *Shangshu dazhuan* are all reconstitutions by Qing 清 scholars, who painstakingly collected and ordered quotations from the text in a wide variety of sources.⁴ Moreover, scholars have long recognized that the *Shangshu dazhuan* is a multi-layered text, one that probably was not committed to writing by the early Han master Fu Sheng, but by several generations of his disciples.⁵ Nonetheless, that the *Shangshu dazhuan* was recognized, at least from the later Han dynasty through to Song 宋 times, as an important, authoritative document is demonstrated by the fact that Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (125–200), the most influential of all Han commentators, composed a commentary to the text, as well as by the numerous quotations from the *Shangshu dazhuan* in various textual genres from that period. I will seek to demonstrate, by examining the text's discourse on the Lords, that the *Shangshu dazhuan*, indeed, can provide an important window into the period in which imperial institutions were formed and refined.

Some Notes on the Term *zhubou*

The *Shangshu dazhuan* never provides a definition of the term *zhubou*, but uses it in a way that is consistent with other pre-imperial and early imperial sources. The term, although apparently a collective term for all kinds and types of dependent rulers,⁶ nonetheless excludes some such rulers, designating only those lords who (1) were members of the same cultural and social group as the central ruler (i.e., excluding those identified as cultural others); (2) ruled over a significant swath of territory, often far removed from the center, with a relatively high degree of autonomy. Generally speaking, *zhubou* received their land and appointments because of a relation of special trust – often based on close kinship – that existed between the central ruler and themselves, this relation of trust tended to erode as the Lords passed on their land and title to their descendants.

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- 3 The editors of the *Siku da cidian* 四庫大辭典 put it as follows: “The book preserves a great number of ancient teachings and old doctrines and therefore has definite value for research into the *Shangshu*, and into ancient history, philology, and philosophy.” *Siku da cidian*, ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤, et al., 2 vols. (Changchun, 1996).
- 4 According to *Siku da cidian*, 134, the first such scholar was Sun Zhilu 孫之騶 (fl. 1723–1736), but the names and texts of several other scholars have been preserved. The most encompassing reconstitutions of and commentaries to the *Shangshu dazhuan* are those by Chen Shouqi 陳壽祺 (1771–1834; *Shangshu dazhuan jijiao* 尚書大傳輯校, in *Huang Qing jingjie xubian* 皇清經解續編, vol. 6, 4113–4152 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1965), Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞 (1850–1908; *Shangshu dazhuan shuzheng* 尚書大傳疏證, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, vol. 55, 697–794 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji, 1995–), and Wang Kaiyun 王闓運 (1833–1916; *Shangshu dazhuan buzhu* 尚書大傳補注, in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu*, vol. 55, 797–844. In this article, references to the *Shangshu dazhuan* are to Wang Kaiyun's text, as reprinted in *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin* 尚書大傳逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Shangshu dazhuan*), ICS Ancient Chinese Texts Series (Hong Kong: Shangwu, 1994).
- 5 Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (125–200) is the earliest author known to have made this point in his preface. See *Shangshu dazhuan buzhu*, 799.
- 6 Sources from the Western Zhou period show that such dependent rulers were referred to by a variety of terms. For a list, see Jiang Shanguo 蔣善國, *Shangshu zongshu* 尚書綜述 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1988), 184–185. The term *zhu* 諸 in classical Chinese usually means “all.”

This restrictive use of the term can be found in the closing section of the “Yu gong” 禹貢 chapter of *Shangshu*, which is usually assigned a very late date.⁷ There a five-fold territorial hierarchy is laid out in concentric circles of 500 li 里 each: the royal zone (*dianfu* 甸服) in the center, is followed respectively by a zone for lords (*houfu* 侯服), a pacification zone (*suifu* 綏服), a compact zone (*yaofu* 要服) and a wild zone (荒服); the latter two zones consist of various non-Chinese peoples. The *zhubou* occupy the outer 300 li of the second zone, following the *cai* 采 and *nanbang* 男邦 in the first 200 li while they are not immediately adjacent to the royal zone, they seem to form an important buffer between it and the potentially hostile non-Chinese world. Here, clearly, the term *zhubou* does not mean “all lords,” but indicates a specific subset of those.

In the literature of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C., the term commonly refers to the rulers of the various states of the Chunqiu and Warring States period, states that, though increasingly autonomous from the Zhou king, nonetheless form an intricate part of the Zhou world. It is these *zhubou* who seek the guidance of the persuaders and technical specialists of the age in order to maintain or expand their power, and who, both before and after the unification of 221 B.C., are widely blamed for the violence and chaos of the late Zhou world. To give just some examples, in *Mencius* 3 B 9 the chaotic situation that prevailed after Confucius’ death is characterized by the fact that “the Lords do as they please 諸侯放恣.”⁸ In the stele text erected at Mount Zhifu 之罘, it is claimed about the First Emperor, that “at the outside, He instructed the Lords 外教諸侯.”⁹ The *Huainanzi*, at the end of the chapter “Ben jing” 本經, contrasts the behavior of the Lords in antiquity with the situation in more recent history:

古者天子一畿，諸侯一同，各守其分，不得相侵。有不行王道者，暴虐萬民，爭地侵壤，亂政犯禁，召之不至，（今）（令）之不行，禁之不止，誨之不變，乃舉兵而伐之，戮其君，易其黨，封其墓，類其社，卜其子孫以代之。晚世務廣地侵壤，并兼無已，舉不義之兵（而）伐無罪之國，殺不辜之民（而）絕先聖之後，大國出攻，小國城守，驅人之牛馬，僇人之子女，毀人之宗廟，遷人之重寶，（血流）（流血）千里，暴骸滿野，以贍貪主之欲，非兵之所為（生）（主）也。古者天子一畿，諸侯一同，各守其分，不得相侵。有不行王道者，暴虐萬民，爭地侵壤，亂政犯禁，召之不至，（今）（令）之不行，禁之不止，誨之不變，乃舉兵而伐之，戮其君，易其黨，封其墓，類其社，卜其子孫以代之。晚世務廣地侵壤，并兼無已，舉不義之兵（而）伐無罪之國，殺不辜之民（而）絕先聖之後，大國出攻，小國城守，驅人之牛馬，僇人之子女，毀人之宗廟，遷人之重寶，（血流）（流血）千里，暴骸滿野，以贍貪主之欲，非兵之所為（生）（主）也。¹⁰

In antiquity, the Son-of-Heaven had a *ji* domain, the Lords had *tong* domains. They each guarded their own territory, never invading each other’s. It could happen that there was one who did not follow the way of a true king, but instead harassed the myriad people, contested land, invaded the bor-

7 See Jiang, *Shangshu zongshu*, 173–98; for a recent controversy on the dating of this chapter, see Liu Qiyu, *Shangshu yanjiu yaolun* 尚書研究要論 (Jinan: Qi Lu, 2007), 174–85. This controversy does not involve the concluding section from which the above fragment is drawn.

