

On *Shiji* 22, Table Ten: A Year-by-Year Table of Generals, Chancellors, and Prominent Officials since the Founding of the Han Dynasty*

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Among the ten tables in the *Shiji* 史記¹ Table Ten (“Han xing yilai jiang xiang mingchen nianbiao” 漢興以來將相名臣年表) is most complex to interpret. Scholars from the Han times throughout the imperial period either expressed doubts about its authenticity and authorship because of its unconventional presentation or simply avoided mentioning it. Their negative judgements and confusion over Table Ten may have stemmed from a two-fold challenge: the ambiguities of the Table itself, given that entries in the Table extend well beyond the lifetime of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–c. 99 B.C.) himself; and the suspicions and criticisms, justified or not, raised by detractors of the *Shiji*. Modern Chinese scholars have contributed analyses and discussions of Table Ten from various perspectives, but so far none of them have connected its physical layout and authorial purpose to its Han administrative background. In Western scholarship to the present there has been little discussion and no translation of the Table itself. It is therefore important for us to investigate Table Ten from the perspectives of authorship, physicality, and the Han bureaucratic system in order to bridge the two-thousand-year chasm between its authors and readers.

* I am very much indebted to the three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments.

¹ Sima Qian, *Shiji* (Hereafter SJ) (1959; reprint, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010). I also take note of the Bona 百衲 edition (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1930–37; Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1968). The Zhonghua edition is based upon the Jinling shuju 金陵書局 edition of 1870. The Bona reprint is based upon the Southern Song edition (published by Huang Shanfu 黃善夫 in the era of Qingyuan 慶元, 1195–1200).

When we examine the arrangement of the five sections in the *Shiji*, we discover that the ten tables in general and Table Ten in particular are situated exactly where they should be and that none of them can be constructed independently. The tables section offers information about the nobles who served and received power and wealth from the rulers recorded in the *benji* 本紀 (basic annals), and it in turn is followed by the *shu* 書 (treatises), which record various systems created to maintain the power structure of the state under a single ruler. The fourth section pertains to the *shijia* 世家 (hereditary houses) and narrates the family histories of kings and nobles whose founding fathers are listed in the tables. These kings and nobles exercised power over the individuals described in the *liezhuan* 列傳 (biographies). Accordingly, from its emphasis on the administrative function, especially the three top governmental positions during the Han dynasty, I further argue that Table Ten has the characteristics of a treatise conveying political history related closely to state affairs, similar to the contents of the eight chapters written in the following section of treatises, but in tabular form.

Table Ten is the last of the six tables in the *Shiji* that record bestowals of *jue* 爵 (orders of aristocratic rank) during the first half of the Western Han dynasty.² According to Sima Qian's perception of merit, individuals received marquises based upon five categories, which in hierarchical order were extraordinary contributions to the state (*xun* 勳), governance or scholarship (*lao* 勞), military achievement (*gong* 功), administrative service (*fa* 閥), and seniority (*yue* 閤).³ Tables Five through Nine register Han traditional aristocrats who were ennobled due to their royal births or the outstanding military contributions by their ancestors during the time of the Han's state foundation and consolidation. These five chapters describe two high aristocratic ranks of the twentieth and nineteenth orders, marquis (*lie hou* 列侯) and marquis of the Interior (*guannei hou* 關內侯), as well as aristocratic groups whose ranks are above them, such as kings (*zhuhou wang* 諸侯王), imperial descendants (*wangzi hou* 王子侯), and imperial clan members (*enze hou* 恩澤侯).⁴ Table Ten extends the record of meritorious nobles with the ranks of *lie hou* and *guannei hou* to another group whose ennoblement is associated with appointments to the top three positions in government:

² For an explanation of the twenty ranking orders and privileges, see Michael Loewe, "The Orders of Aristocratic Rank of Han China," *T'oung Pao*, 2nd ser., 48, 1/3 (1960), pp. 97–174.

³ SJ 18/877.

⁴ Liu Min 劉敏, "Xi-Han jue zhi leibie" 西漢爵之類別, *Qin-Han shi luncong* 3 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1986), p. 255. Liu Bang began conferring two ranks on royal members: kings and marquises. See Zhu Shaohou 朱紹侯, "Jungong juezhi zai Xi-Han de bianhua" 軍功爵制在西漢的變化, *Henan daxue xuebao*, 1983, no. 1, p. 58.

the Chancellor, the General, and the Grandee Secretary. These incumbents therefore played dual roles, as nobles and civil servants. Table Ten demonstrates how the power of military aristocrats waxed and waned over time and was ultimately shared with leaders of the civil administration. The Table is thus appropriately situated in the *Shiji* as it appears, corresponding to the nine tables ahead of it and connecting the eight state systems in the following treatises with statistics and administrative information.

Recently excavated bamboo and wood strips shed new light on Table Ten with respect to its physicality, construction, and preservation, thereby permitting us to advance *Shiji* studies into new and intriguing directions. Further, I argue, Table Ten reveals the true power structure of the Han government in chronological order and highlights Han bureaucratic development by presenting information on the power-holders. Accordingly, this essay addresses four aspects of the study of Table Ten: (1) Tackling the problems of authenticity and authorship; (2) Investigating and illuminating the multiple reference functions of the inverted text (*daowen* 倒文 or *daoshu* 倒書) with its “raised-out-of-row” (*tilan* 提欄) feature, which gives Table Ten its peculiar appearance and opaque intent; (3) Discussing the upper echelons of the Han government and power shifts occurring within the Han bureaucratic system; and (4) Exploring the physical medium, its construction, and the method used to display and preserve the Table as a scroll made of bamboo or wood strips.

Questions of Authenticity and Authorship

Although Sima Qian claims to have compiled ten tables within a work totalling 130 chapters and explains his purpose for Table Ten,⁵ three major issues yet challenge *Shiji* scholars and raise doubts about the Table’s authorship and authenticity. First, the Table chronicles from 206 B.C., the first year of the King of Han 漢王 (Liu Bang 劉邦; acceded as Gaozu 高祖 in 202 B.C.) down to 20 B.C., some eight decades after we believe Sima Qian died. Second, it does not include a preface as do other tables. Third, unlike other tables, there are inverted texts, each lifted one row above the grid and a few columns to the left of where the incumbent to whom it refers is recorded. In this part of the essay I will discuss the first two issues and then deal with the third issue in the next part. Concerns over authorship and authenticity can be addressed by examining two principal questions: Is the available printed version of Table Ten true to its original bamboo/wood version? Who were the continuators and what did they contribute?

⁵ SJ 130/3304 and 3319.

Story of the Missing Texts: Is Table Ten Authentic?

Nearly two centuries after the compilation of *Shiji*, the issue of its “missing texts” was first noted by Ban Biao 班彪 (3–54) and his son Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), who both stated that there were ten chapters with titles only, but without texts (*you lu wu shu* 有錄無書).⁶ But they neither identified the missing chapters nor clarified whether Table Ten was included. It was not until the third or fourth century that Zhang Yan 張晏 revealed for the first time the titles of the ten empty chapters, one of which included Table Ten.⁷ In this case, the existence of the Table was known to scholars of Zhang Yan’s time, which was almost four hundred years after the death of Sima Qian.

Table Ten mysteriously resurfaced occasionally when the *Shiji* attracted renewed interest among scholars, who would proffer commentaries and textual criticisms. Such works as the *Shiji jijie* 史記集解 by Pei Yin 裴駟 (c. the fifth century), the *Shiji suoyin* 史記索隱 by Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (c. the eighth century), and the *Shiji zhengyi* 史記正義 by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (c. the eighth century) are three leading works that even today are must-read books for every *Shiji* researcher. Although they have corrected some of Sima Qian’s errors even while they perpetuated a few of their own, they commented on all of the 130 chapters of *Shiji*, including the ten tables, and their explanatory notes were incorporated by the Bona and Zhonghua editors.⁸ With regard to the “missing texts” Zhang Shoujie gives us a more detailed yet confusing statement: “Ten chapters in the *Shiji* have titles only. During the reigns of Yuandi 元帝 (r. 49–33 B.C.) and Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33–7 B.C.) Chu Shaosun 褚少孫 (71–23 B.C.) amended (*bu* 補) [the following] chapters: the Basic Annals of the Emperor [Xiao 孝] Jing 景 and the Emperor [Xiao 孝] Wu 武; the Annual Table of the Generals and the Chancellors; the Treatises on Ritual, Music, and Legal Codes; the Hereditary House of Three Kings; the Biographies of the Lords of [Fu 傅] [Jin 靳] Kuaicheng 削成, the Rizhe 日者, and the Guice 龜策.”⁹ However, Zhang’s statement prompts several questions. First, what does he mean when he refers to the “amendment” by Chu Shaosun? Did Chu rewrite the entire chapter of Table Ten, or did he fill in passages in

⁶ Ban Gu et al., *Hanshu* 漢書 (Hereafter HS) (1962; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 30/1714. Ban Gu’s annotation. Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), *Hou-Hanshu* 後漢書 (Hereafter HHS) (1965; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 40a/1325.

⁷ Yu Zhanghua 俞樟華, *Lidai Shiji yanjiujia* 歷代史記研究家, in *Shiji yanjiu jicheng* 史記研究集成 (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2005), vol. 13, p. 402.

⁸ Ying Sanyu 應三玉, *Shiji sanjia zhu yanjiu* 史記三家注研究 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2008), p. 2. Ying only mentions the edition from the Qingyuan era, of which the Bona edition is a reprint.

⁹ SJ 128/3223.

the existing chapter the way he usually did in other chapters? Second, what did Zhang mean when he claimed that the *Shiji* omitted ten chapters of full texts during the eras of Yuandi and Chengdi? Did he mean to suggest that the ten chapters existed prior to c. 40 B.C. and was he aware of their existence? If he was, to which edition was he referring, given that the *Shiji* had been in circulation for some nine hundred years? Before we can clarify these questions, we must recognize that there is no credible support for the idea that Chu Shaosun was the “new” author of Table Ten.

It is true that most scholars prior to the Qing (1644–1911) tended to skip over the ten tables when they had a copy of the *Shiji* in their hands.¹⁰ For example, among some sixty *Shiji* scholars during the Song period (960–1279) the works of which modern historians have collected, for example, only three reflected on the tables in general:¹¹ Wei Liaoweng 魏了翁 (1178–1237), Lin Jiong 林駢, and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181). The latter two men praised the value of *Shiji* tables for the first time known in history, but they did confess their confusion over the purposes of Table Ten and left no detailed explanations.¹² Given the time period, their studies may have been based on the edition printed in the Jingyou 景祐 era (1034–1037), which is said to be preserved in and published by the Academia Sinica in Taipei.¹³ Michael Loewe claims that Table Ten and its inverted texts exist in the Jingyou edition.¹⁴ Wang Shumin 王叔岷 reaffirms Loewe’s claim, citing both the Jingyou and Bona editions in his own commentary on Table Ten.¹⁵ Wang’s commentary contains all *Shiji* chapters, including Table Ten, which ends in 20 B.C.

The increased interest in *Shiji* during the Song period shows that its publication received wider circulation, and this might have been prompted by the advent of movable type printing and improved binding methods. The new technology also enabled larger works such as *Shiji* to be printed in a shorter period of time and, meanwhile, presented the possibility for Sima Qian’s continuators to add, insert, or alter texts or characters before they put Table Ten into print.

¹⁰ Zhang Guiping 張桂萍, “*Shiji* yu Qing ren de shibiao yanjiu” 史記與清人的史表研究, *Shanghai daxue xuebao*, 2007, no. 5, p. 60.

¹¹ Yu Zhanghua, *Lidai Shiji yanjiujia*, pp. 416–35.

¹² Ibid., pp. 426, 430.

¹³ I have no access to this edition but Dr David Curtis Wright at the University of Calgary has made primary inquiry to the Academia Sinica’s Institute of History and Philology as to its whereabouts for me during his research period there. Their answer was that the Jingyou edition is the same as the Bona edition.

¹⁴ Michael Loewe, *The Men Who Governed Han China: Companion to A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 245.

¹⁵ Wang Shumin, *Shiji jiaozheng* 史記斠證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), pp. 979–1003.

If Table Ten Is Authentic, Who Are the Authors?

Was Sima Qian the First Author?

Although Sima Qian claimed that he narrated 130 chapters from the Huangdi period through the Taichu 太初 era (104–101 B.C.),¹⁶ Table Eight, like Table Ten, extends beyond Sima's lifetime. But in Table Eight, Chu Shaosun explained that he himself was responsible for the latter half of Table Eight, which was a record down to 48 B.C.¹⁷ Chu made no such claim with respect to Table Ten. However, in Table Ten Pei Yin cited Ban Gu's assertion in his own work, *Shiji jijie*, that Sima Qian recorded events up to the Tianhan 天漢 era (100–97 B.C.) and that afterwards, Table Ten was continued by another hand. For centuries thereafter, scholars have been confused by the discrepancy between Sima Qian's own statement and Pei Yin's citation. Modern scholar Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (1883–1955), using linguistic analysis, finally clarified the longstanding apparent contradiction: "When Pei Yin says that Sima Qian recorded events up to the Tianhan era, this is the same as Sima Qian who said that he has narrated history through the Taichu era, both referring to 100 B.C."¹⁸ Yu Jiaxi therefore concludes that the latter part of Table Ten was continued by someone else commencing in 100 B.C. and also affirms that the earlier part of Table Ten was penned by Sima Qian.

The Question of the Continuator

Scholars continue to debate about who might have penned the latter part of the Table. Yu Jiaxi rules out Chu Shaosun, whom almost every other *Shiji* scholar suspects to be the continuator.¹⁹ Yu's argument is based upon the conflicting claims of Zhang Yan and Sima Zhen, author of *Shiji suoyin*. I concur with Yu's conclusion that Chu Shaosun was probably not the continuator, but I do believe that he participated in the task of editing this Table. I come to this conclusion because Sima Zhen made an entry in Table Ten in 96 B.C., which reads as follows: "Pei Yin is convinced that [the latter part of the Table] was continued by another hand after the Tianhan era and was subsequently amended by Mr Chu [Shaosun], *Pei Yin yiwei zi Tianhan yihou, houren suo xu, ji Chu xiansheng suo bu ye* 裴駟以為自天漢已後，後人所續，即褚先生

¹⁶ SJ 130/3321. The third year of Taichu was also the year Sima Qian ceases to record the activities of Wudi in the Basic Annals and the column recording Major Affairs of State in Table Ten is left blank after that year.

¹⁷ SJ 20/1059.

