

Chen gui and Other Works

Attributed to Empress Wu Zetian

Some quarter-century ago, studies by Antonino Forte and Richard Guisso greatly advanced our understanding of the ways in which the empress Wu Zetian 武則天 made deliberate and sophisticated use of Buddhist materials both before and after declaring herself ruler of a new Zhou 周 dynasty in 690, in particular the text of *Dayun jing* 大雲經 in establishing her claim to be a legitimate sovereign.¹ However, little attention has ever been given to the numerous political writings that had earlier been compiled in her name. These show that for some years before the demise of her husband emperor Gaozong in 683, she had been at considerable pains to establish her credentials as a potential ruler in more conventional terms, and had commissioned the writing of a large series of political writings designed to provide the ideological basis for both a new style of “Confucian” imperial rule and a new type of minister.

All save two of these works were long ago lost in China, where none of her writings seems to have survived the Song, and most may not have survived the Tang. We are fortunate enough to possess that titled *Chen gui* 臣規 complete with its commentary, and also a fragmentary copy of the work on music commissioned in her name, *Yue shu yaolu* 樂書要錄,² only thanks to their preservation in Japan. They had been acquired by an embassy to China, almost certainly that of 702–704, led by Awata no ason Mahito 粟田真人 (see the concluding section of this article) to the court of empress Wu, who was at that time sovereign of

¹ See Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1976); R. W. L. Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien and the Politics of Legitimation in T'ang China* (Bellingham, Wash.: Program in East Asian Studies, Western Washington U., 1978).

² *Juan* 5 to 7 alone of *Yue shu yaolu* are preserved, and are included together with *Chen gui*, in collection 1 of *Isson sōsho* 佚存叢書, compiled by Hayashi Shussai 林述齋 (林衡; 1768–1841) and first printed in 1799. This was taken to China early in the 19th c., reissued in an edition printed from wooden moveable type by a Mr. Huang of Hushang (Shanghai) 滬上黃氏 in 1882, and finally published in a photog. rept. of the original Japanese print by the Commercial Press in Shanghai in 1924.

her new Zhou dynasty. He probably also carried others of these works back to Japan.

WORKS ATTRIBUTED TO EMPRESS WU

The titles of works compiled in her name, listed subsequently, appear in the following six early sources:

JTS/Shilu

The earliest list; appended to the Basic Annals of her reign in *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書,³ which probably derives from the hurriedly compiled Veritable Record of her reign titled *Zetian Huanghou shilu* 則天皇后實錄, completed early in 706, shortly after her death.⁴

JTS/Gujin

A second early source is the bibliographical monograph of *Jiu Tang shu*,⁵ which is an abstract of the titles in *Gujin shulu* 古今書錄, a summary imperial library catalogue compiled in 721 by Wu Chiung 吳暉.⁶

JTS/Liu liezhuan

A third list is found in the short biography of Liu Yizhi 劉禕之 in *Jiu Tang shu* 187, a chapter which almost certainly comes from the T'ang *National History* completed in 759–760.⁷ This list is confirmed by the biography of Yuan Wanqing 元萬頃 in *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 201.⁸

XTS, XTS/?

A fourth source is the bibliographical monograph of *Xin Tang shu*,⁹ which in part repeats titles in the *Jiu Tang shu* monograph (and in such cases is noted below as *XTS*), and otherwise supplements those titles with items taken from a variety of unknown sources, below noted as *XTS/?*

Genzai sho

Several of these works, in addition to *Chen gui*, were taken to Japan and are listed in the catalogue *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku* 日本

³ Liu Xu 劉昫 et al., comps., *Jiu Tang shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975; hereafter *JTS*) 6, p. 133.

⁴ Compiled under the direction of Wu Sansi 武三思, revised in 716 as *Zetian shilu* 則天實錄 by Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 and Wu Jing 吳兢. See Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the Tang* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), pp. 132–35, 243.

⁵ See *JTS* 46–47. Individual page references are cited below.

⁶ Twitchett, *Writing of Official History*, pp. 231–32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 178–87.