8 *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), “Teng Wengong xia” 滕文公下, 456. Translation adapted from D.C. Lau, *Mencius* (London: Penguin, 1970), 114.

9 Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji*, (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 6.249. Translation adapted from Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch’in Shih-Huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society: 2000), 36. I take the term *zhubou* here to refer to the leaders of the six states (*liu guo* 六國) the First Emperor had subdued; the latter are mentioned just a few lines below.

10 *Huainanzi zhuzi suoyin* 淮南子逐字索引 (*A Concordance to the Huainanzi*), ICS Ancient Chinese Texts Series (Hong Kong: Shangwu, 1992), 66 (lines 19–24).

ders of others, adopted a disorderly way of governing and failed to respect prohibitions; such a one was summoned but would not come, was given orders but would not carry them out, was forbidden to do certain things but failed to stop, was given instructions but failed to abide by them. Only then, an army would be raised and sent out to punish him, his chiefs would be murdered, his faction deposed, but still his tomb would be prepared, sacrifices made at his altar, and a divination performed to determine which of his sons or grandsons would succeed him.

However, in recent times, they all made efforts to expand their territories, invading the borders of others, and annexing their lands without pause. Raising unrighteous armies, they invaded states that bore no guilt, murdered innocent people, and interrupted the lineages founded by sages of old. Large states took the initiative to attack, while small states sought to defend themselves through their walls. They took possession of the oxen and horses of others, captured their sons and daughters, destroyed their ancestral temples, and moved the treasures important to them. Blood flowed over a thousand *li*, the bones of those who died a violent death filled the fields. All this happened in order to fulfill the desires of greedy rulers, and is not something initiated by the military in itself.

The passage looks back with nostalgia to the time when the Son-of-Heaven and the Lords coexisted harmoniously, and when, if ever there was a recalcitrant Lord, he was dealt with efficiently, but without interrupting his ancestral line; that period is contrasted with the situation in more recent history, when the Lords were out of control, and there was no central regime strong enough to reign them in. As we shall see, the *Shangshu dazhuan's* views on Lords resonate quite nicely with those expressed in the *Huainanzi*.

In the *Huainanzi* passage just quoted, a recalcitrant Lord is “one who does not follow the way of a true king” (*bu xing wang dao zhe* 不行王者). Since the Warring States period, most of the Lords had, indeed, become kings (*wang* 王). That *zhuhou* had become the functional equivalent of the kings whom Qin, by 221 BC, had defeated one by one, might explain the reluctance on the part of Qin to reinstitute the institution after the unification. In the *Shiji's* account of a debate that allegedly took place soon after 221 BC at the court of the First Emperor, Chancellor Wang Wan 王綰 proposes to establish princes (*zhuzi* 諸子) to serve as kings (*wang*) in peripheral areas of the young empire; Li Si, the Commandant of Justice, rebuts this argument by invoking the violence of the preceding period and states that “to establish Lords (*zhuhou*) is not advantageous *zhi zhuhou bu bian* 置諸侯不便.”¹¹ This passage, if it reflects an actual political process, does not mean, as is often assumed, that the Qin did not institute lords (*hou* 侯) and endow them with land on a hereditary basis, or that it ruled over all territories of its newly conquered empire strictly through a system of centrally administered prefectures and districts.¹² At most, it states that imperial princes would not be used to rule semi-autonomously over areas in the empire's periphery.

In Han times, the institution reappeared, name in all. The political history of the *zhuhou* (or *wang*) in the early Han dynasty has often been described.¹³ Some conspicuous moments in that

11 *Shiji* 6.238–239.

12 Yang Kuan 楊寬. “Lun Qin Han de fenfengzhi” 論秦漢的分封制, *Zhonghua wen shi lun cong* 13.1 (1980), 23–37. This passage from *Shiji* will further be discussed at the end of this paper.

13 See Loewe, Michael, *The Men who Governed Han China: Companion to A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, former Han and Xin Periods*, (Leiden: Brill, 2004), Chap. 11 “The Kingdoms (*Zhuhouwang guo*) of Western Han”; Griet Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 37–61; Yang, Guanghui 楊光輝, *Han Tang fengguo zhidu* 漢唐封爵制度 (Beijing: Xueyuan, 2001); Reinhard Emmerich, “Die Rebellion der Sieben Könige, 154 v. Chr.,” in Reinhard Emmerich and Hans Stumpfeldt, eds., *Und folge nun dem, was mein Herz begehrt: Festschrift für UL-*

process were the 196 B.C. oath of the dynasty's founder, to only allow members of the imperial family to serve in that position, the rebellion of the seven states of 154 that shook the empire to its foundations, and the conviction in 122 B.C. of Liu An, King of Huainan. These events took place against the backdrop of a more continuous process through which the power of the kings was eroded both by legal means (kings would be accused of a crime, and their territory, as a result, would be reduced or abolished), or by the central state repossessing territories that were deemed not to have a suitable heir. The lords from being kings (*wang* 王) who could truly rule over their territory, became more like princes (*wang*), who could use the income of their estates, as well as regular dotations by the central government, for extravagant display. Nonetheless, all through the Han dynasty, the Lords were a force to be reckoned with. As a group they floated, as it were, between the Emperor himself, and the various members of the twenty-rank system of meritocratic orders. In sumptuary regulations outlined in the Zhangjiashan 張家山 legal documents, for example, the *zhubouwang* enjoy privileges higher than the *chebou* 徹侯, who occupy the highest rank within the Han orders.¹⁴ How the *zhubou* were able to translate their enormous wealth¹⁵ into power on various levels, is an issue that still awaits further study.

The *Shangshu dazhuan*'s Discourse on Lords

Altogether, ten of the thirty-six chapters of *Shangshu dazhuan* have passages that mention the *zhubou*.¹⁶ Some chapters have several such passages, but none as many as “Yao dian,” which presents by far the most sustained discussion. The chapters “Yao dian,” 堯典 “Pan Geng,” 般庚 and “Jiu gao” 酒誥 stand out because they address the topic of the Lords and their relation to the Son-of-Heaven explicitly.

Passages in the *Shangshu dazhuan* that address the topic of the *zhubou* only implicitly are of two types: passages that describe historical situations in which a new ruler is confirmed as a legitimate ruler after the Lords give him their support, and passages describing sumptuary regulations involving the Lords. In passages of the first type, the Lords give support to such rulers as Shun 舜,¹⁷ Tang 湯,¹⁸ Wuding 武丁¹⁹, and Zhougong 周公²⁰. The case of Zhougong

rich Unger zum 70. Geburtstag (Hamburger Sinologische Schriften 8. Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2002), 397–497.