¹⁸ Yu Jiaxi, "Taishi gong shu wang pian kao" 太史公書亡篇考, in *Yu Jiaxi wenshi lunji* 余嘉錫文史論集, ed. Zhou Shiqi 周士琦 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1997), p. 29.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 32.

所補也。”²⁰ Here it is important to understand the character “*ji*” and the differences between “*xu*” (continuing) and “*bu*” (amending). “*Ji*” 卽 may as well be “*ji*” 既, which means “subsequently,” and in the context of the whole sentence it does not translate into “the later hand (*houren*) is Chu Shaosun,” but refers to Chu Shaosun amending or adding information after the work of the later hand.

The continuator(s) of the Table remain unknown. In the early thirteenth century Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 argued that the so-called missing ten chapters in fact all existed, and he asserted that the history of Table Ten could be traced down to the Hongjia 鴻嘉 era (20–17 B.C.).²¹ But Chen admitted that he did not know who completed the work. Contemporary critics, such as Wang Shumin and Zhao Shengqun 趙生群, speculate that Feng Shang 馮商 (c. 53–18 B.C.), a student of Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.), was most likely the continuator of Table Ten²² because they believe that he received an imperial order to continue seven chapters in the *Shiji*.²³ But they are not sure whether the seven chapters include Table Ten, so the identity of the second author remains uncertain. Yu Jiaxi excluded Liu Xiang as a possible author because, he argued, the Table ended in 20 B.C., some fourteen years before Liu’s own death. Therefore, if Liu Xiang were the author, the Table should have covered another decade or more of history.²⁴ Yu Jiaxi also rejected Feng Shang as a possible author because for more than thirty years after 50 B.C. there were no entries in the Major Events of State. Those were prime years of Feng’s life, and he should have lived long enough to compile it, had he been the continuator.²⁵

With regard to the identity of the continuator, Yu Jiaxi did not offer an answer and his rejections were based on a careful chronology, but he neglected to analyse the contents of Table Ten. Indeed, the row for Major Events of State in the latter half of the Table remains empty; however, this is not due to authorial neglect, but to the shift of power to the Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief (*da sima da jiangjun* 大司馬大將軍), who then superseded the Chancellor and governed State affairs. In the second half of the Table several Marshals-of-State carried a hybrid title of general with various prefixes, such as General of Defence (*wei jiangjun* 衛將軍), General

²⁰ SJ 22/1142–43.

²¹ Zhang Dake 張大可 and Zhao Shengqun, *Shiji wenxian yu bianzuanxue yanjiu* 史記文獻與編纂學研究, vol. 11 of *Shiji yanjiu jicheng*, pp. 111–12.

²² Wang Shumin, *Shiji jiaozheng*, p. 979; Zhao Shengqun, *Shiji wenxianxue congkao* 史記文獻學叢稿 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2000), pp. 54–55.

²³ HS 59/2657, n.1.

²⁴ Yu Jiaxi *wenshi lunji*, p. 29.

²⁵ Ibid.

of Chariots and Cavalry (*juji jiangjun* 車騎將軍), and General of Cavalry on the Alert (*piaoji jiangjun* 飃騎將軍), in addition to the General in Chief (*da jiangjun* 大將軍). Among these we find Huo Guang 霍光 (87–68 B.C.), Zhang Anshi 張安世 (67–62 B.C.),²⁶ Han Zeng 韓增 (61–56 B.C.), Xu Yanshou 許延壽 (56–53 B.C.), Shi Gao 史高 (Zichang 子長, 49–43 B.C.), Wang Jie 王接 (43–41 B.C.), Xu Jia 許嘉 (41–30 B.C.), Wang Feng 王鳳 (33–22 B.C.), and Wang Yin 王音 (22–15 B.C.).²⁷

A closer analysis of these Marshals-of-State may offer insights into the identity of the continuator of the Table. Only three of the five Marshals-of-State from the most powerful Wang Family (Wang Jie, Wang Feng, and Wang Yin) who dominated the Western Han dynasty in its last few decades, are cited in the latter half of the Table.²⁸ Wang Shang 王商 (15–13 B.C.) and Wang Gen 王根 (12–8 B.C.), two more distinguished relatives of Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9–23), are unmentioned in Table Ten because it ended before their times. Were the author alive, he would not stop noting these five men and interrupt the records of Marshals-of-State in the Table. Therefore, I argue that the author of the latter half of the Table ceased to write it when he passed away. Feng Shang, then, was probably the most likely candidate for Table Ten continuator due to the proximity of his death and the end of the Table history.

It is also possible that someone lived long enough to compile the whole Table all at once. However, as I have discussed earlier in this paper, I have ascertained that the continuator has a different purpose and attitude when he recorded the Marshals-of-State.²⁹ His different attitude was reflected in the inconsistent and erroneous information regarding the Wangs. Wang Feng, a Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief and Marquis of Yangping 楊平侯, should have been recorded in inverted texts and with the “raised-out-of-row” device upon his death in 22 B.C., but the continuator failed to mention it at all, as he also did Wang Jie’s death in 41 B.C. Two entries regarding Wang Zhang 王章 are most confusing and misleading. Wang Zhang was an arch enemy of Wang Feng but not related to his family, although they carried the same family name. He is listed in an entry in 26 B.C. detailing his appointment in the sequence of the date, former title and aristocratic rank, full name, and the new title, “On the *xinmao* 辛卯 day of the tenth month Grand Coachman (*taipu* 太僕)

²⁶ In 67 B.C. Huo Guang’s son, Huo Yu 霍禹, also received the appointment of a Marshal-of-State, but he was executed that same year for a crime. See HS 19b/804.

²⁷ These dates are derived from HS 19b/791–839.

²⁸ HS 99a/4039. Ban Gu contributes one biography each to the history of these five powerful men. See HS 98 “*Yuanhou zhuan*” 元后傳. Table Ten fails to record the deaths of Wang Jie and Wang Feng.

²⁹ Most of the Marshals-of-State acquired noble status and power from the emperor because they were related to his empress or consorts. They were enfeoffed to the highest aristocratic rank of marquis, *lie hou*.

and Marquis of Ping'an 平安侯 Wang Zhang was appointed General of the Right.” In fact, it should have been Wang Yin, the Marquis of Anyang 安陽侯, who received the appointment.³⁰ Wang Zhang was never ennobled and died in prison in 25 b.c. as the Governor of the Capital (*Jingzhaoxin* 京兆尹).³¹ Ban Gu continued this mistake but recorded Grand Coachman Wang Zhang as the General of the Right without an aristocratic rank.³² Wang Yin was Wang Feng’s nephew and was promoted from a Grandee Secretary to the Marshal-of-State-and-General-of-Chariot-and-Cavalry in 22 b.c. The other error is the alleged death of Wang Zhang recorded in 21 b.c. as follows: “On the *yichou* 乙丑 day of the ninth month the General of the Right and the Superintendent of the Imperial Household, Marquis of Ping'an Wang Zhang, died.” Although this information is recorded in reverse in the row for Chancellors, according to the *tilan* principle, the recipient should not have been Wang Zhang but Marquis of Ping’a 平阿侯 Wang Tan 王譚, who was Wang Feng’s half-brother. Chengdi desired him to be Wang Feng’s successor, but Wang Feng preferred and recommended Wang Yin. Wang Tan therefore received appointment as General of the Right and Superintendent of the Imperial Household. He passed away several months after his new appointment. Ban Gu continued this error and recorded Wang Zhang’s death here instead of Wang Tan’s.³³

These errors and neglect can be explained by observing that Table Ten’s continuator displayed resentment toward the monopolization of power by the military in the later years of the Western Han dynasty and gave little information regarding the death of Marshals-of-State-and-Generals-in-Chief such as Huo Yu 霍禹, Zhang Anshi, Han Zeng, and Xu Yanshou. Although the continuator listed the entries inverted, he did not mention their titles and recorded them by their first names only. This was unlike Sima Qian who did not use his usual technique of “praise and blame” but rather offered an objective account when he compiled Table Ten. The author of the latter half of the Table followed Sima Qian’s concept of a power hierarchy, but his personal judgements are evident.

The “Other” Authors: Insertions and Interpolations

Like every chapter in the *Shiji*, Table Ten contains authorial errors as well as insertions and interpolations added by later hands throughout the millennia. Addressing these issues, Qing commentators made the most insightful contributions, and many of the works they published are available to us. This is a topic that remains little

³⁰ HS 98/4025.

³¹ HS 76/3238–39; HS 19b/828.

³² HS 19b/828. According to Wang Zhang’s biography (HS 76/3238–39), he was never a general.

³³ HS 19b/830.

researched and is seldom discussed in Western scholarship. However, Michael Loewe observes that accounts in Table Ten are at variance with other records, as he compares the *Shiji* with the *Hanshu* parallels and notes some of the errors and inconsistencies, which Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 (c. the eighteenth century) also explored in his celebrated book, *Shiji zhiyi* 史記志疑.³⁴ I will not dwell on Loewe's summary here but will instead focus on Liang's assertion regarding Wudi 武帝 (r. 140–87 B.C.) in 140 B.C. Liang Yusheng claims that the entry is an interpolation added by a later hand because Sima Qian usually referred to Wudi as "His Majesty" (*jin shang* 今上) and not by his posthumous name Xiaowu.³⁵ Liang's conclusion is probably valid simply because Wudi was still alive when Sima Qian completed the *Shiji*. It is possible, however, that Sima Qian did note Wudi's reign and that later, his continuator altered the name after Wudi's death. In fact, posthumous names are applied to all emperors throughout Table Ten. I assume that this could be explained as the work of later commentators, such as Chu Shaosun or Sima Zhen.³⁶

Does Sima Qian Deserve the Credit?

Although Table Ten lacks an introduction, in his autobiographical chapter Sima Qian clearly states his intention in writing the Table: "The meritorious Chancellors and fine Generals of the state are role models for the people, and their achievements are displayed in the Table. For those who are worthy, I record their governance; for those who are unworthy, I reveal their doings. This has been the purpose behind A Year-by-Year Table of Generals, Chancellors, and Prominent Officials since the Founding of the Han dynasty."³⁷ However, Sima Qian's explanation did not seem to convince Yu Jiaxi, who observed that the Table recorded only the ennoblements, appointments, dismissals, removals, and deaths of the Generals and Chancellors but did not narrate their governance or revealed their doings. In sum, argued Yu, since "worthiness or unworthiness" did not matter in the Table, the reality of the Table did not correspond to the autobiographical statement.³⁸ From there he reasoned that it was clear that Table Ten did not come from the hand of Sima Qian. I maintain that Yu did not grasp the greater purpose of this Table for its authors, which was to reflect the rise and fall of the true power holders in Han administrative history and to reveal the shifts of

³⁴ Loewe, *The Men Who Governed Han China*, pp. 243–45. For more information, see Liang Yusheng, *Shiji zhiyi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), pp. 740–56.

³⁵ Liang Yusheng, *Shiji zhiyi*, p. 751.

³⁶ Sima Zhen contributed an epilogue, "Suoyin shuzan" 索隱述贊, in Table Ten (SJ 22/1155).

³⁷ SJ 130/3304.

³⁸ Yu Jiaxi *wenshi lunji*, p. 31.

power among the top three positions within the Former Han government. Table Ten is not merely a list of dates, events, and individuals, as Yu Jiaxi perceived it, nor is it constructed merely for biographies.

Yu Jiaxi reiterated his call to strip Sima Qian of credit for Table Ten. He first argued (correctly) that the other nine tables had prefaces, but then he averred that the absence of a preface in this Table distinguished it from all other chapters in the *Shiji*. In fact, not every chapter in the *Shiji* includes a preface. For example, only five of the eight treatises have prefaces. Sima Qian personally wrote observations to express his historical theory and reflections. They can be found in three locations: in the front of a chapter, which we term “*xu*” 序 (preface); at the end of a chapter, which we call “*zan*” 賛 (epilogue); and in the middle of a chapter, “*lun*” 論 (argument). The first two types of commentary are preceded by “*Taishigong yue*” 太史公曰 (The Grand Historian says). The Bona and Zhonghua editions incorporate twenty-three prefaces, one hundred and six epilogues, and five arguments.³⁹ The absence of a preface in Table Ten should not, therefore, constitute a significant discrepancy, much less preclude Sima Qian’s authorship.

Another consideration pointing to Sima Qian as the primary author is his activity both as historian, Grand Scribe (or Grand Historian), and Grand Astrologer. In a letter to his friend Ren An 任安, Sima Qian mentioned that he had not inherited aristocratic rank and privileges from his ancestors but was nevertheless assigned the responsibility of overseeing the publications of the nation, state documents, astronomical records, and calendars (*wen shi xing li* 文史星曆).⁴⁰ In addition to his own historical writings, Sima Qian’s job description included organizing state archives, keeping statistical records, and updating calendars.⁴¹ Scrutinizing the data he recorded in *Shiji*, we find that some tables offer precise accounts as to the day, month, and year. It is evident that Sima Qian had access to the personnel files of individuals upon whom noble status was bestowed. In the Han system, an individual who made outstanding contributions needed to be evaluated and confirmed by the government before he received any honours or rewards.⁴² Sima Qian once mentioned that he had read the imperial order for the ennoblement (*liefeng* 列封) of King Changsha 長沙王, Wu Qian 吳淺.⁴³ This type of file was prepared during the process of evaluating

³⁹ Zhang Dake, *Shiji lunzan yanjiu* 史記論贊研究, in *Shiji yanjiu jicheng*, vol. 4, p. 2.

⁴⁰ HS 62/2732.

⁴¹ Cheng Jinzao 程金造, *Shiji guankui* 史記管窺 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1985), pp. 371–72.

⁴² Zhu Shaohou, *Jungong juezhi yanjiu* 軍功爵制研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1990), p. 41.

⁴³ SJ 19/977. King Changsha was enfeoffed with the county of Bian 便 due to his loyalty.

a candidate for ennoblement, and it would be kept in imperial archives to become a major source of data for Table Ten.