⁸ See Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, Song Qi 宋祁 et al., comps., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975, hereafter *XTS*) 201, p. 5744.

⁹ *XTS* 201, p. 5744.

國現在書目錄 of Fujiwara no Sukeyo 藤原佐世, compiled at the end of the ninth century.¹⁰

Dentō

Others are mentioned in the later catalogue, *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* 東域傳燈目錄 (1094) by the monk Eichō 永超 (1014–1095).

The following 30 works include 22 attributed to Wu Zetian under one form or another of her high dynastic titles; 1 attributed to her under a name that is pre-empress in status; 6 retrospective compilations, one of which is clearly posthumous; and 1 compilation of the empress's sacred writings by one of her courtiers after her removal. Immediately following each item, the bibliographic sources attesting the work (namely, one or more of the above “six early sources”) are given in parentheses. For convenience, in my discussions, references to standard sources use the abbreviations as listed at the end of this article.

Court Writings Composed for Empress Wu and Attributed to Her

1. ZISHU YAOLU 紫樞要錄 (*JTS/Gujin, XTS*)

In 10 chapters. Compiled by Da (Tai)sheng Tianhou 大(太)聖天后; *JTS* 47, p. 2026. *XTS* 59, p. 1512, is identical, but gives the empress's title as simply Wu hou 武后.¹¹

2. ZICHEN LIYAO 紫宸禮要 (*JTS/Gujin, XTS*)

In 10 chapters by Dasheng Tianhou. Listed by *JTS* 46, p. 1975, under “Rituals” (Li 禮) together with the major ritual codes of the Sui period and *Da Tang xin li* 大唐新禮, compiled under Tang Taizong in 637. *XTS* 58, p. 1491, is identical, but gives the empress's title as Wu hou, and lists it under the category of works on “Ritual Ceremonial” (Yizhu 儀注).

¹⁰ On Fujiwara no Sukeyo 藤原佐世 (d. 897) and his catalogue, which is also known as *Honchō genzaisho mokuroku* 本朝現在書目錄, *Genzaisho mokuroku* 現在書目錄, or *Sukeyo mokuroku* 佐世目錄, see Wang Zhenping, “Manuscript Copies of Chinese Books in Ancient Japan,” *The Gest Library Journal* 4.1 (1991), pp. 35–67, esp. 47 ff. There are various modern critical editions: Kariya Ekisai 狩谷掖齋 (1775–1835), *Nihon genzai shomoku sōchūkō* 日本現在書目證注稿 (in *Nihon koten zenshū* (Tokyo: Nihon koten zenshū kankōkai, 1928); Kohase Keikichi 小長谷惠吉, *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku kaisetsu kō* 日本國現在書目錄解說稿 (Tokyo: Komiya shoten, 1956; rpt. 1976); Yajima Genryō 矢島玄亮, *Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku, shūshō to kenkyū* 日本國現在書目錄集証と研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 1984). My references are to Kohase (1956).

¹¹ Empress Wu's original posthumous title was Dasheng Zetian huanghou 大聖則天皇后. After Ruizong succeeded to the throne, August 6, 710, this was changed to Tianhou 天后, as in her lifetime, and was then again changed to Dasheng Tianhou 大聖天后 on November 13, 710. It was further changed to Tianhou shengdi 天后聖帝 July 27, 712, and then to Shenghou 聖后 September 10. After the death of Ruizong, 12th lunar mo., 716, her title Tianhou was again restored. On July 2, 749, this was changed to Zetian shunsheng huanghou 則天順聖皇

3. BAILIAO XINJIE 百寮新誠 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *JTS/Liu liezhuan*, *XTS*, *Genzai sho*)

In 4 chapters by Tianhou; *JTS* 4, p. 2026. *XTS* 59, p. 1512, gives an identical title but names the author as Wu hou, and gives its length as 5 chapters. The title is confirmed by Liu Yizhi's biography, *JTS* 87, p. 2846; also by Yuan Wanqing's biography, *XTS* 201, p. 5744, and by the list at end of the empress Wu's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133. None of these gives the number of chapters. *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 records its completion and promulgation,¹² together with *Zhaoren benye* (see below), to the prefectural court delegates, *chaoji shi* 朝集使 on May 4, 686. Taken to Japan, see *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku*, p. 13, where it is listed as in 4 chapters, by Zetian Taihou 則天太后.