14 Strips 221 and 222, for example, outline how the *zhubouwang* are entitled to three ranks of concubines, the *chebou* only to two. See *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhujian (er si qi mu bao)*. 張家山漢墓竹簡 (二四七號墓), strips 221 and 222 (Beijing: Wenwu, 2001).

15 The enormous wealth of the *zhubouwang* is becoming obvious, as more and more of their tombs are being excavated. See Jessica Rawson, “The Eternal Palaces of Western Han: a New View of the Universe,” *Artibus Asiae* 59: 1–2 (1999), 5–57, and Huang, Zhanyue 黃展岳 “Han dai zhuhouwang mu lunshu 漢代諸侯王墓論術,” *Kaogu xuebao* 128 (1998), 11–34.

16 This chapter count is based on Wang Kaiyun's edition of the *Shangshu dazhuan*. Of the thirty-six chapters in Wang's edition, twenty-two correspond to received New Text chapters, four to received Old Text (*gu wen* 古文) chapters, whereas the ten remaining chapters do not correspond directly with a chapter from the received *Shangshu*. The last chapter, a long essay entitled “Hongfan wuxingzhuan” 洪範五行傳, is, in the editions of Pi Xirui and Chen Shouqi, folded under the chapter “Hongfan” 洪範.

17 “Yao dian,” *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 2 (lines 9–11).

18 “Tang shi” 湯誓, *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 11 (lines 24–27).

is especially interesting as the *Shangshu dazhuan* depicts him as man who is full of doubts about his ability to lead the realm, and only regains confidence in his leadership skills after a strong show of support by the Lords.²¹ Given the moral stature these four leaders enjoyed by early imperial times, we should not regard the stories about how they were supported by the Lords as mere stories about a distant past: many rhetoricians would have regarded such stories as important precedents to be followed wherever possible. In these stories, it is the collective support of the *zhuhou* – rather than, for example, the people (*min* 民) – that make or break a ruler.

Sumptuary regulations involving the Lords can be gleaned from the following table:

Chapter in <i>Shangshu dazhuan</i>	Hierarchies in which <i>zhuhou</i> are placed	Topic
“Gao Yao mo” 咎繇謨	<i>Tianzi</i> 天子 / <i>zhuhou</i> 諸侯 / <i>zinan</i> 子男 / <i>da fu</i> 大夫 / <i>shi</i> 士	Patterning of clothes
“Yu gong” 禹貢	San gong 三公 / <i>zhuhou</i> 諸侯 / bo 伯 / <i>zinan</i> 子男	Duty to inspect tributary goods from various mountains and rivers of descending degree of importance
“Gu ming” 顧命	<i>Tianzi</i> 天子 / <i>zhuhou</i> 諸侯 / <i>da fu</i> 大夫 / <i>shuren</i> 庶人	Type of foundation used in building walls

The Lords rank just after the Son-of-Heaven (*tianzi* 天子) in two of the three cases, in the remaining case, they are preceded by the Three Ministers (*san gong* 三公). That the Lords occupy a high position in many ritual hierarchies is well attested from other textual sources; such hierarchies, in *Shangshu dazhuan* and elsewhere, ought to be regarded as normative reconstructions of the ritual practices of a lost golden age.

Rewarding and punishing the Lords

As mentioned before, it is the “Yao dian” chapter of *Shangshu dazhuan* that contains the most sustained discussion of the relation between the Son-of-Heaven and the Lords.

Many of these passages attest to an acute awareness that the relationship between the Son-of-Heaven and his Lords ought to be carefully monitored. Several of them prescribe regular court visits, during which the Lords were to report on their activities (*shu qi zhi* 述其職). The performance of the Lords was measured in the realm of ritual (sacrifices to the gods of mountains and rivers, participation in ancestral rites), in the Lords' adherence to prescribed sumptuary rules, and in their willingness to supply the Son-of-Heaven on a regular basis with officials (*shi* 士). The “Yao dian” passages outline a system of punishments and rewards, according to which the Lords can gain or loose privileges, noble sub-ranks, or part or whole of their terri-

19 “Gaozong zhi xun” 高宗之訓, *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 13 (line 18).

20 “Kang gao” 康誥, “Luo gao” 雒誥, *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 17 (lines 22–25) and 19 (line 13) – 20 (line 2).

21 On the controversy surrounding Zhougong, see Guo Weichuan 郭偉川, “Zhougong cheng wang yu Zhou chu lizhi: Shangshu-Zhoushu yu Yi Zhoushu xintan 周公稱王與周初禮治 — 《尚書·周書》與《逸周書》新探,” *Huaxue* 5 (2001), 253–175.

tory based on their performance record. In one of the most interesting passages, the *Shangshu dazhuan* outlines the highest military, judicial, and sacrificial authority a Lord may aspire to:

諸侯賜弓矢者，得專征；賜鈇鉞者，得專殺；賜圭瓚者，得為鬯以祭。不得專征者，以兵屬於得專征之國；不得專殺者，以獄屬於得專殺之國；不得賜圭瓚者，資鬯於天子之國，然後祭。²²

Lords who are given bow and arrow have the authority to initiate a military expedition; those who are given the execution axe have the authority to inflict capital punishment; and those who are given the *gui* and *zan* jades have the authority to make sacrificial wine. Those who do not have the authority to initiate a military expedition have to subordinate their armies to states that do have this authority; those who do not have the authority to inflict capital punishment have to subordinate their judicial system to states who do have this authority; those who are not given the *gui* and *zan* jades have to get their sacrificial wine from the Son of Heaven's realm, only then they can make sacrifice.

Concomitantly, a bad or lackluster performance could descend all kinds of evils upon a Lord.

山川神祇有不舉者為不敬。不敬者、削以地；宗廟有不順者為不孝。不孝者、黜以爵。變禮易樂者為不從。不從者、君流；改制度衣服為畔。畔者、君討。有功者賞之。²³

Failing to sacrifice to the gods of the mountains and rivers was considered irreverent (*bu jing*). Those found to be irreverent had their land reduced. Failing to observe the proper order at the ancestral temple was considered unfilial. Those found to be unfilial had their noble rank reduced. Changing the rites and altering music was considered disobedient. Those found disobedient, the ruler had them exiled. Violating the regulations concerning clothing was considered rebellious. Those found rebellious, the ruler went on a punitive expedition against them. Those with merit were rewarded.