Table Ten: Structure, Title, Characteristics, Inverted Texts, and Contents

Structure of Table Ten

Table Ten has five rows or horizontal divisions and one hundred and eighty-seven columns, with key headings displaying in succession five major subjects in the first column at the extreme right-hand side of the Table. In the five corresponding horizontal rows we find information about each subject entered in chronological order. Row one indicates the year of each reigning emperor from the first year of Gao Huangdi 高皇帝 (206 B.C.) through the first year of Hongjia (20 B.C.) during the reign of Chengdi. It also gives posthumous names of the emperors recorded in the first year of their reigns. Row two records major events pertaining to the state and imperial house (Major Events of State, *dashiji* 大事記), including the season or month, if applicable. Row three identifies men who hold the position of Chancellor (*xiangwei* 相位) with the dates of appointment, their former titles, and noble rank of marquis noted above their names. Row four records names and former titles of men appointed as Supreme Commanders (*taiwei* 太尉) or Generals (*jiangwei* 將位) with their noble rank, if applicable, above their names and the purpose of their appointment, if applicable. Finally, row five gives names of men who occupy the office of Grandee Secretary (*yushi dafu* 御史大夫). Generally, the title of Grandee Secretary is listed above their personal name without a surname. Helpfully, the author(s) give the number of years of tenure for the Chancellors and the Generals in the upper, right corner of the grid where the incumbent belongs.

The regular text in each row provides concise information. In the row on Major Events of State, the Table documents changes pertaining to emperors, the imperial clan, and the state. Examples include the accessions and deaths of emperors and empresses, construction of imperial tombs, designations or removals of heirs apparent and princes, Xiongnu 匈奴 invasions, rebellions and military expeditions, natural disasters (earthquakes and solar or lunar eclipses), major changes in foreign relations,⁴⁴ and promulgations or rescissions of certain law codes.

⁴⁴ The Table mentions relations between the Han and its new frontier states, such as Nanyi 南夷, Dongyue 東越, and Nanyue 南越, but it does not mention Chaoxian 朝鮮 and Dayuan 大宛 in the row on Major Events of State.

There are significant differences of historical emphasis in the earlier and latter parts of the row on Major Events of State. First, the deaths of Wudi and all emperors after him are not documented; and second, most entries of Major Events of State in the post-Wudi period are blank. In the row on the Chancellor's position, the earlier part of the Table records above the individual's full name (in sequence) the date, former title, and noble rank of marquis of the incumbent prior to his appointment; e.g. (in 176 B.C.) on the *jiauwu* 甲午 day of the first month Grandee Secretary and Marquis of Beiping 北平侯 Zhang Cang 張蒼 was appointed Chancellor.⁴⁵ However, from 112 B.C. information about the occupants of the Chancellor's position is recorded in a different order but with a great uniformity: date of appointment, former title, full name, and the newly conferred noble rank of a marquis; e.g. (in 112 B.C.) on the *xinsi* 辛巳 day of the ninth month Grandee Secretary Shi Qing 石慶 was appointed Chancellor and enfeoffed Marquis of Muqiu 牧丘侯.⁴⁶ This pattern demonstrates that a Chancellor had to be enfeoffed before his appointment to head the government prior to 112 B.C., whereas after that year a person did not have to have an aristocratic rank to become a Chancellor. It is also noteworthy that the date of the appointment of Chancellor, down to the precise month and day, is sometimes missing in the earlier part of the Table but appears for every appointment in the latter part of the Table.

In the row for the General's position, Table Ten records men with the noble rank of marquis or their former titles, full names, and designations of either Supreme Commander or General with various mission-specific prefixes attached to the title of *jiangjun* 將軍, e.g. General of Chariots and Cavalry. Only entries for the Generals, not the Supreme Commanders, explain the purposes of the designation, whether for offensive attacks (*ji* 撃) (against the Xiongnu, other states, or the rebels), destroying (*po* 破) the enemy, or garrisoning (*tun* 屯) some places. In the row for the Grandee Secretary's position, Table Ten gives only the title of the Grandee Secretary (sometimes along with a noble rank, if any) and the personal name of the incumbent. Full names are given for Grandee Secretaries who are ennobled, while those who are not are identified by personal name only.⁴⁷ From 44 B.C. on, the entries provide information regarding most of the Grandee Secretaries in detail equivalent to that for

⁴⁵ There were two exceptions: in 162 B.C., Grandee Secretary Shentu Jia 申屠嘉 was promoted to Chancellor before he was enfeoffed Marquis of Gu'an 故安侯, and in 124 B.C. Grandee Secretary Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 was promoted as Chancellor before being enfeoffed Marquis of Pingjin 平津侯.

⁴⁶ The entry regarding the appointment of Zhang Yu 張禹 in 25 B.C. does not record the noble rank of a marquis. Information about Chancellor Xue Xuan 薛宣 appointed in 20 B.C. does not include a former title or a noble rank.

⁴⁷ Except Yang Chang 楊敞 (77 B.C.), Wei Xiang 魏相 (71 B.C.), and Bing Ji 邝吉 (67 B.C.).

the Chancellor. Thus, the principle of highlighting the importance and hierarchy of political power is here on display.

The posts of Supreme Commander and General are not filled on a regular basis, unlike the offices of the Chancellor and Grandee Secretary, which needed to be occupied at all times.⁴⁸ A Chancellor came from the noble rank of a feudal lord or marquis. A Supreme Commander was ennobled as a marquis before his appointment, and some Generals come from nobility, while some possessed another official title with a fixed pay scale prior to being ordered by the emperor to lead troops or prior to being designated a General.⁴⁹ A Grandee Secretary carried the title of *yushi dafu* above his personal name, indicating his non-noble, subject (*chen 臣*) or bureaucratic status. Only a few of them in the early years and a few in the last four decades of the Western Han empire bore the noble rank of marquis. These three positions represent the most senior level of civil service and imperial administration, and they stand in a hierarchical order according to their authority, status, and salary. A Chancellor is superior to Grandee Secretary, with a Supreme Commander in a position equivalent to that of a Chancellor.

Title of Table Ten

The authors of Table Ten neither apply the collective name “the Three Excellencies” (*san gong* 三公) to the top three positions in the Han government—Chancellor, General, and Grandee Secretary nor use “the Three Excellencies” in the chapter title.⁵⁰ This is because in the late Western Han era and its aftermath, *san gong* referred to the top three government positions, but with different titles and co-equal powers rather than a hierarchy.⁵¹ The term *san gong* appears often in the *Shiji* conveying different

⁴⁸ Huang Jinyan 黃今言, *Qin-Han junzhi shilun* 秦漢軍制史論 (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 1993), p. 23.

⁴⁹ Yang Xudong 楊旭東 and Li Chuan 李川, “Han Wudi shi de jiangjun fenghao” 漢武帝時的將軍封號, *Wenshi zhishi*, 2007, no. 12, p. 34. For example, Wei Qing 衛青 was a Grand Palace Grandee (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫) before he was designated as General of Chariots and Cavalry in 129 B.C. See SJ 22/1135.

⁵⁰ The term *san gong* never indicates the positions of Chancellor, General, and Grandee Secretary in the *Shiji*. See Bu Xianqun 卜憲群, *Qin-Han guanliaozhidu* 秦漢官僚制度 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2002), p. 111.

⁵¹ In 1 B.C. the three top offices existed on equal terms but with different titles: Grand Minister of Works (*da sikong* 大司空), Grand Minister of Instruction (*da situ* 大司徒), and Marshal of State (*da sima* 大司馬). See An Zuozhang 安作璋 and Xiong Tieji 熊鐵基, *Qin-Han guanzhishigao* 秦漢官制史稿 (Ji’nan: Qi-Lu shushe, 1984), p. 7; Meng Xiangcai 孟祥才, *Zhongguo zhengzhizhidu tongshi* 中國政治制度通史, vol. 3, Qin-Han 秦漢 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1996), p. 154.

meanings and referring to individuals or to a specific title, but not to the top three positions in the Han government. For example, it is said that when Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (*c.* 200–121 B.C.) held the position of Grandee Secretary, he was in the office of *san gong*.⁵² In this case *san gong* refers to one specific office of the Grandee Secretary.⁵³ This is the reason that Table Ten is not entitled “the Table of the Three Excellencies.”

Another question is why the author(s) of the Table did not specify the term Grandee Secretary but mentioned only prominent officials (*mingchen* 名臣) in the title. My explanation is that both the Generals and the Chancellors were ennobled with *lie hou*, the twentieth order of the aristocratic ranks, but the Grandee Secretaries were civil servants and not ennobled.⁵⁴ Only on special occasions did the emperor promote them to the nineteenth rank of a *guannei hou*.⁵⁵ That did not belong to the high order (*gaojue* 高爵),⁵⁶ which was a privilege belonging to marquis (so-called *houjue* 侯爵) and Chancellor and General-in-chief (so-called *guanjue* 官爵), because a *guannei hou* enjoyed only tax income from his fief (*shiyi* 食邑) but was not granted land ownership and the authority to govern a kingdom (*guo* 國) like the marquis. In other words, *guannei hou* was an aristocratic rank within the bureaucratic system, the so-called *lijue* 吏爵, while the Grandee Secretaries were basically bureaucrats. Once they were dismissed from their positions, they had no income, status, or privileges.⁵⁷ (In the very early years of the Han dynasty some Grandee Secretaries are ennobled before appointment.) From this perspective, the Grandee Secretary was an official (*chen* 臣) within the Han bureaucracy, as reflected in the chapter title. In the arrangement of the chapter title one consistently discerns Sima Qian’s concept of the hierarchical order of aristocratic ranks (*ming zunbei* 明尊卑).⁵⁸

⁵² SJ112/2951; HS 58/2614; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, vol. 9 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 638. Huang Qingxuan 黃慶萱 explains that Gonsun Hong still served as interim Grandee Secretary during the first five months after he was promoted to Chancellor. See Huang Qingxuan, “Gongsun Hong wei xueguan kaoshi” 公孫弘為學官考釋, *Dalu zazhi* 32, no. 5 (March 1966), p. 23.

⁵³ Sima Zhen explained that the positions of the Chancellor, Supreme Commander, and “Three Excellencies” were being established. He referred to the Grandee Secretary as the “Three Excellencies” (SJ 22/1119, “xiang wei” 相位).

⁵⁴ Zhu Shaohou, *Jungong juezhi yanjiu*, pp. 65–66.

⁵⁵ The popular occasion was when the Heir Apparent was announced, for example in 67 B.C. and 46 B.C. See Zhu Shaohou, *Jungong juezhi yanjiu*, pp. 113 and 117.

⁵⁶ This term is derived from Loewe, “The Orders of Aristocratic Rank of Han China,” p. 112.

⁵⁷ Zhu Shaohou, *Jungong juezhi yanjiu*, pp. 252–53.

⁵⁸ SJ 17/803.

The sequence of the three positions in Table Ten's title is not the same as the sequence in the first column of the Table itself. The title begins with the General (the military), which is followed by the Chancellor and the Grandee Secretary; but in the first column of the Table the position of Chancellor is listed above the other two. From a chronological perspective, the chapter title reflects the fact that incumbents of the Chancellor's position were from the military or were men with military experience before the founding of the Han dynasty; and in the early years of the dynasty at least, they were enfeoffed as marquises before they took the office of Chancellor.⁵⁹ In the later years of the Western Han dynasty a new type of military man, such as Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief (*da sima da jiangjun* 大司馬大將軍), rose to power. Given that information on the deaths or dismissals of Chancellors in inverted texts becomes scarce or irregular after 155 B.C., as does information regarding promotions to Chancellor from the Grandee Secretary or other offices,⁶⁰ the monopolization of power by the military in the later years of the Western Han dynasty is evident. This might be what led Sima Qian and his continuator(s) to agree on the arrangement of positions in the chapter title, which has the military (*jiang* 將) listed first. From the institutional perspective, Table Ten emphasizes the position of the Chancellor, an office that wielded the power of government, rather than the General or the Grandee Secretary. This fact helps to explain why the Chancellor was listed first in the Table. This dual focus will be elaborated upon below.

Characteristics of Table Ten

Leaving aside its inverted texts, at first glance Table Ten appears to be like the other tables: it has information arranged horizontally and vertically and conveys considerable narrative force and authorial intent.⁶¹ Given the fact that terms such

⁵⁹ Xiao He 蕭何 was in charge of transportation of provisions and defending the area of Shu 蜀 (SJ 18/ 892); Cao Can 曹參 joined Liu Bang as a general (SJ 18/881); Chen Ping 陳平 was a Capital Commandant before his ennoblement (SJ 18/887); Wang Ling 王陵 was a troop leader when he followed Liu Bang (SJ 18/924). They had earned their aristocratic status through military service.

⁶⁰ In 20 B.C. when Xue Xuan was promoted to Chancellor, his original appointment as a Grandee Secretary is not noted. The same year Wang Jun 王駿 was appointed Grandee Secretary, but the occasion goes unmentioned. See SJ 22/1155.

⁶¹ Griet Vankeerberghen, "The Table (*biao*) in Sima Qian's *Shi ji*: Rhetoric and Remembrance," in *Graphics and Text in the Production of Technical Knowledge in China: The Warp and the Weft*, ed. Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, and Georges Métailié (Leiden: Brill, 2007), p. 295.

as “*gong*” 功 (merit) and “*ming*” 名 (fame) appear in Table Six and Table Ten in connection with the aristocrats who have earned their status based on merit, it reflects the author’s belief that they are as important as the nobles by birth recorded in other tables.

The concept of power-holding plays a crucial role in Sima Qian’s decision to arrange his narratives as he does. In Table Ten, however, it is not his purpose to focus on the political career of the occupants of the Chancellor’s office, but rather to explore the development and powers of this office. Although Table Ten identifies who occupies the position, when, and with what background, more important, it reveals who the true power holder was during various periods of Han history. If we look into related chapters of *Shiji* we also learn why they hold such power.

When we examine the regular and inverted texts we learn about the rise and fall of individual incumbents, but when we survey all entries in a certain row over a period of 186 years, we can understand the evolution of the office because inverted texts highlight the changes. Thus, these inverted texts are intended for reference rather than subtle judgements. The authors of Table Ten faithfully preserved the past without making personal judgements like the “praise and blame” (*baobian* 褒貶) found in biographies. The design of this layout is chosen from the very beginning of the compilation of Table Ten, and its regular and inverted texts cannot be separated from each other. Although the inverted texts did not receive scholarly attention until the Qing period, it does not mean that Sima Qian and his continuator(s) did not have their purpose and design in mind before they set out to compile it.

The Inverted Texts and the *Tilan* Device

The inclusion in Table Ten of sixty-eight entries in reverse or upside down format, thirty-eight in the earlier part and thirty in the latter, is a unique feature not seen in the nine other tables of the *Shiji* or the eight tables of the *Hanshu* or anywhere else in the Standard Histories.⁶² After *Shiji*, no other scholar ever attempted to compile tables in this way. More mysterious is the way they are presented by the author(s). Each of the inverted scripts is lifted one row above the grid where the incumbent is recorded and a few columns to the left. Modern Chinese scholars have labelled this technique as *tilan*, which means “lifted above the register” or “raised out of row.” The inverted texts were never seen until publication of the Jingyou edition in the Song period, as previously discussed, and they went unmentioned until the Qing. The Jingyou edition is the first complete printed version of the *Shiji* at our disposal, and it must be assumed that the *tilan* feature existed already in earlier manuscripts.