4. CHEN GUI 臣軌 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *JTS/Liu liezhuan*, *XTS*, *Genzai sho*)

In 2 chapters by Tianhou 天后; *JTS* 47, p. 2026. *XTS* 59, p. 1512, gives the author as Wu hou 武后. The title is mentioned in Liu Yizhi's biography, *JTS* 87, p. 2846; Yuan Wanqing's biography *XTS* 201, p. 5744, and the list at the end of empress Wu's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133. Taken to Japan, and listed in the *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku*, p. 13, which gives the author as Huanghou 皇后.

5. QINGGONG JIYAO 青宮紀要 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *JTS/Liu liezhuan*)

In 30 chapters, by Tianhou; *JTS* 47, p. 2026. *Xin Tang shu* 59, p. 1512 is identical, but gives the author as Wu hou. Listed as in 30 chapters in the empress's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133. Not mentioned in Liu Yizhi's or Yuan Wanqing's biography.

6. SHAOYANG ZHENGFAN 少陽正範 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *JTS/Liu liezhuan*)

In 30 chapters by Tianhou; *JTS* 47, p. 2026. *XTS* 9, p. 512 gives title as 少陽政範 in 30 chapters by Wu hou. The title in the form 少陽政範 in 30 chapters is listed in the empress's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133, but is not included in either form in Liu Yizhi's or Yuan Wanqing's biography.

It was written some time before 680. In the eighth month of that year the extremely capable heir-apparent Li Xian 李賢, who was beginning to become involved in court politics, came under attack from empress Wu's favorites. The empress made him still more apprehensive

后. See Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1935: rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955; hereafter *THY*) 3, p. 24.

¹² See *THY* 36, p. 657.

by formally presenting him with a copy of this book, which provided rules of proper behavior for an heir-apparent, together with the work titled *Xiaozi zhuan* (see item 12, below), on the behavior appropriate for filial sons, both of which books had been written with his guidance in mind. She also subsequently wrote letters to him criticizing his behavior. See *JTS* 86, p. 1832; *Zizhi tongjian* 202, p. 6397.¹³

7. LIEFAN ZHENGLUN 列藩正論 (*XTS*/?)

In 30 chapters by Wu hou. Appears only in the *XTS* bibliography, *XTS* 59, p. 1512.

8. WEICHENG DIANXUN 維城典訓 (*XTS*/?, *Genzai sho*)

In 20 chapters by Wu hou, appears only in *XTS* bibliography, *XTS* 59, p. 1513. (See also next title.) It was taken to Japan, and is listed in *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku*, p. 13, as in 20 chapters, by Zetian Taihou, under the “Miscellaneous” category.

9. XUNJI ZAZAI 訓記雜載 (*XTS*/?)

In 10 chapters by Wu hou. Appears only in *Xin Tang shu* bibliography (*XTS* 59, p. 1513), where it is said to have been compiled out of selections from the following books: *Qinggong jiyao* 青宮紀要; *Weicheng dianxun* 維城典訓; *Gujin neifan* 古今內範; *Neifan yaolue* 內範要略, etc. (for which, see items 5, 8, 14, 15, below).

10. LIENŪ ZHUAN 列女傳 (*JTS*/*Gujin*, *XTS*)

In 100 chapters by Dasheng Tianhou; *JTS* 46, p. 2006. *XTS* 58, p. 1487, is identical apart from author’s name being given as Wu hou.

11. XIAONŪ ZHUAN 孝女傳 (*XTS*/?)

In 20 chapters by Wu hou. Listed only in *XTS* 58, p. 1487.

12. XIAOZI ZHUAN 孝子傳 (*JTS*/*Shilu*, *JTS*/*Liu liezhuan*)

In 20 chapters. Mentioned only in the list in the empress’s Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133, and in *JTS* 86, p. 2832. It was written before 680. See under 6, above.