The passages reveal how not all Lords are created equal: once they have received their title, it is their own performance that determines their precise standing and power within their group. The *Shangshu dazhuan* thus prescribes the implementation of a complex system of exchange, designed to give the Lords greatest possible autonomy, while maintaining imperial control at an acceptable level.

One noteworthy passage in the “Yao dian” describes a supposedly ancient ritual according to which, in ancient times, the Lords were assigned *gui* jades that they had to join, during each court visit with the *mao* jade of the emperor. The emperor, following sub-standard behavior of a lord, could conditionally withhold his *gui*-jade, and, if no amends were made after a grace period of nine years, abolish his territory entirely.

古者、圭必有冒，言下之必有冒，不敢專達也。天子執冒以朝，諸侯見則覆之，故冒圭者，天子所以與諸侯為瑞也，諸侯執所受圭以朝于天子。瑞也者、屬也。無過行者，得

22 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 5 (lines 10–12). What having highest military authority entails is spelled out in more detail in another “Yao dian” passage: 命諸侯得專征。得專征者，鄰國有臣弑其君，孽代其宗者，弗請于天子，征之而歸其地于天子可也。“A ‘Designated Lord’ has the authority to initiate a military expedition. As to those who have the authority to initiate a military expedition: when in a neighboring state a minister assassinates his ruler, or when a secondary lineage substitutes its main lineage, they are, without petitioning the Son of Heaven, allowed to organize a military expedition against them and return their lands to the Son of Heaven.” *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 4 (lines 25–6). All translations in this article are by Lin Fan 林凡 and myself; we are preparing a complete translation of the text for publication in the Washington University Press series on Ancient Chinese Thought, edited by A. Plaks and M. Nylan.

23 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 4 (lines 9–11).

復其圭以歸其國；有過行者，留其圭，能正行者，復之。三年圭不復，少黜以爵；六年圭不復，少黜以地；九年圭不復，而地畢削。此謂諸侯之朝於天子也。義則見屬，不義則不見屬。²⁴

In ancient times, the *gui* jade had to be accompanied by a *mao* jade. This expresses that those below needed a *mao* jade. Without it, they did not dare to communicate with the Son of Heaven. The Son of Heaven holds the *mao* jade when he receives the Lords at his court. When he interviews them, he puts his *mao* over their *gui*. Therefore with the *mao* and the *gui* the Son of Heaven makes a pact (*ru*) with the Lords. The Lords hold the *gui* they have received to pay their respects to the Son of Heaven. A “pact (*ru*)” signifies belonging. Those who have no deviant behavior, are allowed to have their *gui* back and to return to their states. The *gui* of those with defiant behavior is retained, and is given back to them when they are able to rectify their behavior. If they haven't received it back after three years, their noble rank is slightly reduced. After six years, their territory is slightly reduced. After nine years, their territory is completely taken away. This describes the Lords' court visits to the Son of Heaven. If they behave properly then they will be seen as subordinate, if they do not behave properly, they will not be seen as subordinate.

We are thus offered an interesting visual image of the mutually interdependent relationship between the Lords and the Son-of-Heaven. Just as the *mao*-jade is not complete without being able to cover – like a hat – the *gui*-jades of the Lords, the *gui*-jades need to return to their place of origin (under the *mao*-jade) on a regular basis – i.e., via regular court visits – to be ritually reconfirmed.

Rationale for instituting *Zhubou*

Why advocate instituting Lords if they are such potential troublemakers? Why not consider the practical difficulties the Lords had caused in earlier times? Is this just traditionalism, an attempt to restore the glories of a previous period? In what follows I will try to show how the *Shangshu dazhuan* also offers political arguments in favor of the institution, as it outlines a vital role for the Lords in placing limits on the ritual and political powers that are vested in the Son-of-Heaven. Whereas in one particular passage, the text addresses the issue of concentrating power in the hands of the Son-of-Heaven directly, there are other passages that make a similar argument more obliquely, by likening the Son-of-Heaven to a lineage head.

In one passage in “*Jiu gao*,” the *Shangshu dazhuan* creates a parallel between, on the one hand, the relationship between the Lords and the Son-of-Heaven, and, on the other hand, that between clansmen and their clan, as represented by its ritual head.

天子有事，諸侯皆侍；宗室有事，族人皆侍。²⁵

If the Son of Heaven has affairs, the Lords are all in attendance. When a clan has affairs, the clansmen are all in attendance.

The Lords, on this scheme, are the clansmen of the Son-of-Heaven, and owe their special position in society, either literally or metaphorically, to their membership in the ruling clan, the realm's first family. Such a comparison confirms the hierarchical position of the Son-of-Heaven at the top, pointing to him as a leader whose executive decisions have to be implemented loyally. However, the comparison also imposes constraints on the Son-of-Heaven's

24 *Shangshu dazhuan zhubu suoyin*, 3 (lines 4–7).

25 *Shangshu dazhuan zhubu suoyin*, 18 (lines 8–9).

powers. As lineage head, the Son-of-Heaven would only be the care-taker of the public good that has been entrusted not to him personally, but to the lineage that he represents. Towards his ancestors and descendants, he has the duty to preserve that trusteeship for as many generations as possible. Toward his living clansmen, he is under a moral obligation to share with them both his enjoyment of the public good and his power over it to the greatest possible extent. Indeed, looked at it in ritual terms, the needs of the founding ancestors, would not be met by sacrifices from the lineage head alone, but require that branch lineages too offer sacrifices at the appropriate hierarchical level, thus confirming the vitality of the whole tree, rather than that of the trunk alone.

The importance of conducting sacrifices at various hierarchical levels implies that those conducting them would have at their disposal a piece of territory – complementing their status both in terms of size and location – that is designated specifically to their branch of the family. The need for a branch family to control some territory continuously is at the heart of a passage from the “Pan geng” chapter. There a part of a Lord’s fief receives the special designation of “income land” (*cái dì* 采地),²⁶ and becomes inalienable, even if individual Lords do not live up to expectations.

古者諸侯始受封，則有采地。百里諸侯以三十里，七十里諸侯以二十里，五十里諸侯以十五里，其後子孫雖有罪黜，其采地不黜。使其子孫賢者守之，世世以祠其始受封之人。²⁷

In ancient times, the Lords first received their fief, and then had some of their land designated as income land. For a Lord of 100 *li*, such unalienable lands amounted to 30 *li*; for a Lord of 70 *li* to 20 *li*; for a Lord of 50 *li*, to 15 *li*. Even if among his descendants there were sons or grandsons who were demoted because of a crime, the income lands would not be abolished. This enabled the worthy among his sons and grandsons to preserve it, and, for generation upon generation, to perform sacrifices to the person who originally received the investiture.