⁶² Loewe, *The Men Who Governed Han China*, p. 245.

The inverted texts are certainly neither random or erroneous entries nor what some scholars have called “mistakes by the printer,” “texts inadvertently placed incorrectly,” or “interpolations, not written by Sima Qian.”⁶³ On the contrary, they are created for a special purpose: they record *negative* events that might lead to political changes: dismissals (for illness, incompetence, or criminal conduct), resignations (on the grounds of age or ill health), judicial indictments, and deaths of the top three officials: Chancellors, Supreme Commanders (Generals), and Grandee Secretaries. Although some inverted texts do not initially seem to be negative based solely on their entries, after following their historical backgrounds to the larger context as the author(s) wanted readers to do, we realize that their placement within the Table is completely justified and this feature was determined by the author(s) and not added at a later stage. (For a discussion of individual variations in each row, please see below.)

Qing scholar Wang Yue 汪樾 (in the early eighteenth century) was the first person to pay attention to this extraordinary feature of reversed entries. He believed that the inverted texts have special meaning but did not elaborate on his observation except to assert that Sima Qian inverted the deaths of the Chancellors in order to draw attention to the position as the apex of the bureaucratic hierarchy.⁶⁴ Wang admits that he does not understand the inverted technique and awaits future studies for a definite answer. He also does not mention the *tilan*-device. Like Wang Yue, most *Shiji* scholars during the Qing period focused on correcting errors in Table Ten and inserting more relevant information from various editions and historical works, but they avoided discussion of the inverted text.⁶⁵ I argue that they failed to understand the inverted texts and the *tilan*-device because they did not grasp its multi-reference function and the true purpose behind the inverted texts. The inverted texts are not simply reversed data as the Table superficially suggests, but have multiple reference functions (elaborated below) including that of highlighting the “real power structure” and identifying the true power holders in the Han government. Surely the credit for pioneering the idea of inverting information related to regular texts and the invention of the *tilan*-device should not be denied to Sima Qian and his continuator(s) simply because Qing scholars failed to discern their meaning and significance.

⁶³ Fu Sinian 傅斯年, in Wang Shumin, *Shiji jiaozheng*, p. 980. Liu Xianxi 劉咸忻, in Yang Yanqi 楊燕起, ed., *Shiji jiping* 史記集評, vol. 6 of *Shiji yanjiu jicheng*, p. 345.

⁶⁴ Wang Yue, “Du *Shiji* shibiao” 讀史記十表, in *Ershiwu shi bubian* 二十五史補編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), p. 22.

⁶⁵ The *Shiji jiping* assembles comments on Table Ten from seven Qing scholars. Among them only Liu Xianxin pays attention to the inverted texts, but he does not know the reason for them and assumes that they are mistakes made during the copying or printing process. See Yang Yanqi, *Shiji jiping*, pp. 341–45.

Certainly, the Table could offer the same or even greater visual clarity if the inverted texts remained in the same row and were written in red.⁶⁶ However, from a study of the recently excavated Fuyang 阜陽 bamboo strips of c. 165 B.C., we find that there is red ink applied to the bamboo strips to make the short horizontal lines for the “year table” but found for no text other than drawn lines. The red ink is not used for writing the texts.⁶⁷ It is not certain that red colour will darken with time. Whichever material the compiler of Table Ten might have chosen to write on, they had reservations using different colours to denote their purposes.

Viewing a series of inverted texts in a single row, the multi-reference function becomes apparent. For example, when the reader browses the eight inverted entries pertaining to the Supreme Commander in the earlier half of Table Ten, he or she is able to gain an overview of this position, especially its connection to major state events. They show that the Supreme Commander was appointed when a crisis occurred and was dismissed when the crisis was over. Ultimately, the appointments and the inverted entries ceased in 139 B.C. when newly enthroned Wudi assumed military authority. During the long reign of Wudi, entries recording the deaths and dismissals of the Generals were not reversed, but after 87 B.C. entries pertaining to the deaths and removals of the Marshals-of-State-and-Generals-in-Chief were once again reversed.⁶⁸ This observation reflects the dual reference function of the inverted texts, which directs the reader to related chapters in sections of *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. There, he or she can find an explanation for the discrepancy, namely that the Supreme Commanders had military power while the Generals during Wudi’s reign did not; but then the Marshals-of-State-and-Generals-in-Chief in post-Wudi eras wielded both political and military power. Through the inverted entries in this row the author(s) convey information about the differences between these three military positions, and the nature of the power shift transpiring in the Western Han dynasty.

Sima Qian’s scheme of referencing is similar to our modern feature of footnotes or endnotes. In contemporary research we offer readers an opportunity to consult the sources upon which we have drawn. To remind the reader of our responsibility as scholars, we separate our text from footnotes or endnotes and insert them at the

⁶⁶ Chen Zhi 陳直, *Shiji xinzheng* 史記新證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), pp. 59–60.

⁶⁷ This information is provided by Hu Pingsheng 胡平生, author of many publications about this excavation.

⁶⁸ The deaths of Wang Jie in 41 B.C. and Wang Feng in 22 B.C. are not recorded in Table Ten. Wang Jie and Wang Feng were the first two of five Marshals-of-State from the Wang family, relatives of Wang Mang. See HS 19b/818 and 830. Xu Jia succeeded Wang Jie in 41 B.C. and was dismissed in 30 B.C. due to old age. Table Ten overlooks Xu’s true title of Marshal-of-State-and-General-of-Chariots-and-Cavalry. See SJ 22/1154; HS 19b/819.

bottom of the page or on another page. When he used bamboo strips to make a reference, Sima Qian had the same consideration: where and how to place the documentation. He needed to offer information and references at the same time, but he also wanted to draw the reader's attention in a way that would not confuse him. Table Ten is a horizontal table in which historical information is chronologically ordered from right to left.⁶⁹ In other words, Sima Qian needed to consider how to offer a browsing effect and to present essential information at the same time. So motivated, he chose to display the inverted texts in the blank margin on the left side of the entry field one row above and a few columns to the left, because, in general, several years pass between the time a position holder is appointed and the time he dies or is dismissed. It is therefore necessary to record the information in a separate row.

Two events, such as a gift of gold and the appointment of a Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent, are recorded upside down. They appear to be positive and therefore inappropriately inverted. However, they entail negative events after careful examination of their backgrounds. The inverted entry of 135 B.C. noting the appointment of [Zhuang] Qingdi 莊青翟 as Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent (*taizi taifu* 太子太傅) is documented in the row for the Generals, but this appointment is in fact a demotion. If we look a few columns to the right and one row below, as Sima Qian wanted us to do, we realize that Zhuang was originally a Grandee Secretary and was being demoted to Grand Tutor. This inverted text was therefore situated exactly where it should be. Two entries concern imperial gifts of gold and both events were related to the retirements of the recipients. It is comparable to our university offering us a good retirement deal to entice us to retire early; the Han emperors gave gifts of gold as gestures of appreciation for their service, but they were ushering the incumbents out the door. In 67 B.C. [Wei] Xian 韋賢 was given a hundred catties of gold. This inverted text does not tell us the reason, but the continuator invites us to find the answer for ourselves, through his inverted text and *tilan*-device. When we trace his reference on the Table back to 71 B.C. we recognize that Wei Xian was appointed as Chancellor; and when we look one row below this inverted entry, we see that Wei Xian was replaced by his successor, the Grandee Secretary Wei Xiang 魏相, in the same year that Wei Xian retired. The situation (also involving a gift of gold) was similar in the case of the inverted text of 30 B.C., which is recorded in the row for Chancellors. [Xu] Jia 許嘉 was ordered to turn in his seal with sash because he was being removed (*mian* 免) from his position. In turn, he was given two hundred catties of gold. Moreover, as this inverted entry also tells us, the emperor dispatched the Superintendent of the Imperial Household, Xu Jia's supervisor, to collect the seal.

⁶⁹ I adopt the terminology from Loewe, *The Men Who Governed Han China*, p. 210.

When we follow the inverted text references, we discover that the entry of 41 B.C. records Xu Jia's three titles: [Marshal-of-State-and-] General-of-Chariots-and-Cavalry ([*da sima*] *juji jiangjun*), Palace Attendant (*shizhong* 侍中), and Imperial Household Grandee (*guanglu dafu* 光祿大夫). This information reveals the quiet transfer of power within the Han bureaucracy. The two entries are thus situated where they should be and are not in error.

A graphic overview of the information related to the top three positions also clarifies why Sima Qian needed to apply the *tilan* technique. His design offers readers, contemporaneous and future, a quick and convenient means to browse, or a synoptic view of events in Han history in the form of a table that can be displayed on a desk. It also provides a cue to the reader. The out-of-row and inverted entries announcing deaths or other unfortunate events invite the reader to seek more information about the origins of the incumbent a few columns back and one row below. The *tilan* feature thus points the way from events to people.

Michael Loewe suggests that it would have been much easier to insert revised entries on a text that is written on paper rather than on wooden strips. The Fuyang excavation sheds new light on the production of bamboo strips in the pre-paper age. By 165 B.C. the Han Chinese were already able to make bamboo strips as thin as 0.1–0.2 cm, and the paper-thin strips or slips could be bound with three strings to make a flat sheet.⁷⁰ Even more amazing, they could be preserved for over two millennia. From many excavations we know that silk was also a popular stationary for writing during this same period, but it is not easy to make corrections and additions on silk. Improved technology that allowed for a series of bamboo strips to be turned into a convenient paper-like material for writing permitted Sima Qian to make a narrative table and employ the *tilan* device. Therefore, we can say that the idea of writing a narrative table and inserting inverted texts in a *tilan* presentation were products of Sima Qian's time and the conditions of his world. The inventions of paper and woodblock printing made it possible to replace the paper-like bamboo strips, but as with silk, paper still could not overcome the inconvenience associated with making corrections and additions until the advent of movable type.

Contents of Table Ten

It is important to closely scrutinize the contents of the Table in each of the four rows and to understand the irregularities in order to bring to light the multi-reference function of the inverted texts and the purposes of the author(s).

⁷⁰ Li Xiaochun 李曉春, “Fuyang Hanjian guo zhi guibao” 阜陽漢簡國之瑰寶, *Wenshi zhishi*, 2000, no. 6, p. 44.

The Row on Major Events of State

The thirty-four inverted entries in the row for Major Events of State, twenty in the earlier part and fourteen in the latter, document the dates of the deaths or dismissals of Chancellors, their personal names, and the causes of their deaths or dismissals. These entries can be as short as two characters or as long as ten.⁷¹ In the row for Major Events of State, three characters are employed to represent the deaths of three major political groups: The character *beng* 崩 represents the death of an emperor, empress, or empress dowager; and *hong* 蔴 is used for the death of a king (from either the Liu family or another), a royal prince, or a princess. Both of these announcements are recorded in the regular texts. A Chancellor's death is, however, termed either *hong* or *zu* 卒 and the entry is placed in the inverted text. If a Chancellor suffers the death penalty due to a crime, the term used is *si* 死, and the entry is recorded in the inverted text.⁷²

Wang Yue did not understand why Sima Qian applied *hong* to the deaths of Chancellors.⁷³ In fact, only five Chancellors in all of Table Ten are given the character of *hong* to mark their exceptional political importance, albeit all Chancellors were ennobled as marquis. The deaths of Xiao He 蕭何 (193 B.C.), Chen Ping 陳平 (178 B.C.), Cai Yi 蔡義 (71 B.C.), Huang Ba 黃霸 (51 B.C.), and Wei Xuancheng 韋玄成 (36 B.C.) are so designated in Table Ten. If we trace the deeds of Xiao He and Chen Ping back to Table Six, we discover that Xiao He assisted Liu Bang in pacifying the marquis, establishing state laws, and founding the imperial clan temples (*zuo shang ding zhuhou wei faling li zongmiao* 佐上定諸侯為法令立宗廟)⁷⁴ and that Chen Ping contributed to dynastic consolidation for Liu Bang by offering six extraordinary strategies (*chu liu qi ji ding tianxia* 出六奇計定天下).⁷⁵ Sima Qian decides to give their merits special honours and he applies *hong* to their deaths because they helped establish the imperial clan temples and stabilize the country (*yi de li zongmiao ding sheji* 以德立宗廟定社稷).⁷⁶

⁷¹ Sima Qian recorded the death of Shentu Jia in 155 B.C. as “*Jia zu*” 嘉卒, while he referred to the dismissal of Zhou Bo 周勃 in 177 B.C. as “*shiyi yue renzi Bo mian xiang zhi guo*” 十一月壬子勃免相之國. See SJ 22/1126 and 1134.

⁷² The death of Gongsun He 公孫賀 in 92 B.C. is an example.

⁷³ Wang Yue, “*Du Shiji shibiao*,” p. 342.

⁷⁴ SJ 18/892.

⁷⁵ SJ 18/887.

⁷⁶ SJ 18/877.

Although *hong* is used more frequently and casually in the *Hanshu* than in the *Shiji*,⁷⁷ the deaths of Cai Yi and Huang Ba in Table Ten are termed *hong* for similar reasons. Cai Yi, as a specialist of the *Book of Poetry* and teacher of Zhaodi 昭帝 (r. 87–74 B.C.), established policies to stabilize the throne and the state (*ding ce an zongmiao* 定策安宗廟)⁷⁸ during his tenure as the Chancellor (74–71 B.C.). Huang Ba is famous for his outstanding governance, the best in the country (*zhi wei tianxi diyi* 治為天下第一)⁷⁹ and because of his excellent skills he was promoted to Grandee Secretary and ennobled with the nineteenth rank of *guannei hou*. In 55 B.C. he was promoted to the Chancellor's position.⁸⁰ The continuator of Table Ten understood Sima Qian's concept of contributions and power mentioned above and therefore applied *hong* to the deaths of these two men.