13. LIENŪ ZHUAN 列女傳 (*JTS*/*Shilu*)

In 20 chapters. Mentioned only in the list in the empress’s Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133, together with the previous title. It seems likely that there is some confusion with items 10 and 11, above.

14. GUJIN NEIFAN 古今內範 (*JTS*/*Gujin*, *JTS*/*Liu liezhuan*, *XTS*)

In 100 chapters by Dasheng Tianhou; *JTS* 46, p. 2006. *XTS* 58, p.

¹³ Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956; hereafter, *ZZTJ*) 202, p. 6397.

1487, is identical except author is named as Wu hou. Mentioned, without number of chapters, in biographies of Liu Yizhi *JTS* 87, p. 2846, and Yuan Wanqing *XTS* 201, p. 5744.

15. NEIFAN YAOLUE 內範要略 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *XTS*)

In 10 chapters by Dasheng Tianhou; *JTS* 46, p. 2006. *XTS* 58, p. 1487 is identical except author is given as Wu hou. Not mentioned in the biographies of Liu Yizhi or Yuan Wanqing. Included in the list in the empress's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133.

16. BAOFU RU MU ZHUAN 保傅乳母傳 (*JTS/Gujin*, *XTS*)

In a single chapter by Dasheng Tianhou; *JTS* 46, p. 2006. *XTS* 58, p. 1487, lists it as in 7 chapters and with Wu hou as author.

17. HUANGLUO XINJIE 鳳樓新誠 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *XTS*)

In 20 chapters; *JTS* 47, p. 2026. Current editions of *Jiu Tang shu* erroneously attribute this work to Suzong's empress née Zhang 張氏. The collation note to the Zhonghua shuju edition (47, p. 2082) points out this error. The attribution cannot be correct, as the *JTS* bibliographical monograph is a summary of the imperial library catalogue as completed in 719, more than 40 years before empress Zhang's death in 762. This list was deliberately never supplemented with the titles of books completed later, so as to preserve an image of the state of Tang writing at its highest point (see *JTS* 46, p. 1963). See also *XTS* 58, p. 1487, which correctly gives the author as Wu hou. The title is also included in the list of her works in the empress Wu's Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133.

18. ZHAOREN BENYE 兆人本業 (*JTS/Shilu*, *JTS/Gujin*, *XTS*, *Genzai sho*)

In 3 chapters. This appears in *JTS* 47, p. 2035, among the "Agriculturalist Writers," as having 3 chapters, its author given as Tianhou. *XTS* 59, p. 1538, is identical, except that the author is given as Wu hou. It is also included in the list of her works in the empress's Basic Annals; *JTS* 6, p. 133. *THY* 36, p. 657, records its completion and distribution to the prefectural court delegates in 686 (see item 2 above). Alone among these works it underwent an official revival in the Tang. In 828 the historian Li Jiang 李絳 presented a copy that had been preserved in his own collection to the new young emperor Wenzong, who ordered that copies be made and sent out to the county and prefectural administrations, so that it could be distributed to the villages. See *JTS* 17A, p. 528, under the *gengwu* (24th) day of the second month (March 13, 828). It was also taken to Japan, and is listed

in *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku*, p. 14, as in 3 chapters, without an author's name.

19. YUE SHU 樂書 (*XTS*)

Is included, with no indication of its length, among the works listed in the biographies of Liu Yizhi and Yuan Wanqing. This title is probably an abbreviated reference to the next item. But it may have been a longer work of which the next was a condensed version.

20. YUE SHU YAO LU 樂書要錄 (*JTS/Shilu, JTS/Gujin, XTS, Genzai sho*)

In ten chapters by Dasheng Tianhou; see *JTS* 46, p. 1975. *XTS* 57, p. 1436, is identical but names the author as Wu hou. This title also appears in the list in the empress's Basic Annals; *JTS* 6, p. 133. It was taken to Japan and is included in *Nihon genzai sho mokuroku*, p. 3, where it is listed as in 10 chapters, but without an author's name. A fragmentary copy, a single fascicle comprising chapters 5 to 7, survived in Japan and was reprinted in *Ison sōsho* 佚存叢書 in 1799, and subsequently reintroduced to China, together with *Chen gui* (4, above).