The above passage hints to an interesting mixture of the claims of heredity with those of merit. A founding Lord’s descendants owe their position entirely to hereditary principles (presumably according to strict rules of descent), the central state can punish an heir that proves unworthy, allowing his replacement by a more meritorious member of the family.²⁸ In other words, the central state has a commitment to the founding member of a fief; individual descendants of that founding member count only because they are properly placed to conduct and maintain sacrifices to this founding member. The state’s commitment to the founding Lords seems to stem from a deeply felt need to ritually satisfy not just the main line of descent stemming from the dynastic founder, but also the lines of descent of those who were given a fief by the Son-of-Heaven (the dynastic founder or his successors), either to honor ties of

26 Itō Michiharu outlines the difference in Zhou times between *gong yì* 公邑 “public walled towns,” and *cái yì* 采邑, walled towns assigned to the king’s subordinates as as source of income. Itō, Michiharu 伊藤道治. *Chūgoku kodai kokka no shibai kōzō: Seishū boken seido to kinbun* 中国古代国家の支配構造：西周封建制度と金文, (Tōkyō: Chūō Kōronsha, 1987), 171–206.

27 *Shangshu daizhuan zhubuzi suoyin*, 12 (lines 14–16).

28 The same idea was expressed in the passage from *Huainanzǐ* quoted earlier when, after punishing the recalcitrant Lord, “a divination was performed to determine which of his sons or grandsons would succeed him.”

kinship or to recognize special merit. Interrupting the sacrifices to these founding Lords would disrupt the sacrificial order as a whole, and render it incomplete.

Elsewhere, the *Shangshu dazhuan* addresses the issue of the power invested in the Son-of-Heaven without taking recourse to ritual. A stunning passage from “Yao dian” highlights how important it is for the Son-of-Heaven to show that his power is shared, and not something absolute. The Lords, in their position of semi-autonomous rulers, are assigned a key role in that process. The passage seeks to convince the Lords to recommend *shi* (potential officials) to the throne once every three years. These *shi*, the Lords themselves, and the Son-of-Heaven, are represented as partners in shared governance on behalf of the people.

古者諸侯之於天子也，三年一貢士，天子命與諸侯輔助為政，所以通賢共治，示不獨專，重民之至。²⁹

In ancient times, as to the Lords' relation with the Son of Heaven: they presented *shi* once every three years. The Son of Heaven commanded them to assist him in governing, together with the Lords. This is how he interacted with the worthies and established shared governance. Thus he showed that he was not despot and the extent to which he valued the people.

These power-sharing arrangements are defended in this passage not for ritual reasons, but to take away any suspicion that the Son-of-Heaven might want to rule as a despot (i.e., would monopolize power *dazhuan* 獨專). The Lords, as well as the *shi* that they recommend on a regular basis, are of intrinsic importance to make the exalted power of the emperor acceptable, and allow the latter to present a desirable political image. The Lords' public role consists in demonstrating, both by their sheer presence and by their participation in governance, the Son-of-Heaven's preparedness to share his powers.

The aforementioned historical anecdotes, in which the *zhubou* confirm the position of a ruler (usually one who acceded through violence or other irregular means), point in the same direction: there too the *zhubou* allow the ruler to claim legitimacy. In the anecdote about Tang, the legendary founder of the Shang 商 dynasty, there is another explicit reference to the fact that the ruler ought to regard the realm not as his personal possession, but as endowed with a much wider, public value. In this case, the family model itself is rejected, as the anecdote claims that a successful ruler ought to represent the Way (*dao* 道), rather than his house (*jia* 家). At a grand meeting of all the Lords, Tang, who has just defeated his rival Jie 桀, first declines the position of Son-of-Heaven. Rejoining the ranks of the Lords, he proclaims:

「此天子之位，有道者可以處之矣。夫天下、非一家之有也，唯有道者之有也，唯有道者宜處之。」³⁰

As far as the position of the Son-of-Heaven is concerned, he who possesses the Way can occupy it. Indeed, all-under-heaven is not the possession of a single family; it belongs to the one who possesses the Way. Only one who possesses the Way is fit to occupy it.

It is only after declining the position of Son-of-Heaven three times, and when none of the Lords voice any opposition to his ascendancy that Tang finally assumes the throne. The theatrical performance of Tang is meant to demonstrate that he too does not wish to be a despot, but has the best interests of the realm at heart. The Lords, perhaps each representing their

29 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 4 (lines 22–23).

30 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 11 (lines 24–27).

own house, are there to guard the interests of the common good; their role seems especially crucial during power transitions.

Rhetorical Strategies: Arguing through the *Shangshu*

Arguably the main rhetorical strategy of the *Shangshu dazhuan* lies in its form: as a commentary to the *Shangshu*, the *Shangshu dazhuan* not only helps to solidify the canonical status of the text on which it comments, it also succeeds in presenting its own proposals as ones that, through their base in the *Shangshu*, are firmly grounded in the sacred past of which the documents tell. Indeed, the same archaizing posture may explain why the *Shangshu dazhuan* – as it now stands – refrains from overtly engaging in a polemic regarding the *zhubou*.³¹ Instead, it seeks to detail for contemporaries the precise features of the old order it so admires.

In this section I will lay out the various commentarial strategies that the *Shangshu dazhuan*, in its discourse on Lords, uses to connect itself with the *Shangshu* text. In doing so, I will establish not only that the *Shangshu dazhuan* aggressively seeks to connect ideas it deems relevant to a contemporary audience with the text of the *Shangshu*, but also that the line between “composing” the canon and commenting on it is more blurry than is usually assumed.

Historical narrative: Most of the documents that make up the *Shangshu*, have one or several figures, almost always past rulers, central to it. This, indeed, is what allows *Shiji*, in its reconstitution of the ancient past, to draw so heavily on these documents. While not quite as sustained as in *Shiji*, *Shangshu dazhuan* too frequently contains narratives in which it further elaborates on the actions and achievements of these figures. Some of these mention, *en passant*, the term *zhubou*. In an example from “Yao dian,” *Shangshu dazhuan* describes how Yao handed over power to Shun:

堯為天子，丹朱為太子，舜為左右。堯知丹朱之不肖，必將壞其宗廟、滅其社稷，而天下同賊之。故堯推尊舜而尚之，屬諸侯焉，納之大麓之野，烈風雷雨不迷，致之以昭華之玉。³²

When Yao was Son of Heaven, Danzhu was his heir-apparent, and Shun was his aide. Yao knew that Danzhu did not qualify. Surely, he would bring ruin to the ancestral temple, would destroy the altars of soil and grain, and all-under-heaven would band together in order to get rid of him. Therefore, Yao propelled Shun into a position of power and honor, and subordinated the Lords to him. He sent [Shun] to the foothills, and despite violent wind, thunder and rain, he did not go astray. Yao gave him a Zhao-hua jade.