The special attention given to the death of Wei Xuancheng is probably an authorial error. Although Wei Xuancheng was promoted from Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent to Grandee Secretary and then to Chancellor, according to his biography his contributions to the state did not match those of his father Wei Xian.⁸¹ Wei Xian exhibited outstanding scholarship, specializing in the *Book of Rites*, *Book of Documents*, and *Book of Poetry*, and this led to his reputation as the “Great Scholar from Zou-Lu” (*Zou-Lu da ru* 鄒魯大儒). As Chancellor, Wei Xian's contributions to the state surpass his scholarship. When Zhaodi passed away without an heir, retired Wei Xian and the new Chancellor Huo Guang helped Xuandi 宣帝 (r. 74–49 B.C.) ascend to the throne, for which Wei was awarded the title of *guannei hou*. Therefore, Ban Gu recognizes his role in stabilizing the imperial line (*an zongmiao*).⁸²

Two more entries in the row for Major Events of State show some irregularity as well. One is written in reverse: “The Grand Coachman and Marquis of Ruyin, his Excellency Teng, died” (*Taipu Ruyinhou Tenggong zu* 太僕汝陰侯滕公卒), but he does not seem to qualify for placement here. His Excellency Teng or Tenggong refers to Xiahou Ying 夏侯嬰 (?–172 B.C.), whose death is marked with honours equal to those of a Chancellor because he once saved the lives of the future emperor, Huidi 惠帝 (r. 195–188 B.C.), and his sister during the civil war period and later helped the

⁷⁷ Chi Changhai 池昌海, “*Shiji* zhong ju lizhi jiazhi de ‘si’ yi ciyu yuyong xuanze de fuzaxing ji qi yuanyin” 《史記》中具禮制價值的「死」義詞語用選擇的複雜性及其原因, *Xiuci xuexi*, 2000, no. 1, p. 22.

⁷⁸ HS 66/2898–99.

⁷⁹ HS 89/3631–32.

⁸⁰ SJ 22/1150.

⁸¹ HS 73/3115.

⁸² Ibid.

ascendance of Wendi 文帝 (r. 180–157 B.C.).⁸³ Due to his extraordinary merit Xiahou was bestowed a fief at Teng and his death is treated as one of the major events of state.

The other irregularity in the row for Major Events of State appears in 130 B.C. with the entry “in the tenth month Guan Fu and his entire family were sentenced to death and the corpse of Marquis of Weiqi was displayed in the marketplace” (*shiyue zu Guan Fu jia qi Weiqihou shi* 十月族灌夫家弃魏其侯市).⁸⁴ The information here concerns one of the major political power struggles between two royal clans during the reign of Wudi. One clan is represented by Dou Ying 獬嬰 (Marquis of Weiqi) and the other by Tian Fen 田蚡 (Marquis of Wu'an 武安), both of whom were related by marriage to the imperial house. Dou Ying and his faithful adherent, Guan Fu, died as a result of false charges flying between the two royal clans.⁸⁵ Although Sima Qian portrayed Guan Fu as a man of unyielding character in the biography, he did not intend to praise Guan in this Table but simply to highlight this historical event. The inverted entry here is to remind the readers to seek more information in other sections and to learn more about this complicated political situation in the early years of the reign of Wudi. In Sima Qian's eyes, the deaths of these two men were intertwined with major events of state, and the entry is therefore appropriately placed.

The Row for the Chancellor's Position

Table Ten enumerates thirty-eight Chancellors appointed by the Han government.⁸⁶ Their appointments, ennoblements, transfers, or re-appointments are recorded in the regular texts. The designation as Chancellor of Zhang Cang in 176 B.C. marks a turning point.⁸⁷ Under Liu Bang, the Chancellor's position was occupied either

⁸³ See SJ 95/2666–67; Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods* (221 BC–AD 24) (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 596–97.

⁸⁴ SJ 22/1135.

⁸⁵ For more on the power struggle between Dou Ying and Tian Fen, see SJ 107/2839–56 and Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, pp. 135–71.

⁸⁶ The promotion of Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 from Grandee Secretary to Chancellor in 78 B.C. is not recorded in Table Ten and thus is not included here. Xiao He and Cao Can were appointed as Chancellors of State (*xiangguo* 相國). This title was then replaced by Chancellor (*chengxiang* 丞相) when Wang Ling and Chen Ping were named to the office in 189 B.C. See SJ 22/1122.

⁸⁷ Zhang Cang served as a scribe in the office of Grandee Secretary in the Qin Empire. He then joined Liu Bang's rebellion and led troops into several battles. After Liu Bang became the emperor, Zhang served several kings as Chancellor before he was appointed as Grandee Secretary in 180 B.C. Four years later he was promoted to Chancellor by Wendi. Zhang remained in that position for fifteen years and later died at over a hundred years of age.

(Continued on next page)

by a Supreme Commander or a marquis with military accomplishments, with the exception of Shen Yiji 審食其.⁸⁸ Although Zhang Cang, the Marquis of Beiping, was the first Grandee Secretary to be promoted to Chancellor, he did in fact have an outstanding record of military service. In other words, military men headed the government and shared decision-making power during the early years of Han history. Sima Qian comments that “for more than twenty years, from the rise of the Han [dynasty] through the reign of Xiao Wen [di], the world under heaven enjoyed peace. The offices of the Generals, Chancellors, Excellencies, and Ministers were occupied by military men.”⁸⁹ However, the situation has changed after the appointment of Zhang Cang. Between the years 176 and 20 B.C., seventeen of the thirty-one Chancellors were promoted from the position of Grandee Secretary and only seven from the military.⁹⁰ This trend reflects the state’s gradual takeover of the military.

Most modern historians note that none of the Grandee Secretaries wielded significant political influence as Chancellor, especially during the reign of Wudi, due to

(Note 87—Continued)

Zhang receives an individual biography in SJ 96/2680, which Nienhauser speculates might have been written by more than just Sima Qian. See William H. Nienhauser Jr., “Tales of the Chancellor(s): The Grand Scribe’s Unfinished Business,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 25 (2003), pp. 99–103.

⁸⁸ Shentu Jia, successor to Zhang Cang, was a Chief Commandant (*duwei* 都尉) and a Governor (*taishou* 太守 or *junshou* 郡守). See SJ 96/2682. The Commandery Governor was in charge of military affairs of a commandery before he was appointed Grandee Secretary. See Shi Ding 施丁, “Qin-Han junshou jian zhang junshi lueshuo” 秦漢郡守兼掌軍事略說, *Wenshi* 13 (March 1982), p. 61.

⁸⁹ SJ 96/2681. The Grandee Secretary oversees the Nine Ministers (*jiu qing* 九卿). See Rui Hezheng 茹和蒸, *Xi-Han yushi zhidu* 西漢御史制度 (Taibei: Jiaxin shuini gongsi wenhua jijinhui, 1964), p. 23.

⁹⁰ Two of these seven men from the military received their appointments due to political circumstances and imperial favour. Zhou Yafu 周亞夫 was promoted to Chancellor in 150 B.C. because he contributed to the suppression of the Rebellion of the Seven Kingdoms in 154 B.C. Zhou was relieved of his military authority as a Supreme Commander upon his promotion because he played an unfavourable role under Wendi. Gongsun He received imperial preferential treatment because his wife was the sister of Empress Wei 衛皇后. In several anti-Xiongnu campaigns during the reign of Wu di, Gongsun led troops as General of the Light Cavalry in 133 B.C. and 129 B.C., as General of Chariots and Cavalry in 124 B.C., and twice as General of the Left in 123 and 119 B.C. He was promoted to Chancellor in 103 B.C. See SJ 111/2941. Although Dou Ying and Tian Fen were promoted to the Chancellor’s position due to imperial favour, they soon either died or lost their positions.

a concentration of power in the hands of the emperor.⁹¹ Sima Qian once remarked that they were all “prudent, reserved, and incorruptible” (*chuochuo lianjin* 姮媨廉謹), but “could not display merit or garner fame in their own era or bring innovative ideas” (*wu suo neng faming gongming you zhu yu dangshi zhe* 無所能發明功名有著於當世者).⁹² Perhaps he surmised that none of them drew serious attention from the emperor or played a pivotal role in Han politics. Why did the Grandee Secretary become the first choice for the Chancellor’s position? Were they really politically incompetent, as Sima Qian perceived? Why would Wudi fill the two top positions with men lacking “innovative minds”? I will address these issues in the following pages.

In the row for the Chancellors there are, all told, eighteen inverted entries, eight in the earlier part and ten in the latter part of Table Ten. In the first half of the Table the author records the chronic creation and dissolution of the Supreme Commander’s position, “*zhi taiwei guan*” 置太尉官 and “*ba taiwei guan*” 罷太尉官, or “*mian taiwei*” 免太尉, in inverted texts without mentioning the names of its holders. Although not a permanent position, the Supreme Commander held an office that oversaw military administration for the whole state. His status and salary were equivalent to those of the Chancellor. He did not have the power to dispatch troops or recruit military officers, and the size of his staff was relatively small. Its duties included evaluating military achievements to determine promotions and awards and supervising the military service and troop management systems.⁹³ Although the establishment of the Supreme Commander’s position was essentially positive, when the Supreme Commander’s position was created, the state was facing a crisis, such as in 154 B.C. when the Supreme Commander was created because of the Rebellion of the Seven Kingdoms led by the states of Wu 吳 and Chu 楚. This was a decidedly negative event and supports my previous claim that the inverted texts always bear negative messages.

The Supreme Commander was called upon to mobilize troops in situations involving the death of the emperor or during crises such as rebellions or invasion by the Xiongnu, and this temporary position soon expired after the mission was fulfilled. From four regular texts in the row for the Generals we know that four individuals, Lu Wan 盧綰, Zhou Bo 周勃 (who received the same appointment twice), Zhou Yafu 周亞夫, and Tian Fen had been appointed to this position during the first seventy-eight

⁹¹ Li Yufu 李玉福, *Qin-Han zhidushi lun* 秦漢制度史論 (Ji’nan: Shangdong daxue chubanshe, 2004), p. 140.

⁹² SJ 96/2685; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records*, vol. 8 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 226.

⁹³ Huang Jinyan, *Qin-Han junzhi shilun*, p. 23.

years (206–139 B.C.) of Western Han history. The latter three men were promoted to Chancellor after being relieved as Supreme Commander, a common practice during that period. The position of Supreme Commander disappeared in Western Han history after the dismissal of Tian Fen in the second year of Wudi's reign (139 B.C.). Through only seven inverted entries, Sima Qian recounts both the institutional changes in the early Han period and the entire history of the Supreme Commander.

As mentioned earlier, the entries for the deaths or dismissals of the Generals during Wudi's reign are not reversed because the Generals did not have decision-making power; but the Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief in post-Wudi eras did. Although Wei Qing 衛青 received this title first in 119 B.C. Table Ten mentions neither his appointment nor his death in 106 B.C. because he did not hold decision-making power and only followed imperial orders. Huo Guang acquired this title in 87 B.C., and his death in 68 B.C. received an inverted entry because he was the true power holder during his twenty-year tenure under Zhaodi.⁹⁴ From 87 B.C. through the end of the Table in 20 B.C., the position of Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief was always filled, and appointments were never interrupted except for an interval of four years between 53 and 49 B.C. The deaths of the incumbents of this position are recorded in inverted texts. All of these facts support my argument that the idea of inverted entries indicates the power hierarchy.

The Row for the General's Position

The regular texts in the row for Generals reveal that the positions of Supreme Commander and General sometimes co-existed, especially during the reign of Wendi when the Han dynasty needed to mobilize troops to defend against Xiongnu invasions.⁹⁵ During this period the Supreme Commander mobilized the army and the Generals with various prefixes added to their titles to lead troops into battle. The Generals were responsible for the conduct of a campaign, the discipline of the officers

⁹⁴ Table Ten does not mention Huo Guang's complete title, but according to his biography his appointment as Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief was made in 87 B.C. See HS 68/2932.

⁹⁵ SJ 22/1130–31. In an inverted entry in 156 B.C. in the row for Chancellors, a Minister of Instruction (*situ* 司徒) is established instead of a Supreme Commander. Most modern critics believe that this is an interpolation. Cui Shi 崔適, *Shiji tanyuan* 史記探源 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), p. 99. Sima Qian tells us, however, that this position did exist during Zhou times. See SJ 33/1535; William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 5, part 1 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 150. During the Han period, a *situ* was equivalent in status to a General. Therefore, the entry for the Minister of Instruction is situated where it should be.

and men, and their performance in battle.⁹⁶ In the row for the Generals Sima Qian does not mention any of deaths or dismissals because they did not exercise decision-making power. However, he does cite the execution of the Grand Usher Wang Hui 王恢 in 133 B.C., the death of the General of the Military Garrison Han Anguo 韓安國 in 128 B.C.,⁹⁷ and the suicides of the General of Qilian 邶連將軍 Tian Guangming 田廣明 and the General of Huya 虎牙將軍 Tian Shun 田順 in 71 B.C. Only the third entry is recorded in inverted texts with the *tilan*-device, but not the first two. As a matter of fact, these three entries are related to one of the most important political decisions and military operations in Han history. The entry of 133 B.C., marking Wudi's first attempt to launch a series of offensive wars against the Xiongnu, is associated with the entry of 71 B.C. when the Han army fought its last offensive war against the Xiongnu in Western Han history. For unknown reasons Sima Qian does not mention the debates over Wudi's war against the Xiongnu that raged between Han Anguo and Wang Hui.⁹⁸ Wang Hui's victory in the debates did not prevent the defeat of the Han dynasty in this war, which resulted in Wang's execution. Although the Han army returned from the frontier without a fight in 71 B.C., Tian Guangming was forced to commit suicide due to his misconduct.⁹⁹ This mobilization was the last offensive from the Han side.¹⁰⁰ By means of these entries, Table Ten guides readers through the long history of conflict between the Han Empire and its formidable enemy. Again, the multi-reference function of the inverted texts is on display.

⁹⁶ Michael Loewe, "The Structure and Practice of Government," in Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1: *The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC–AD 220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 480.

⁹⁷ Sima Qian contributes an individual biography of Han Anguo. See SJ 108/2857–65; Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, pp. 173–94. Han did not die at Yuyang 漁陽 as Sima reports in the Table, but of frustration after suffering demotion due to his miscalculation of the strength of the Xiongnu forces, an error that caused great losses to the Han army, according to Han Anguo's biography. Han Anguo was a Grandee Secretary before his appointment as General. See HS 52/2406.

⁹⁸ Ban Gu records the complete debates between these two men. See HS 52/2399–2404; Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Hanshu buzhu* 漢書補注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 22/3882–87.

⁹⁹ HS 90/3664.