21. ZI HAI 字海 (*JTS/Gujin, XTS*)

In 100 chapters, attributed to Dasheng Tianhou in *JTS* 46, p. 1984, and to Wu hou in *XTS* 57, p. 1450. The latter adds the following note to this entry: "All of the books written by [*sic*] empress Wu were in fact compiled by Yuan Wanqing 元萬頃, Fan Lübing 范履冰, Miao Shenke 苗神客, Zhou Simao 周思茂, Hu Chubin 胡楚賓, Wei Ye 衛業, etc." This information is confirmed by the Basic Annals of the empress, *JTS* 6, p. 133, which, however, names only Fan Lübing, Zhou Simao, and Wei [Jing]ye 衛敬業 (presumably the same person as Wei Ye).

22. XUAN LAN 玄覽 (*JTS/Shilu, JTS/Gujin, XTS*)

In 100 chapters, attributed to Tianhou; *JTS* 47, p. 2046. *XTS* 59, p. 1563, is identical but names the author as Wu hou. Also included in the list in the empress's Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 133.

A Bonafide Wu Zetian Writing, Dated to Before Her Accession

In addition to titles compiled by others and circulated under the empress's name, there was one short instructional work that she herself wrote before she became Gaozong's empress.

23. NEI XUN 內訓

In one section (*pian*), written by the *Zhaoyi* 昭儀 concubine Lady Wu.¹⁴

¹⁴ *Zhaoyi* "Lady of Bright Department" was the title given to the future empress when

Its completion is recorded in Gaozong's Basic Annals, *JTS* 4, p. 74, under May 21, 655.¹⁵ This was six months before Wu Zhaoyi displaced and subsequently murdered Gaozong's original empress née Wang 王.

Collections of The Empress's Personal Writings

There were also several extensive retrospective collections of her own writings. The *Jiu Tang shu* bibliographical chapter (*JTS* 47, p. 2052) lists the two following items:

24. CHUIGONG JI 垂拱集 (*JTS/Gujin, Genzai sho*)

In 100 chapters. This was presumably compiled between 685 and 688, the reign period forming part of the title. This was taken to Japan and is listed in *Nihonkoku genzai sho mokuroku* as in 100 chapters.

25. JINLUN JI 金輪集 (*JTS/Gujin, Genzai sho*)

In 10 chapters, which must date from after the ninth month of 693, when the empress first took the title Jinlun shengshen Huangdi 金輪聖神皇帝, the first of a series of imperial titles including the term Jinlun, the "Golden Wheel," symbol of the mightiest of Cakravartin Kings, Lords of all the Four Continents, which the empress adopted during the early phase of her reign as sovereign of the Zhou (October 693–May 700). The catalogue by the eleventh-century Japanese monk Eichō 永超 (1014–1095), titled *Tōiki dentō mokuroku* 東域傳燈目錄 (1094),¹⁶ also lists it.

26. JINLUN WANSUI JI 金輪萬歲集 (*Genzai sho, Dentō*)

In a single chapter. This must have dated from some time between the ninth month 695 and the ninth month 697, during which all her reign titles included the element Wansui. Fujiwara no Sukeyo also lists this same title, without an author's name, among "general collections," not among the collections of individual authors. He lists it as containing 51 chapters, one chapter being the table of contents.

Gaozong first recalled her into the imperial harem. Under Taizong she had served as a fifth-ranking concubine, one of the "Ladies of Talents" (*cairen* 才人), but had left the palace to become a nun on his death. Zhaoyi was one of the titles attributed to the "nine concubines" (*jiu bin* 九嬪), holding the upper second rank, who ranked immediately after the secondary consorts (*fei* 妃). According to *JTS* 4, p. 74, this was still her title when she was appointed empress in place of empress Wang. But according to her own Basic Annals, *JTS* 6, p. 115, some short time before this she had been promoted to the title of "Chamber Consort" (*chen fei* 宸妃), a title for a secondary consort otherwise unknown in the Tang period.