This could, indeed, be a passage from *Shiji*.³³ Whereas these, and other such passages, make no explicit statement about the *zhubou*, they, as stated before, presuppose the acquiescence of the Lords – either voluntary or forced – as a precondition for a successful transition of power.

31 As in the debate between Li Si and Wang Wan referred to earlier.

32 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 3 (lines 9–11).

33 There are, in fact, close parallel passages in *Shiji* 1.21–22 and 1.38.

Cultural Translation: In other passages, the *Shangshu dazhuan* elaborates upon the text of the *Shangshu*, in the process clarifying, embellishing, and interpreting it. Compare the following passages from *Shangshu* and *Shangshu dazhuan*:

Shangshu (“Kang gao”):

惟三月哉生魄，周公初基作新大邑于東國洛，四方民大和會。侯、甸、男邦、采、衛，百工播民和，見士于周。周公咸勤，乃洪大誥治。³⁴

In the 3rd month, on the 2nd (or: 3rd) day, Zhougong first laid the foundations and made a new big city, at Luo in the eastern state. The people from the four quarters³⁵ greatly gathered and convened. From the *hou*, *dian*, and *nan* states, and from the *cai* and *wei* zones, the various artisans and the scattered people³⁶ gathered and appeared for service in Zhou. Zhougong encouraged them all. And then he grandly announced the work to be done.

Shangshu dazhuan (“Kang gao”):

周公將作禮樂，優游之三年，不能作。君子恥其言而不見從，恥其行而不見隨，將大作，恐天下莫我知也；將小作，恐不能揚父祖功業德澤。然後營雒以觀天下之心，于是四方諸侯率其群黨，各攻位于其庭。周公曰：“示之以力役且猶至，況導之以禮樂乎！”然後敢作禮樂。³⁷

Zhougong was about to compose rites and music. For three years he wavered, unable to compose. [He thought to himself] “A Superior Person is ashamed of his words if they are not being obeyed, ashamed of his actions if they are not being followed. If I were to compose on a grand scale, I would be afraid that none in all-under-heaven would recognize me; if I were to compose on a small scale, I am afraid I would not be able to make known the meritorious works and penetrating virtue of my father and ancestors.” After that he built Luo to observe the mood of all-under-heaven: the Lords from the four directions, all came leading their parties, and worked on buildings at his court. Zhougong said: “We led the way with [a project requiring] labor services, and still they all arrived; what if we were to guide them with rites and music!” After that he dared to compose rites and music.

There are obvious changes between the two passages: from an unwavering agent in the *Shangshu*-passage, Zhougong, in the *Shangshu dazhuan*-passage, has been transformed into an introspective person, who is fearful his own grasp on power is not quite as strong as he would like. He builds Luo, not as part of a collective effort to establish the power of Zhou, but as a test to see whether he has enough support to assume full rulership (which would be signified by his ability to introduce new music and new rituals). *Shangshu dazhuan* has also drastically changed and simplified the designation of those who show up to assist Zhougong in his building project: the “people of the four quarters” (*sifang min* 四方民) have become “the Lords of the four quarters” (*sifang zhuhou* 四方諸侯). Instead of artisans and subjects of the conquered Yin-house, it is the Lords themselves who converge on the new capital. The designation of the Lords with the collective *zhuhou*, also avoids the more complicated terminology used in the

34 Qu, *Shangshu jishi*, 145–146. Many commentators think that this passage actually belongs to the “Luo gao” 洛誥. Translation adapted from Karlgren, Bernhard. “The Book of Documents,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 22 (1950), 39.

35 People (*min*) here almost certainly does not refer here to commoners, but to the king’s people.

36 A reference to the people of the conquered Shang dynasty. See Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shangshu jishi* 尚書集釋, 146, note 2 (Taipei: Lianjing, 1983).

37 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 17 (lines 22–25).

Shangshu-passage to designate various types of domain (*bou* 侯, *dian* 甸, *nan* 男, *cai* 采, *wei* 衛); this must indicate that by the time the *Shangshu dazhuan* was composed, these terms were no longer needed. Lastly, whereas in the *Shangshu dazhuan* Zhougong's final comments indicate that the Lords came spontaneously and voluntarily, in the *Shangshu* it is much less obvious that participation in the construction of the city was voluntary. That the *Shangshu dazhuan* concludes with a quote from the *Shangshu*-passage,³⁸ followed by the expression "this is what it means" (*ci zhi wei ye* 此之謂也), indicates that it, indeed, sees itself as having successfully explained the *Shangshu*-passage to its audience. One can see this as a form of translation: concepts and customs, due to their belonging to a strange, cruel, and distant past, are made to conform with a far more accessible picture of Western Zhou times, one that, moreover, is highly relevant to the political situation of its own time. Indeed, the *Shangshu dazhuan* uses the *Shangshu*-passage to underscore the relevance and importance of the *zhubou* to the political order. One of the most striking features of that translation, for our purposes, is how the Lords, in their legitimizing function, not only become a collective term for lords of various types, but also substitute for the people.

Explanations (*xun* 訓): I have noted before the many expository passages in the "Yao dian" chapter of *Shangshu dazhuan* that explicitly focus on the relationship between the Son-of-Heaven and the Lords. In one of these passages, a quotation from the document "Yao dian" is followed by the phrase "its explanation says" (*qi xun yue* 其訓曰); after this follows, indeed, a lengthy explanation. We may surmise that some of the other passages too, perhaps, were such "explanations," although they are never designated as such. In this case the explanation provides a rationale for the practice referred to in the quote, and gives a detailed description (again appropriately translated to the way ancient practice was understood by Warring States and early imperial times) of what that practice entailed. Above, I already quoted part of this explanation that I now render in full.

《書》曰：「三歲考績，三考黜陟幽明。」其訓曰：三歲而小考者，正職而行事也。九歲而大考者，黜無職而賞有功也。其賞有功也：諸侯賜弓矢者，得專征；賜鈇鉞者，得專殺；賜圭瓚者，得為鬯以祭。不得專征者，以兵屬於得專征之國；不得專殺者，以獄屬於得專殺之國；不得賜圭瓚者，資鬯於天子之國，然後祭。³⁹

The *Document* says, "Every three years there is an examination of merits, and after three examinations the undeserving is degraded, and the deserving advanced." The explanation of this phrase is as follows: that every three years there is a small examination is to evaluate performance and make sure that affairs are taken care of; that every nine years there is an extended examination is to demote non-performers and reward those with merit. The reward for those with merit is as follows: the Lords who are given bow and arrow have the authority to initiate a military expedition; those who are given the execution axe have the authority to inflict capital punishment; and those who are given the *gui* and *zan* jades have the authority to make sacrificial wine. Those who do not have the authority to initiate a military expedition have to subordinate their armies to states that do have this authority; those who do not have the authority to inflict capital punishment have to subordinate their judicial system to states who do have this authority; those who are not given the *gui* and *zan* jades have to get their sacrificial wine from the Son of Heaven's states, only then can they perform sacrifices.