¹⁰⁰ The Xiongnu confederation declined dramatically after a series of wars during Wudi's reign and in 51 B.C. its leader, Huanye Shanyu 呼韓邪單于 (r. 58–31 B.C.), sued for peace due to decades of internal power struggles and natural disasters. See Shu-hui Wu, "Debates and Decision-Making: The Battle of the Altai Mountains (Jinweishan) in AD 91," in *Debating War in Chinese History*, ed. Peter A. Lorge (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 36.

Although Sima Qian does not intend to “praise and blame” the deeds of these military men and means only to reveal the hierarchical status of the various Generals and their roles and functions in the campaigns against the Xiongnu, his text arrangement does tell us that the frequent and diverse appointments of Generals during the reign of Wendi had a different purpose from those in the years of Wudi. The former aimed at fighting defensive wars, while the latter launches offensive wars. Sima Qian exposes this difference by recording attacks of the Xiongnu in the entry field for Major Events of State and mentioning Han offensives against the Xiongnu as well as wars against other states like Chaoxian 朝鮮, Nanyue 南越, and Dongyue 東越 in entries that appear in the row for the General’s position. The Xiongnu were Han’s most formidable enemies, but the Nanyue, Chaoxian, and Dongyue were conquered subjects. This arrangement reveals once again the importance of the power hierarchy in Sima Qian’s concept of political order.

In post-Wudi periods, as we see from the latter half of the Table, more Generals carried the hybrid title of Marshal-of-State, and because they exercised power in state and military affairs, their unfortunate endings were reported in inverted entries. The actual power of the Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief came to surpass that of the Chancellor. The regular text in the latter half of the Table shows that over the course of the Western Han, information regarding the Chancellor became increasingly scarce, whereas references to the Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief and his activities multiplied significantly.¹⁰¹ For example, Huo Yu was a Gentleman of the Imperial Household (*zhonglang* 中郎) before he was appointed General of the Right and promoted one year later to Marshal-of-State. His death and his name are recorded in an inverted format and placed in the entry field for the office of Chancellors according to the principle of *tilan*, suggesting that Huo Yu was the chief power holder in his capacity as leader of the Central Court and a major decision-maker in the government. However, the position of Chancellor persisted throughout the Han dynasty and according to the Table its hierarchical order stayed above that of the Marshal-of-State-and-General-in-Chief, although the real power had shifted to the latter.

¹⁰¹ The table does not fully or faithfully record the wars against the Qiang 羌 people, although they had become the main threat of the dynasty. In 46 B.C. the Superintendent of the Capital (*zhijinwu* 執金吾) Feng Fengshi 馮奉世 was appointed General of the Right. His suppression of the Qiang riot and his subsequent promotion to General of the Left in 42 B.C. are not mentioned in this Table.

There are some irregularities in the inverted texts reporting the deaths or dismissals of the Grandee Secretaries in this row for the office of the Generals. Because they need to be discussed together with the office itself, I will resume the discussion below.

The Row for the Grandee Secretary's Position

Table Ten identifies fifty-one Grandee Secretaries, twenty-nine in the earlier half of the Table and twenty-two in the latter half.¹⁰² However, it neglects four incumbents appointed to this position: Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 (c. 152–80 B.C.) in 87 B.C., Cai Yi in 75 B.C.,¹⁰³ and both Xue Xuan 薛宣 and Wang Jun 王駿 in 20 B.C.¹⁰⁴ The Table includes one interpolation recording Can Mai's 岑邁 appointment in 151 B.C.¹⁰⁵ In the earlier part of the Table, seven Grandee Secretaries are promoted to Chancellor, among whom five are promoted during the reign of Wudi. In the latter half of the Table, which encompasses the post-Wudi eras, eleven of them are promoted to Chancellor. Their deaths or dismissals are treated like those of the regular Chancellors, receiving an inverted text and *tilan*. Although some of the Grandee Secretaries, especially those in the pre-Wudi period, were from the aristocratic class and had the rank of marquis, their deaths or dismissals are not recorded in inverted texts because they were simply assistants to the Chancellors and lacked decision-making power.

The other Grandee Secretaries do not receive any special attention from the author(s) upon their deaths or dismissals, except for eleven, whose entries are recorded in inverted texts and *tilan*. The earlier half of the Table mentions Zhou Ke's 周苛 death in 203 B.C., Zhao Yao's 趙堯 dismissal due to a crime in 189 B.C., Zhuang Qingdi's demotion in 135 B.C., and Zhang Tang's 張湯 suicide in 115 B.C. The latter half of the Table mentions seven men: Xue Guangde's 薛廣德 dismissal in 43 B.C., Zheng Hong's 鄭弘 dismissal in 37 B.C., Fan Yanshou's 繁延壽 death in 33 B.C.,¹⁰⁶ Zhang Tan's 張譚 death in 30 B.C., Zhang Zhong's 張忠 suicide in 23 B.C., and Yu Yong's 余永 death in 21 B.C.

¹⁰² Throughout the years of Western Han dynasty there were about seventy Grandee secretaries. See Rui Hezheng, *Xi-Han yushi zhidu*, p. 67.

¹⁰³ SJ 22/1144 and 1146; HS 19b/791 and 798. Sang Hongyang's promotion to Chancellor in 78 B.C. is not given in Table Ten, but rather in Table Eight. See SJ 20/1062. Ban Gu states that Sang was executed due to treason after seven years of service as Grandee Secretary. See HS 19b/791. Cai Yi was promoted to the Chancellor's position the following year, 74 B.C.

¹⁰⁴ HS 19b/832. Xue Xuan was promoted to Chancellor the same year.

¹⁰⁵ SJ 22/1131; HS 19b/763. Ban Gu does not mention him and there is no biographical record for him.

¹⁰⁶ Ban Gu records him as Li Yanshou 李延壽. See HS 19b/821.

To understand the irregularity, it is necessary to consult their biographies. In doing so we find that in the earlier half of the Table the deaths of the four Grandee Secretaries mentioned above have one thing in common: namely, behind each of their deaths is a political movement or incident to which they fell victim.¹⁰⁷ Modern historians suspect careless mistakes by the author(s) of the latter half of the Table regarding the seven Grandee Secretaries whose entries appear in inverted texts and *tilan* between 43 and 20 B.C. during the reigns of Yuandi and Chengdi.¹⁰⁸ But, in fact, their suspicions are groundless. From their biographical accounts we learn that once again these seven men had common backgrounds. They were not professional bureaucrats but Ruists (*rusheng* 儒生 or *boshi* 博士), individuals who studied Confucian disciplines and manifested outstanding literacy. Their appointments were related to the shift of political orientation, from over-emphasis on bureaucratic governance under Xuandi to the more literary and relaxed policies of Yuandi.¹⁰⁹ Wudi's policy of appointing Ruists to the Chancellor's position¹¹⁰ had been revived by Yuandi in his appointment of the Grandee Secretaries. Consequently, these Ruist Grandee Secretaries played major roles as advisors to the emperor and participated

¹⁰⁷ In 203 B.C. when Zhou Ke died, Liu Bang and Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 B.C.) decided upon Hongqu 洪渠 as the border between the Chu and the Han (*Chu-Han fenjie* 楚漢分界). In 189 B.C., as soon as Empress Dowager Lü 呂太后 (regent 188–180 B.C.) seized power, Zhao Yao was dismissed because he once tried unsuccessfully to protect Liu Bang's son, Ruyi 如意, King of Zhao 趙王, from her persecution. The two entries on Cen Mai 岑邁 are problematic because he is not mentioned elsewhere in historical records. These may be interpolations. In 135 B.C. Zhuang Qingdi fell victim to the conflict between Wudi and his grandmother, Empress Dowager Dou 竇太后, who represented two rival factions (one pro-Confucian and one pro-Daoist) contending to establish the official state ideology. Because Zhuang supported Dou, he was dismissed from office and demoted to Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent upon the death of the Empress Dowager. In 118 B.C. Zhuang Qingdi was promoted to Chancellor, but in 115 B.C. he and Zhang Tang, who represented the cream of Wudi's new personnel policies, were forced to commit suicide due to conflict between the Chancellor (the Ruists) and the Grandee Secretary (the bureaucrats). See HS 59/2643–45. Zhang Tang's son, Zhang Anshi, was the Marshal-of-State-and-General-of-Chariots-and-Cavalry and many of his descendants were enfeoffed as marquises. Ban Gu comments that since the founding of the Han dynasty no noble family had ever enjoyed the glory and honour accorded the Zhangs. See HS 59/2657.

¹⁰⁸ Zhang Dake, “Shixi jiangxiangbiao zhi jiegou yu daoshu” 試析將相表之結構與倒書, in *Shiji yanjiu jicheng*, vol. 11, p. 493.

¹⁰⁹ HS 9/298. Ban Gu notes that Yuandi opposed Xuandi's dependence on bureaucrats to rule the country and preferred the Ruists.

¹¹⁰ The decree is documented by Ban Gu. See HS 6/160–61; HS 81/3366, Ban Gu's comment.

in discussions of state policies.¹¹¹ In other words, the Grandee Secretaries exercised decision-making power from 43 B.C. through 20 B.C., and they were therefore recorded with inverted texts and *tilan* in the latter half of Table Ten. Two decades later, during the reign of Pingdi 平帝 (r. 1 B.C.–A.D. 6), last emperor of the Western Han dynasty, this position ceased to exist.¹¹² Again, the inverted texts and the *tilan* device are employed in the row for Grandee Secretaries to highlight the evolution of this position in Western Han history.

In conclusion, the inverted texts and the *tilan* device closely connect the four rows on Major Events of State, Chancellors, Generals, and Grandee Secretaries and reflect a unique method of illuminating the nature of the institutional transitions occurring over this span of 186 years. Moreover, through means of this graphic table design Sima Qian and his continuator(s) provide for their readers a visual depiction illustrating the complexities of shifting power in the Han government.

Power Play within the Western Han Government

From the present version of Table Ten it appears that during the pre- and post-Wudi periods it was almost customary for military leaders or Grandee Secretaries to be promoted to the position of Chancellor with a noble rank. This was not, however, so common during Wudi's reign.¹¹³ Here, then, I explore the trends in Western Han administration with particular emphasis on the reign of Wudi.

None of Wudi's Grandee Secretaries had noble rank, while many Chancellors came directly from the offices of the Nine Ministers and were not ennobled until their promotions. As well, they had long resumes of bureaucratic service before they became Chancellors. That is, Wudi's top men had to start from the base of the bureaucratic system. Examples from the Table include the following: Zhao Zhou 趙周 was a Grand Tutor to the Heir Apparent before 115 B.C.; Gongsun He 公孫賀 was a Grand Coachman before 103 B.C., and Tian Qianqiu 田千秋 was a Grand Herald (*dahonglu* 大鴻臚) before 89 B.C. Why did Wudi decide to promote fresh talents of lesser nobility, or even commoners? What were the criteria he employed in recruitment? To answer these questions we need to look at the political and social context of Wudi's China and seek information beyond Table Ten, especially in the Hanshu. Only then can we understand this new type of civil servant.

¹¹¹ Zheng Hong, HS 66/2902–7; Xue Guangde, HS71/3046–48; Yu Yong, HS 71/3046; Kuang Heng 匡衡, HS 81/3331–46.

¹¹² Rui Hezheng, *Xi-Han yushi zhidu*, p. 74.

¹¹³ Only three out of twelve Chancellors were from the office of Grandee Secretary: Gongsun Hong (124 B.C.), Li Cai 李蔡 (121 B.C.), and Shi Qing (112 B.C.).

The Han territory under direct control of the central government expanded in two ways during the reign of Wudi: on the outskirts of the empire through warfare against non-Han states such as the Xiongnu and Chaoxian in the north and the Nanyue and Xi'nanyi 西南夷 in the south, resulting in adding two provinces (*zhou* 州), the Shuofang 朔方 and the Jiaozhi 交趾, to the empire;¹¹⁴ and through the policies of diminishment of the kingdoms and marquises.¹¹⁵ The increased number and functions of Generals in this Table reflect conditions of frequent warfare. The ennoblement of the thirty leaders of the non-Han states against which Wudi went to war confirms the success of his expansion into the south and southwest of China.¹¹⁶ Wudi demonstrated his willingness to share the newly expanded territory with his children and kinsmen and with the high nobles (163 in total as Table Nine indicates) without relinquishing the authority to govern; but soon he confiscated their lands due to crimes they had committed, or when they died without heirs, and he incorporated their fiefs into the Han's commandery system. In 106 B.C. the Han dynasty had 108 commanderies under the supervision of twelve higher administrative units, the newly established provinces by Wudi.¹¹⁷ Consequently, there was an urgent need for staff to

¹¹⁴ HS 28a/1543. According to Xin Deyong 辛德勇, Wudi reorganized the administrative units of the whole empire into twelve provinces in 108 B.C. See Xin Deyong, *Qin-Han zhengqu yu bianjie dili yanjiu* 秦漢政區與邊界地理研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), p. 126.

¹¹⁵ Wudi's grandfather, Wendi, began to divide big kingdoms in order to weaken them. For example, the Kingdom of Qi 齊 was divided into nine parts and the Kingdom of Huainan 淮南 was divided into four. See SJ19/997–1001 and 1003–4. Table Ten does not include this information. Wudi's father, Jingdi 景帝 (r. 157–141 B.C.), continued this policy and proceeded to annex parts of territories that belonged to various kings and marquises. The central government took over the fiefs and transformed them into commanderies (*jun* 郡) if the kings or marquises committed crimes or passed away without heirs. The governors (*taishou*) of the commanderies were directly appointed by the central government. By the time of the Rebellion of Seven Kingdoms in 154 B.C. the Han had direct control over twenty-four commanderies instead of the previous fifteen. Wang Hui 王恢, *Han wangguo yu houguo zhi yanbian* 漢王國與侯國之演變 (Taibei: Guoli bianyiguan Zhonghua congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, 1984), pp. 21–22. The division of the Kingdom of Liang 梁 into five parts in 144 B.C. was also one of the indicators that the power of the traditional nobility was waning and that control was shifting toward a more centralized government under the emperor, as Table Ten shows.

¹¹⁶ SJ 20/1027–32 and others. Table Eight provides information regarding these foreign nobles.

¹¹⁷ Zhou Zhenhe 周振鶴, “Han Wudi shisan cishibu suo shu junguo kao” 漢武帝十三刺史部所屬郡國考, in *Zhou Zhenhe zixuanji* 周振鶴自選集 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 1999), pp. 65–69. By 104 B.C. some twenty more new commanderies were added to the empire. See Loewe, “The Structure and Practice of Government,” p. 170.

manage this new, administrative complex, the newly established Central Court, and the growing number of commanderies and counties. Shrewdly, Wudi had his own candidates in mind.