¹⁵ The date is given as the *renwu* day of the 3d mo., but there was no *renwu* day until the 4th.

¹⁶ *T*, vol. 55, no. 2183, p. 1164c.

This perhaps was the single chapter listed by Eichō. See *Nihonkoku genzaisho mokuroku* p. 21, line 14.

Fujiwara no Sukeyo also lists these two:

27. SHENGMU SHENHUANG CHUIGONG HOUJI 聖母神皇垂拱後集 (*Genzai sho*)

In 30 chapters.

28. SHENGMU JI 聖母集 (*Genzai sho*)

In 10 chapters. Neither of these two works is known from any Chinese sources. The empress adopted the title Shengmu shenhuang in the fifth month, 688, and retained it until the ninth month, 690.

Finally both Fujiwara no Sukeyo and Eichō mention a posthumous collection of her writings, once again unknown from Chinese sources;

29. ZETIAN DASHENG HUANGHOU JI 則天大聖皇后集 (*Genzai sho, Dentō*)

In 10 chapters. A possibly incomplete copy of this work was still preserved in a Japanese temple library in Eichō's time (end of the eleventh century). Eichō says that it consisted mostly of the empress's prayers. This is the only indication we have about the contents of any of these collections of her works. From the imperial title used for the empress this collection must have been compiled under emperor Zhongzong (705–710). The empress was deprived of the title of sovereign and given the posthumous title Zetian Dasheng huanghou on the day of her death, December 16, 705, and this was confirmed as her canonization name on the same day. After the accession of Ruizong in 710 she was posthumously granted the title she had held in Gaozong's lifetime, Heavenly Empress (Tianhou), but shortly afterwards this was changed to Grand Empress-Dowager Zetian (Zetian huangtaihou).

It seems most likely that the above collections of her works, nos. 24–29, were chronologically incremental:

- a collection of work up to 685–688, the *Chuigong ji* in 100 chapters;
- a supplement to this, the *Shengmu shenhuang Chuigong houji*, in 30 chapters, and possibly also another, the *Shengmu ji* in 10 chapters, compiling work written between 688 and 690;
- a further supplement, the *Jinlun ji* in 10 chapters, and possibly also the *Jinlun Wansui ji* in a single chapter, covering the period from 693 to 700;
- a posthumous supplement, *Zetian Dasheng Huanghou ji* in ten chapters, compiled sometime before Ruizong's accession in 710.

The note listing the empress's writings appended to the Basic Annals of her reign in *Jiu Tang shu* also mentions her collected writings *Wen ji* 文集 in 120 chapters. This entry is confirmed by the strange tale of the original Veritable Record for her reign (*Zetian huanghou shilu* 則天皇后實錄), from which these Basic Annals were directly derived. This very contentious Veritable Record was compiled in great confusion and unseemly haste following her death on December 3, 705, and was presented to emperor Zhongzong on June 23, 706, only days before her burial in Gaozong's mausoleum on July 2. At the interment, the newly completed Veritable Record of her reign was buried with her, together with 120 chapters of her own writings, *Wen ji*.¹⁷

What relationship does this figure have with the various collections listed above? It is impossible to be certain, but the 120 chapters can hardly have included the posthumous collection *Zetian Dasheng Huanghou ji* (item 29), which had most probably not yet been assembled. It most likely represents the 100 chapters of *Chuigong ji* (item 24), plus the 10-chapter *Shengmu ji* (item 28) and the 10-chapter *Jinlun ji* (item 25).

Yet another collection of her writings was also assembled, at the imperial command of Zhongzong.