38 Only one line of the passage quoted above, but I take this as a *pars pro toto*.

39 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin*, 5 (lines 9–12).

Transposing terms: A last technique that I would like to highlight is seen in the above-mentioned passage on the *mao* and *gui*-jades, also from “Yao dian.” The exposition on the two types of jade has no obvious origin in *Shangshu*. However, the *Shangshu dazhuan* creates a connection with the mother text by transposing a single term from the original document to the commentary it provides. In this case, the term is “pact” (*mi* 瑞):

故冒圭者，天子所以與諸侯為瑞也，諸侯執所受圭以朝于天子。瑞也者，屬也。⁴⁰

Therefore with the *mao* and the *gui* the Son of Heaven makes a pact (*mi*) with the Lords. The Lords hold the *gui* they have received to pay their respects to the Son of Heaven. A “pact (*mi*)” signifies belonging.

Rui occurs in the *Shangshu* within the description of the first acts of rulership of Shun:

輯五瑞；既月乃日，覲四岳群牧，班瑞于群后。⁴¹

He gathered in the five (kinds of) insignia; and when he had determined a month, he determined the day and saw the Si Yue and all the Pastors, and (again) distributed the insignia to all the princes.

Obviously the *rui*, as described in the document, has a function not unlike the *gui* and the *mao*. The *Shangshu dazhuan* seeks to approximate the two with one another, in the process conferring a more abstract meaning to *rui* (from the insignia themselves to the symbolic pact that they signify), and, once more, simplifying Zhou administrative terminology as if all that there was, was the Son-of-Heaven and his Lords.

The techniques described above show that, although the *Shangshu dazhuan* consistently links its own ideas and words with those of the *Shangshu*, it also takes great liberties with the text. Rather than seeking to explain the mother text line by line, as some other early commentaries do,⁴² the *Shangshu dazhuan* grounds its own discourse in the text of the *Shangshu* and uses the latter text creatively to construct a ritual-political order relevant to its own time. The Lords, virtually absent from the *Shangshu*, become important elements of the *Shangshu dazhuan*'s new order, where they are seen as agents whose support is essential to the legitimacy of the Son-of-Heaven.⁴³ As the above exposition of commentarial techniques has shown, this feat required considerable massaging of the mother text.

Shangshu dazhuan, Fu Sheng, and Han Historiography

In the *Shiji*, the moment at which Gongsun Hong manages to become prime minister due to his knowledge of the *Chunqiu* 春秋 is taken as a pivotal one: it signifies how classical scholarship has become an instrument of political manipulation, rather than the sacred possession of true masters.⁴⁴ It is the moment after which classical scholarship loses some of its independ-

40 *Shangshu dazhuan zhuzi suoyin* 3 (lines 4–8).

41 Qu, *Shangshu jishi*, 19; Karlgren, “The Book of Documents,” 4.

42 Commentaries, roughly contemporary to the *Shangshu dazhuan*, that explained a text line by line were called *jie* 解, not *zhuan* 傳. Examples are the “Jie Lao” 解老, currently part of the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, and several explanatory chapters in the received *Guanzi* 管子.

43 For example, whereas the term *zhubou* is very prominent in the “Yao Dian” chapter of *Shangshu dazhuan*, it is entirely absent from the corresponding chapter in *Shangshu*. In fact, the term occurs only once in the New Text chapters of the *Shangshu*, in the passage from “Yu gong” quoted above.

44 *Shiji* 121.3118.

ence, and becomes an important factor in making or breaking the careers of aspiring officials. This marriage between scholarship and convenience is what would lead to intense political rivalry and strife, for the remainder of the Han dynasty, over the exact form and content of the classics.⁴⁵ In what follows, I will argue that the passages in the *Shangshu dazhuan* that deal with the *zhubou* most likely predate this moment. More specifically, I will review the available evidence, and argue that there are no good reasons to assume that Fu Sheng, to whom the *Shangshu dazhuan* is ascribed, did not put forward similar arguments on the *zhubou* while he was employed by the Qin court. The presumably oral persuasions that he delivered at that time could then be connected – directly or indirectly – with the written passages that form part of the current text of the *Shangshu dazhuan*.

Fu Sheng, according to his biography in the *Shiji*, started his career as an academician (*boshi* 博士) at the Qin court. Forced to leave the court after the collapse of Qin, he seems to have resisted all efforts to involve himself with the new Han dynasty directly, choosing instead to settle as a private teacher in Eastern China.⁴⁶

My review of the available evidence will focus on two questions. First, is there a marked difference between the *Shangshu dazhuan*'s arguments on the *zhubou*, and those put forward in texts that can be more firmly dated to the early Western Han period (particularly Lu Jia's 陸賈 *Xin yu* 新語 and Jia Yi's 賈誼 *Xin shu* 新書)?⁴⁷ Second, were the attitudes and policies of the Qin rulers after the unification of 221 BC towards the *zhubou* as negative and inflexible as is usually assumed? It is the answer to the second question that will convince the reader that the claim that Fu Sheng argued for the institution of the Lords during his employment at the Qin court, if not conclusively proven, is indeed plausible.⁴⁸

The early Western Han text that deals most explicitly with the institution of the *zhubou* is Jia Yi's *Xin shu*. Some chapters of that text, particularly those that deal with contemporary events, argue that the Lords – usually specific individuals – have become overly strong, and that their power should be reined in. It is striking, however, that the institution of the *zhubou* as such is never called into question. For example, one passage indicates how the Lords can either contribute to the flourishing of the state, or to its destruction, depending on whether the “officials and the people” *shimin* 士民” “care for them” (*ai zhi* 愛之), or “resent them” (*ku zhi* 苦之). What is up for debate here is who is more important to society, the Lords or the conglomerate of officials and people, not whether or not the Lords form an intricate part of the political order.⁴⁹ Lu Jia's

45 For this reading of the “Collected Biographies of the Classicists” (*rulinzhuan* 儒林傳), see Mark Csik-szentmihalyi and Michael Nylan. “Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China.” *T'oung Pao* 89.1–3 (2003), 59–99.