Indeed, in many respects Wudi's reign was a watershed in Han history. New policies were implemented to address the intricacies and rapid pace of growth of society and this expanding empire. Han China's population during the early years of Wudi's reign numbered around thirty-six million.¹¹⁸ These measures, in fact, represented surprisingly modern initiatives. The demand for a larger pool of bureaucrats and administrators prompted Wudi to resort to new recruitment ideas in order to attract and train fresh talents to serve the state, measures crucial for bureaucratic development. Through several methods, including recommendations from local officials and standardized examinations, Wudi transformed two classes or groups in the Han government: civil servants (*shi 士*) and bureaucrats (*li 吏*). Moreover, these groups stood out due to screening procedures put in place to ensure high moral character and their possession of knowledge, skills, or prior experiences.¹¹⁹ They dominated the government and became the backbone of Wudi's innovative bureaucratic system. The emergence of these two groups also signalled the beginning of the protracted conflicts and power struggle throughout Han history.¹²⁰

Understanding the recruitment of fresh talents to staff the Han government is one key to our analysis because it entails a concerted effort to identify the qualities and qualifications requisite for serving as Grandee Secretary and Chancellor. In Table Ten Sima Qian fails to acknowledge Wudi's personnel revolution, or his call for a nationwide movement “Seeking Men of Integrity, Intelligence, and Literacy” (*zheng xianliang wenxue zhi shi 徵賢良文學之士*).¹²¹ But he gives accounts of Ruists who distinguished themselves in Confucian scholarship in the biographical section of the *Shiji*.¹²² Men like Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (c. 198–c. 107 B.C.) and Gongsun Hong attracted Wudi's attention and rose to importance because of their literary talent and

¹¹⁸ The population had fallen to thirty-two millions by the end of his reign. See Ge Jianxiong 葛劍雄, *Xi-Han renkou dili* 西漢人口地理 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1986), p. 76.

¹¹⁹ Wang Ying 王穎, “‘Sike qushi’ yu Handai yongren biaozhun” 「四科取士」與漢代用人標準, *Huainan shifan xueyuan xuebao*, 2010, no. 1, p. 85.

¹²⁰ Bu Xianqun, “Handai de wenli yu rusheng” 漢代的文吏與儒生, *Qin-Han shi luncong* 7 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1998), p. 239.

¹²¹ In 165 B.C. Wendi began this movement. For a discussion of it, see HS 49/2290–98. Wudi later modified his comprehensive personnel system, incorporating several other schools of thought that flourished during the Warring States period.

¹²² SJ 121/3115–30, “Rulin liezhuan” 儒林列傳. Gongsun Hong gets credit for suggesting this policy to Wudi.

knowledge of Confucian studies.¹²³ As well, in his Memoir of Harsh Bureaucrats Sima Qian narrates the governance of harsh local bureaucrats who used strict law codes and generate fear among the local elites.¹²⁴ Zhang Tang is representative of this group of bureaucrats and is noted in Table Ten because of his promotion to Grandee Secretary in 121 B.C.

Ban Gu's summary of the qualifications and individuals chosen and promoted by Wudi can best illuminate the diversity of talents discovered under this new recruitment policy. Most of the individuals were promoted to Grandee Secretaries and are thus listed in Table Ten:¹²⁵

Gongsun Hong, Bu Shi 卜式, and Ni Kuan 倪寬 . . . all had their origins amidst sheep and swine. If they had not lived at the right time, how could they have reached these [high] positions? At that time it had been more than sixty years since the rise of the Han, . . . When the sovereign had just begun to want to employ cultured and martial men, he sought them without attaining them. [Later] many civil servants arose and extraordinary men emerged. Bu Shi took the examination as a herder and [Sang] Hongyang emerged from among merchantmen. Wei Qing was originally a slave, and [Jin] Midi 金日磾 came from among surrendered prisoners. . . . The Han way of obtaining men [of talent] flourished during the time [of Wudi]. The fine Confucian scholars [who forged good policies] were Gongsun Hong, Dong Zhongshu, and Ni Kuan. Those with outstanding deeds in [governance] were Shi Jian 石建 and Shi Qing. Ji An 汲黯 and Bu Shi had strong senses of justice and righteousness. [Both excelled in advising the sovereign.] Han Anguo [specialized in the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 and commanded great powers of persuasion] and Zheng Dangshi 鄭當時 were adept at identifying other worthy men. Zhao Yu 趙禹 and Zhang Tang [rose to importance through their literary achievements and knowledge of law codes]. They [were famous for] the legal measures they

¹²³ SJ 121/ 3118–20 and 3127–28. Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, pp. 70–73, 125–28. Dong Zhongshu's rise to power later was later hindered by Gongsun Hong and others.

¹²⁴ SJ 122/3131–55. Xue Mingyang 薛明揚, “Xi-Han xunli kuli bian” 西漢循吏酷吏辨, *Qin-Han shi luncong* 6 (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1994), p. 201. Ironically, in the Memoir of Good Officials Sima Qian does not mention any of the Han bureaucrats. See SJ 119/3099–3103. Sima Qian does not insert his personal judgement into Table Ten, as mentioned before, but in the preface to the Memoir of Good Officials he comments that there is another way of governing people: using a sense of justice instead of strict laws. See SJ 119/3099.

¹²⁵ Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, pp. 391–94. See also SJ 112/2964–65; HS 58/2617–18; Wang Xianqian, *Hanshu buzhu*, 28/4236–37. Notice that Ban Gu improves the image of Gongsun Hong.

established. [Zhang specialized in the *Shangshu* and [co-]wrote a massive corpus of judicial law, guidelines for sentencing, and procedures for lawsuits,¹²⁶ all of which became models for future dynasties to follow.] . . . Yan Zhu and Zhu Maichen 朱買臣 [rose from obscurity and poverty. They were appointed Governor of Guiji 會稽 due to] their excellence in responding to the emperor's questions [and making suggestions accordingly]. . . . Sang Hongyang¹²⁷ [was a genius in finance. He served as a Chief Commandant for Grain (*zhisu jiaowei* 治粟校尉) under Wudi¹²⁸ and] was responsible for many financial and economic policies [such as the salt and iron monopolies, which generated great wealth to sponsor Wudi's wars and enriched the state treasury]. . . . Supporting dynamical stability were Huo Guang and Jin Midi. . . . Xuandi continued in this tradition . . . also had the Six Disciplines [of the Confucian School] deliberated and discussed. He selected and attracted many distinguished and extraordinary men. Xiao Wangzhi 蕭望之 . . . Wei Xuancheng . . . were advanced [to Grandee Secretary and Chancellor] because of their Confucian scholarship. . . . [Among] the Generals and the Chancellors were . . . Bing Ji 邗吉 . . . Yu Dingguo 于定國. [Yu's father was an excellent county judge. Yu acquired abundant legal knowledge and judicial skills from his father. He was committed to the Confucian *Chunqiu* school. He served as Commandant of Justice for eighteen years during the reign of Xuandi before being promoted first to Grandee Secretary and then to Chancellor.] For governing

¹²⁶ Although Sima Qian objectively describes the deeds of Zhang Tang, Zhao Yu, and others in the Memoir of Harsh Officials, he clearly prefers virtuous governance to punitive measures: “The legal codes are [only] the tools of governance, and they can never nourish a fair and just system of rulership” (*faling zhe zhi zhi ju er fei zhizhi qingzhuo zhi yuan ye* 法令者治之具而非制治清濁之源也). See SJ 62/3131. Zhang Tang brought to fulfilment the melding of the Confucian tradition with case-governed Legalism. See Benjamin E. Wallacker, “Han Confucianism and Confucius in China,” in David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuiin Tsien, eds., *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), p. 226.

¹²⁷ In fact, Sang Hongyang was making military plans. See Nienhauser, *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 9, p. 392. Sima Qian was not able to record Sang Hongyang's appointment to Grandee Secretary in 87 B.C., his promotion to Chancellor in 78 B.C., or his suicide in 77 B.C. because of Sima Qian's own death. Ban Gu chronicles Sang's career in the Table of a Hundred Officials, Excellencies, and Ministers. See HS 19b/772; Wang Xianqian, *Hanshu buzhu*, 7b/955.

¹²⁸ Sang Hongyang had great skills in accountancy. In 104 B.C. he was promoted from Palace Attendant to Chief Commandant for Grain and interim Grand Minister of Agriculture (*dasinong* 大司農), positions that put him in charge of finance and taxation for the empire and allowed him to control the state budget. See Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*, pp. 462–63.

the people wisely, Huang Ba [and others were outstanding]. [Huang was promoted to Chancellor due to his many years of bureaucratic experience from the eras of Wudi through Xuandi and for his reputation for tolerance and caring governance. He was the best example of the ideal bureaucrat Wudi sought.] . . . These men all left legacies of merit that were handed down to later generations.¹²⁹

In sum, a broad spectrum of professionals and specialists in areas such as Confucian classics, literature, economics, finance, political theory, legal measures, and bureaucratic procedures were called to the service of the empire.

Wudi's idea was to employ both Confucian civil servants (*rusheng*) and literary bureaucrats with sufficient knowledge of law codes (*wenfali* 文法吏 or *daobili* 刀筆吏) to staff positions at every level in the offices of Chancellor, Grandee Secretary, Nine Ministers, and his own Central Court, as well as local governments.¹³⁰ Wudi's system operated in tandem with political participation of the traditional nobility, and this explains why the new Chancellors, Grandee Secretaries, and Meritorious Officials in the latter half of Table Ten manifested different qualifications and performed different duties. It was because Wudi initiated several innovative policies to devolve the duties and responsibilities of the Chancellor and the Grandee Secretary onto other officials, thus revolutionizing the three positions.

In the early years of the Han dynasty, the Chancellor's duties encompassed almost every aspect of Han administration, including personnel and policy. He was in charge of recruiting, evaluating, and supervising officials; modifying proposals for new policies; and suggesting changes to the emperor after consultations with the Grandee Secretary, the Supreme Commander, or other high officials.¹³¹ During Wudi's

¹²⁹ All men mentioned above can be found in Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods*.

¹³⁰ Those civil servants who were chosen to serve in Wudi's private Central Court carried dual titles, adding Serving the Palace or Regular Palace Attendant to their administrative titles. In this case they worked in government and in the Central Court for the emperor. See Bu Xianqun, *Qin-Han guanliaozhidu*, p. 181.

¹³¹ A few examples of personnel policies over which he was in charge included appointing officials of the central government and commanderies with salaries below 400 *shi* 石; recommending officials with salaries from 600 to 2,000 *shi*; reserving the right to investigate, penalize, reward, impeach, and dismiss officials; and overseeing evaluation of the systems of taxation and recruitment, like the *shangji* 上計 procedure and the *kaoke* 考課 policy of the commanderies. See Li Xincheng 李新城, “Lun Qin-Han xiangquan zhi bianqian” 論秦漢相權之變遷, *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao*, 2001, no. 4, p. 37; Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 132–42.

reign the authority of the Chancellor underwent a crucial transformation. For example, his authority to participate in decision-making was partially transferred to the Generals and the emperor at the Central Court. Moreover, his executive authority to promulgate edicts and execute imperial orders was shared with the newly established secretariat in the emperor's private Central Court, composed of eunuchs (who staffed the office of Prefect of the Palace Writers [*zhongshu ling* 中書令]) and examination bureaucrats (who staffed the office of Prefect of the Master of Writing [*shangshu ling* 尚書令]).¹³² Nevertheless, the Chancellor's responsibility for the personnel evaluation system actually increased due to the growth of the newly expanded empire. Clearly, under Wudi's reign the office of the Chancellor became part of the bureaucratic system instead of a leading government or political authority over the bureaucracy. Ban Gu offers the following comments regarding the leadership of this new type of Chancellor: “[Tian] Qianqiu was over eight-chi 尺 tall and very handsome. Wudi was very pleased by his appearance. . . . Qianqiu did not have any particular talent for scholarship, nor did he deserve the aristocratic status he had received [*wu ta caineng shuxue you wu fayue gonglao* 無他材能術學又無伐閱功勞]. He took over the Chancellor office [in 89 B.C.] and was enfeoffed marquis within months because one of his casual comments had coincidentally pleased the emperor. This had never happened before in [Chinese] history.”¹³³

Before the Wudi era, the Grandee Secretary was responsible for imperial secretarial tasks such as drafting edicts, policies determined by the emperor and Chancellor, legal measures, and papers for the appointment of officials.¹³⁴ But during the reign of Wudi this secretarial responsibility was taken over by the Master of Writing (*shangshu* 尚書) in the Central Court¹³⁵ because Wudi intended to transform the Grandee Secretary's office into a network with supervisory functions for the administration in the capital and surrounding areas as well as for the local administrations. The central government's supervisory duties on the local governments was carried out by the office of the right-hand man of the Grandee Secretary, the Palace Assistant Secretaries (*yushi zhongcheng* 御史中丞). This office was responsible for appointing imperial Inspectors (*cishi* 刺史) to receive

¹³² Xu Zihong 徐子宏, “Xi-Han ‘zhongshu’ ‘shangshu’ kao” 西漢「中書」「尚書」考, *Kuangxi daxue xuebao*, 1988, no. 2, p.110.

¹³³ HS 66/2884.

¹³⁴ Zhu Zongbin 祝總斌, *Liang-Han Wei-Jin Nanbeichao zaixiang zhidu yanjiu* 兩漢魏晉南北朝宰相制度研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1990), p. 35.

¹³⁵ Xu Shu'an 許樹安, “Xi-Han zhongshu zhiguan de shezhi he yanbian” 西漢中樞職官的設置和演變, *Beijing daxue xuebao*, 1986, no. 5, p. 80.

complaints from local officials and investigate corruptions of local governments.¹³⁶ Although it was an ad hoc appointment, the imperial Inspectors could impeach and penalize officials for criminal conduct or wrongdoing. Their supervisory power was significantly augmented, when they were made directly responsible to the emperor. In addition, Wudi established the permanent office of Colonel Director of the Retainers (*sili jiaowei* 司隸校尉) to supervise administration and investigate corruption in the capital and its surrounding areas. All powerful aristocrats, from Chancellor, Generals, and marquises to the imperial relatives were subject to their judicial authority. To impose censorial and judicial authority over the various institutions, the emperor modified the famous Six Law Codes (*liutiao wenshi* 六條問事)¹³⁷ that empowered the inspectorial officials, even those of lower rank, to exercise their authority over the nobility and officials whose rank and status surpassed their own. Meanwhile, the Commandant of Justice (*tingwei* 廷尉) in the government functioned as the Supreme Court judge and took over the responsibility of sentencing and judging cases, including arresting and imprisoning criminals. He also supervised twenty-six prisons in the capital.¹³⁸

Many of these new practices seem to have eroded the power of the Chancellor. Wudi was attempting to transform a traditional world of aristocrats into an essentially bureaucratic government and to rule the empire with legal authority with himself at the centre exercising absolute power.¹³⁹ This explains why in the latter half of the Table, fields are left almost blank in the rows for Major Events of State and the Chancellors: The power of the nobility was waning and power was shifting toward a more centralized government and the emperor.

¹³⁶ Ding Shiyou 丁世友, *Zhongguo lianzheng shi* 中國廉政史 (Xiamen: Lujiang chubanshe, 1990), pp. 85–86.

¹³⁷ It was issued in 106 B.C. See Yuan Gang 袁剛, “Han Wudi de ‘liutiao zhaoshu’ ji Han-Tang difang jiancha fagui” 漢武帝的「六條詔書」及漢唐地方監察法規, *Nandu xuekan*, 1998, no. 4, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Hua Yougen 華友根, “Han Wudi de fazhi huodong ji qi sixiang yingxiang” 漢武帝的法制活動及其思想影響,” *Gansu shehui kexue*, 1991, no. 3, p. 56.

¹³⁹ Chen Lianqing 陳連慶, *Zhongguo gudaishi yanjiu: Chen Lianqing jiaoshou xueshu lunwenji* 中國古代史研究：陳連慶教授學術論文集 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1991), pp. 237–38. “The Han law protects life, security, dignity, and the authority of the emperors, reigning or deceased. Under the law, whoever commits a crime such as an assassination attempt, rebellion, disobedience, disrespect, criticism, failure to protect the emperor, and so on, deserves the death penalty.”

Table Ten and Recently Unearthed Materials: Physicality, Construction, and Preservation

Assuming that the authors of the Table used one strip to chronicle each year of history, as is the case in the received version, to compile Table Ten in one volume required 187 strips in total for 186 years of history, from 206 B.C. to 20 B.C., plus one additional strip to serve as the running head or “header.” The header has four labelled rows for the Major Events of State, Chancellor, General, and Grandee Secretary. To bind these 187 strips in one volume, notches were made on both edges of the strip to be used with the connecting cords. Four binding cords divided one strip into five entry fields and also served as markers between the entry fields.¹⁴⁰ (The wood or bamboo strips themselves constituted the columns.) In other words, the authors did not need to “draw lines” for the Table.

Since the lengths of the entries vary according to the different types and amounts of information to be conveyed, and since the physical length of the grids in each row had to be uniform and the strips had to be the same length, the only alternative for accommodating these entries was to use strips of varying widths. The longest entry in Table Ten consists of seventy-four characters (124 B.C.) and the shortest has just one (the number giving the year of tenure of the incumbent). In order to calculate the size of Table Ten (to determine how many strips were needed, what size, and how many lines), as when the Table’s authors needed to write seventy-four characters in one entry field, these questions can be answered only by knowing the physical dimensions of the bamboo strips.

According to Wang Guowei 王國維, the physical format of bamboo strips has its own logic. Following the basic rules of division, if the standard length of the strip is two *chi* and four *cun* 寸 (c. 23.3 cm), we can divide by one, two, three, or four, producing four types of strips in two *chi* and four *cun*, one *chi* and two *cun* (c. 12 cm), eight *cun* (c. 8 cm), and six *cun* (c. 6 cm).¹⁴¹ The design depends on the user’s political status and purpose; the more important is the material being presented, or the loftier the political status of the user, the longer the strips that are used.¹⁴² Hu

¹⁴⁰ It is possible that the author(s) wrote either before or after the binding cords were attached. The strings used were usually made of silk. See Lin Yun 林漥, “Gudai de jiandu” 古代的簡牘, *Zhongguo dianji yu wenhua*, 1994, no. 1, p. 42.

¹⁴¹ Wang Guowei, *Jiandu jianshu kao jiaozhu* 簡牘檢署考校注, annotated by Hu Pingsheng and Ma Yuehua 馬月華 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), p. 14. However, Wang later claims that bamboo strips are made based on the standard size of 24 cm (p. 58).

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 14.

Pingsheng 胡平生 surveys bamboo strips excavated so far from various tombs and makes several tables cataloguing the different lengths of strips used for different types of writing. The longest strip is 72.6 cm,¹⁴³ which is three times the standard length of two *chi* and four *cun*, anticipated by Wang Guowei.

Bamboo strips found in tombs from the Western Han period, excavated in 1972 at Yinqueshan 銀雀山 in Linyi 臨沂, Shandong province, range from 18 cm in length, 0.5 cm in width, 0.1–0.2 cm in depth to 69 cm in length, 1 cm in width, and 0.2 cm in depth.¹⁴⁴ Lin Jianming 林劍鳴 tells us that Han bamboo strips can be as wide as 2.8 cm.¹⁴⁵ Since the inhabitants of the tombs should have lived around 140–118 B.C.,¹⁴⁶ that is, around the same time as Sima Qian, we can surmise that when the *Shiji* was being written, there was already a demand for various types of bamboo strips and the technology and capability to produce them.

The Yinqueshan bamboo strips therefore offer us a glimpse into writing and producing bamboo or wooden volumes during Sima Qian's time. One strip of a volume contains about thirty-five characters on average, has two types of handwriting, and is written by both a neat and a sloppy hand. Each chapter has a title that sometimes appears on the back of the first strip with writing, though sometimes it has a running head on its own strip. Occasionally, the title is at the end of the chapter. The texts are written on the front side of the strip-sheet. The total number of characters is counted and recorded at the end of the chapter. Each volume includes one essay. To close the scroll, one begins at the end of the volume and rolls it from left to the right, with the characters on the inside of the scroll. (The text will therefore appear immediately in front of the reader when it is opened.) The chapter title is normally written on the back of the scroll for convenience in storage and searching.¹⁴⁷ The authors of Table Ten would almost certainly have known these basics of bamboo or wood scroll technology as they worked with their extra-long bamboo strips.

Where were these bamboo or wooden scrolls stored? A string of silk or leather was used to tie the scrolls into a tight bundle, but were they unprotected? Discovered in the Western Han tombs (*c.* 165 B.C.) in Fuyang, for example, are bamboo and wooden containers, the *zhu si* 竹笥 and *mu si* 木笥, that were utilized to store bamboo

¹⁴³ Hu Pingsheng, “*Jiandu zhidu xintan*” 簡牘制度新探, *Wenwu*, 2000, no. 3, p. 67.

¹⁴⁴ Song Kaixia 宋開霞, “*Yinqueshan Hanmu zhujian bowuguan*” 銀雀山漢墓竹簡博物館, *Zouxiang shijie*, 2003, no. 4, p. 40.

¹⁴⁵ Lin Jianming, *Jiandu gaishu* 簡牘概述 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin chubanshe, 1984), p. 35.

¹⁴⁶ Liu Xiaowen 劉小文, “*Shilun Yinqueshan Hanmu zhujian (yi) yuliao shidai*” 試論《銀雀山漢墓竹簡(壹)》語料時代, *Shidai wenxue (xiabanyue)*, 2009, no. 6, p. 156.

¹⁴⁷ Song Kaixia, “*Yinqueshan Hanmu zhujian bowuguan*,” p. 40.

books such as the *Book of Poetry*.¹⁴⁸ Assuming that the *Shiji*, like other bamboo books from the Han period, was stored in this type of bamboo or wood container, then due to its unusual length Table Ten must have been put in a larger bamboo container and deposited somewhere separate from the other nine tables of regular size.¹⁴⁹ Over time, I presume, this separation may have resulted in the eventual “loss” of Table Ten.

Conclusion

Sima Qian explains that he has seen or read (*du 讀*) chronological historical materials. These were types of works such as calendars (*li 曆*), genealogical lists (*pu 譜*), and charts of posthumous names (*die 謨*), as well as the *Chronicle of Springs and Falls* (*Chunqiu 春秋*).¹⁵⁰ He complains about their deficiencies (for example, that they are either too brief or missing dates), but he finds the narratives with dates in the *Chunqiu* very useful, though they do not offer readers information at a glance. However, Sima Qian does not claim that he has read anything labelled with the term “table” (*biao 表*). The tables in *Shiji* employ a system of classification that accommodates ideas of periodization and a range of subjects at the same time, one that can organize existing information into vertical and horizontal charts instead of simply listing events or names as in the *li*, *pu*, and *die*, with which Sima Qian is familiar.¹⁵¹ In addition to the novel format, it systemizes, organizes, and correlates historical information in a

¹⁴⁸ Zhou Bei 周蓓 and Geng Xiangxin 耿相新, “Qie si kao: Jianbo shuji de shouana yu shengju” 簡帛書籍的收納與盛具, *Zhongyuan wenwu*, 2011, no. 1, p. 64. The Chronicle Records excavated in Shuihudi 睡虎地 were also stored in a bamboo container.

¹⁴⁹ Xing Yitian 邢義田 suggests that bamboo scrolls could be hung on the wall for display and storage. See Xing Yitian, *Di bu ai bao: Handai de jiandu* 地不愛寶：漢代的簡牘 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011), pp. 17–18.

¹⁵⁰ SJ 14/509.

¹⁵¹ One *Shiji* commentator, Liu Yao 劉杳, has noted that Table One, the Generations of the Three Periods, evinces a physical form like a modern escalator, *pang xing xie shang* 旁行邪上 (SJ 14/510), which Loewe explains is an arrangement of materials in parallel horizontal rows and vertical columns. See Loewe, *The Men Who Governed Han China*, p. 213. However, Liu Yao says that Table One also follows (*bing fang* 並放/傍) the Genealogical List of Zhou (*Zhou pu* 周譜), but without explaining what *Zhou pu* looks like, which might mislead us to think that *Zhou pu* originates the idea of recording information in a chart of horizontal rows and vertical columns. In fact, in reading from the text without being aware of the existence of the mysterious *Zhou pu*, Liu is referring to two separate things: the form of Table One and the content of *Zhou pu*. Correctly interpreted, Liu means that Table One, like the *Zhou pu*, records the generations of the Three Periods in chronological order.

manner that conveys a special function and purpose.¹⁵² In fact, many works of the Eastern Zhou period, such as the *Chronicle of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳) and the *Bamboo Book Annals* (*Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年) or the Qin Annals (*Biannian ji* 編年記) from the archaeological finds excavated recently in Shuihudi, incorporate a similar feature with historical events being organized in chronological order.¹⁵³ During the early Han period, people developed a popular notion of organizing data in a systematic way using charts, a kind of incipient form of the table. From recent archaeological finds, we glean examples like the Fuyang “year table” (165 B.C.)¹⁵⁴ and the Calendar of the first year of Yuanguang 元光 (134 B.C.).¹⁵⁵ It is therefore not surprising that Sima Qian would eventually come up with the ideas of adding the header row to guide the grids horizontally and of inserting historical narratives in entries to make a table (*biao*) as he coined the term. The birth of narrative tables in general and of Table Ten in particular is, I therefore submit, the product of both historical evolution and the powerful and original thinking of Sima Qian.

¹⁵² Grant Hardy believes that Sima Qian went to an enormous amount of effort to correlate local calendars and recast data from the archives into a unified and usable form. See Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian's Conquest of History* (New York: University of Columbia Press, 1999), p. 43.

¹⁵³ Wang Hui 王暉, “Chunqiu Zhanguo shiqi lishi jingyan zongjie de sichao yu shishu” 春秋戰國時期歷史經驗總結的思潮與史書, *Shixueshi yanjiu*, 1998, no. 4, pp. 29–31. The Qin Annals chronicle events from 306–217 B.C. on fifty-three bamboo strips. Each bamboo strip has two rows. See Ji Xun 季勛, “Yummeng Shuihudi Qinjian gaishu” 雲夢睡虎地秦簡概述, *Wenwu*, 1976, no. 5, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ The “year table” of Fuyang is so-named by museum curators. The original strip set does not bear a title and is in fact a chart recording posthumous names and the years of the reigns of feudal lords during the Eastern Zhou period. They are organized horizontally and vertically with the names of the feudal states on one bamboo strip as the key indicator on the extreme right-hand side. Hu Pingsheng identifies it as “beginning” (*duan* 端). See Hu Pingsheng, “Fuyang Hanjian Nianbiao zhengli zhaji” 阜陽漢簡《年表》整理札記, in *Hu Pingsheng jiandu wenwu lunji* 胡平生簡牘文物論集 (Taibei: Lantai chubanshe, 2000), p. 299. Since the subject itself contains a date, I assume that there is no need to make an additional chronological heading as in the tables of *Shiji*.

¹⁵⁵ The Yuanguang Calendar gives us an idea of how the Han people designed their calendar. The Calendar of 134 B.C. consisted of thirty-two bamboo strips, with the year of reign marked on the first strip on the extreme right-hand side and the months of the whole year written from top to bottom on the second strip (with the tenth month as the beginning of the year); then the *gan zhi* 干支 of each day was recorded on the third through thirty-second strips from right to left to form an annual calendar of 360 days in one chart. See Wu Jiulong 吳九龍, “Luelun Yinqueshan Hanjian de shixue jiazhi” 略論銀雀山漢簡的史學價值, *Linyi shizhuan xuebao*, 1992, no. 2, p. 2.

史記漢興以來將相名臣年表之研究

(摘要)

吳淑惠

本文參考新舊材料，綜合比較中西學者的觀點，嘗試從古今中外有關〈漢興以來將相名臣年表〉作者的討論、表的形式和內容（尤其是倒書與提欄）、漢代的官僚爵制度與權力的遞嬗等方面做一深入探析。本文也利用近年來出土的漢簡，給表十的外形、格式與保存方式提供新的詮釋。〈漢興以來將相名臣年表〉是《史記》十表中六個記錄封爵表的最後一個，記錄了漢代政府行政機關中最高的三個職位——將軍，宰相和御史大夫，逐一分析表格內表現漢興以來一百八十六年的上層中央政府機關人事制度的興廢迭代。

關鍵詞：《史記》〈漢興以來將相名臣年表〉 倒文與提欄 漢代官僚爵制度與權力的替嬗

Keywords: *Shiji* “Year-by-Year Table of Generals, Chancellors, and Prominent Officials since the Founding of the Han Dynasty” inverted texts and “raised-out-of-row” device power plays in the Han bureaucracy