46 *Shiji* 121.3124–3125. *Shiji* reports how at some point during Emperor Wen's 文 reign (180–157 BC), the latter invited Fu Sheng to come to court because of his mastery of the *Shangshu*. However, due to Fu Sheng's advanced age (he was over ninety at that time), the Emperor delegated the Recorder of Precedent (*Zhanggu* 掌故), Chao Cuo 朝錯, to travel to him instead.

47 The *Li ji* has many passages on the *zhubou* that closely parallel those in the *Shangshu dazhuan*. However, the notorious difficulty of dating the *Li ji* leads me to exclude it from this discussion of chronology.

48 We do not know when Fu Sheng took up the position of academician at the Qin court. If he was ninety at the time of Chao Cuo's visit, he would have been born somewhere between 270 and 247 BC; so his age in 221 BC, therefore, could range from 26 to 49.

49 Yan Zhenyi 閻振益 and Zhong Xia 鐘夏, *Xinshu jiaozhu* 新書校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2000), 341–2 (“Da zheng shang” 大政上).

Xinyu is much less concerned with the *zhubou*, and mentions them mostly in discussions of the pre-imperial period. The exception is one passage in chapter 5 “Bian huo” 辨惑, where the ruler and *zhubou* alike are assigned a role in maintaining political order, as they are supposed to rid the realm of “evil ministers and corrupt factions 姦臣賊子之黨.”⁵⁰ There is much more to say about the relationship of the rhetoric on the Lords in the *Shangshu dazhuan* and in these two texts; certainly, this cursory reading reveals disagreements – and possibly a debate – about the relative importance to the political order of, on the one hand, the Lords, and, on the other hand, people and officials. One may postulate that, by early Han times, the Qin debate on whether or not to re-install *zhubou*, had shifted to one that discussed the exact position of the *zhubou* in the political order. The *Shangshu dazhuan* passages on the *zhubou*, however, can be taken to contribute to both of these debates.

As to the second question, the commonly held view is that the Qin, soon after unification, decisively abolished the institution of the *zhubou*, following the aforementioned debate, recorded in the *Shiji*, between Wang Wan and Li Si. Many authors, therefore, consider that the term *zhubou* had no application in post-unification Qin, and that both the institution and the term were reintroduced during the Han dynasty, so as to distinguish that dynasty from its predecessor.⁵¹ In that case, it would indeed seem highly unlikely that someone like Fu Sheng, while he served as an academician at the Qin court, would have put forward arguments in favor of the discredited institution. But to what extent is the *Shiji*'s account of the debate between Wang Wan and Li Si credible?

The currently available archaeological or textual evidence does not allow us to conclude that there were *zhubou* in Qin after 221 BC, and thus that the *Shiji*'s report is false. As Yang Kuan has persuasively argued on the basis of the textual record, the Qin dynasty certainly boasted a fair number of hereditary lords, whose dominions were strewn across the empire's prefectures and districts. However, in the received textual record they are not referred to as *zhubou*.⁵² The Qin legal strips from Shuihudi 睡虎地, which contain material from the pre-dynastic period and the dynastic period alike, do make reference to *zhubou*, but it is impossible to determine whether these particular strips refer to the time before or after 221 BC.⁵³

However, as I will show, there is one strong indication that the *Shiji*'s account of the debate between Wang Wan and Li Si, and the decisive rejection of the idea of reinstating Lords that followed, has to be taken with a strong grain of salt. After recounting the debate between Wang Wan and Li Si, the *Shiji* provides the text of a congratulatory message to the First Emperor, composed by many high ranking nobles and dignitaries after a court debate that took

50 Wang Liqi 王利器, *Xinyu jiaozhu* 新語校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1986), 84.

51 Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-Huang*, 36, note 89; Vankeerberghen, *The Huainanzi and Liu An's Claim to Moral Authority*, 41.

52 Yang, “Lun Qin Han de fenfengzhi.”

53 The veracity of the *Shiji*'s account can be accepted only if one assumes that when *zhubou* are mentioned in the Qin legal sources uncovered at Shuihudi 睡虎地, they refer to the situation prior to unification. In the legal texts, the *zhubou* are of a different category than the *shu bang* 屬邦 or *chen bang* 臣邦, the latter terms designating non-Xia states. See A.F.P. Hulswé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law: An Annotated Translation of the Ch'in Legal and Administrative Rules of the 3rd century B.C. Discovered in Yün-meng Prefecture, Hu-pei Province, in 1975* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 171–3 (D158, D159).

place, not at the capital, but at Langye 琅邪.⁵⁴ In this message, the Lords play a crucial, negative role. The First Emperor, having unified all the land within the seas, is said to have established lasting peace precisely because he administered it through prefectures and districts (*yi wei junxian* 以為郡縣), thus consciously deviating from the paths of earlier rulers, whose regimes fell prematurely due to their inability to restrain the Lords. Whereas I do not see any reason to doubt the authenticity of this bit of political rhetoric, it is significant that both Li Si and Wang Wan are mentioned among the participating dignitaries and nobles, Wang Wan as one of two prime ministers (*chengxiang* 丞相), Li Si as one of two high ministers (*qing* 卿). Wang Wan, in other words, had not been demoted for adopting a losing position in the earlier debate between himself and Li Si (which the *Shiji* seems to place in 221 BC) on the issue of the Lords, and still ranked higher than the latter. Moreover, at Langye, presumably in 219 BC, there was still a deliberation among courtiers (*yi* 議) about this issue. Could not the Simas, wishing to emphasize their understanding of the differences between the Qin and Han administrations, have capitalized on this document and highlighted its importance by constructing an imaginary debate between Wang Wan and Li Si that they then placed at the Qin capital, right after unification?

If this was the case, then the borders between political rhetoric and successfully implemented policies were certainly more fluid than has hitherto been assumed. In other words, there might have been more tolerance for the institution of the *zhubou* at the Qin court than the dismissive account in the *Shiji* lets us assume. Moreover, even if some of the political rhetoric that emanated from the Qin court negatively evaluated the *zhubou*'s contributions to recent history, we also know that the regime's desire to connect with the archaizing language of the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) and the *Shangshu* was strong.⁵⁵ For both of these reasons, therefore, it is very well possible that the Qin regime could or would not censor the likes of Fu Sheng, who used these ancient texts to underline the constructive role the *zhubou* had played in the golden period of the sages of antiquity.

54 *Shiji* 6.246–247; there is a significant gap between the account of the debate and this text. On whether the eulogy should be regarded as part of the stele inscription on Mount Langye, see Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-Huang*, 25 (notes 42–3). The trip, most likely, took place in 219 BC.

55 Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-Huang*, Chap. 6 “Towards a Historical Interpretation of the Inscriptions.”