30. ZETIAN HUANGHOU JI SHENGWEN 則天皇后紀聖文

The biographies of Wei Chengqing 韋承慶, one of the compilers of the Veritable Record of the empress's reign, and also the author of the important Act of Grace issued to mark Zhongzong's restoration to the throne, say that he was subsequently ordered to compile this *Record of Empress Zetian's Sacred Writings*, which was warmly approved by the emperor. Nothing is known about its size, its contents, or its precise date of completion.¹⁸

Extant Writings Attributed to Empress Wu

In addition to the titles that have been mentioned, a considerable number of individual pieces of writing and documents attributed to the empress survive. The prose anthology *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (completed 987) includes 14 of her prose pieces (including the preface to *Chen gui*) and the collection of important Tang edicts, Song Minqiu's 宋敏求 *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (completed ca. 1070), attributes

¹⁷ *THY* 63, p. 1094; *Cefu yuangui* [宋本]冊府元龜 (Song edn., *Songben Cefu yuangui*; Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989; hereafter, *CFYG*) 556, pp. 15a-b. See also Twitchett, *Writing of Official History*, pp. 132-33.

¹⁸ *JTS* 88, p. 2865. *XTS* 116, p. 4230, lists the title as *Wu hou ji shengwen* 武后紀聖文. I have found no reference to either title elsewhere.

authorship of 28 items to her.¹⁹ The early-nineteenth-century complete anthology of Tang prose, *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (1814), lists 65 items (including those already included in *Wenyuan yinghua* and *Tang da zhao ling ji*). Its two supplements by Lu Xinyuan 陸心源, *Tang wen shiyi* 唐文拾遺 (1888) and *Tang wen xushi* 唐文續拾 (1894), add 32 more, almost all of them edicts issued in her name. Most, but not all of these pieces are “public” prose and were probably written by others in her name.²⁰

Anthologies of verse also include a large number of pieces attributed to her. The major compilation of Tang verse, *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (completed 1707), includes 91 poems listed under her name, but all except 9 are solemn ritual hymn texts, written for use in one or another official cult, and these too were most probably the work of her official writers.²¹

THE AUTHORS OF EMPRESS WU’S POLITICAL WRITINGS: THE SCHOLARS OF THE NORTHERN GATE

The title *Beimen xueshi* 北門學士 (“Scholar of the Northern Gate”) had been first established in the Qianfeng reign period (666–668), and was used for a variety of scholarly officials who were employed in the Inner Palace.²² It was a status, not a formal office, and it included a wide range of men holding very different ranks and substantive offices. For example, Wei Chengqing, then a remonstrance secretary (*siyi lang*

¹⁹ Song Minqiu 宋敏求, *Tang da zhao ling ji* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1959, hereafter *TDZLJ*)

²⁰ See for details, Hiraoka Takeo 平岡武夫, Ichihara Kōkichi 市原亨吉, and Imai Kiyoshi 今井清, *Tōdai no sambun sakuhin* 唐代の散文作品, vol. 10 of *Tōdai kenkyū no shiori* 唐代研究のしおり (Kyoto: Jimbun kagaku kenkyūsho, 1960), items 02938–03003; 20753–20784; 22598.

²¹ See idem, *Tōdai no shihen* 唐代の詩篇, vol. 11 of *Tōdai kenkyū no shiori* (Kyoto: Jimbun kagaku kenkyūsho, 1964), items 00211–00257; 00370–00381; 00423–00433; 00511–00520; 00610–00618; 00750.

²² See *THY* 57, p. 977; Li Zhao 李肇, *Hanlin zhi* 翰林志 (Bochuan xuehai edn.), p. 1b (translated F. A. Bischoff, *La Forêt des Pinceaux* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963], p. 41); *JTS* 43, p. 1853 (comm.), which say this title was first granted from this date, to officials summoned to draft edicts in the palace. They list Liu Yizhi and also his brother Liu Yizhi (2) 劉懿之, Zhou Simao, Yuan Wanqing, and Fan Lübing as holders of the title, and say that later, during the reign of empress Wu Zetian, Su Weidao 蘇味道, Wei Chengqing 韋承慶 and others came to hold the same title. Su Weidao (649–706) was a precocious *jinshi* graduate, and became a long-serving chief minister holding office from 694 until 700 (biogs.: *JTS* 94, p. 2991–92; *XTS* 114, p. 3940). Wei Chengqing (d. 709), also a *jinshi* graduate before 678, was briefly a chief minister in late 704, before empress Wu’s dethronement, and later was one of the compilers of the Veritable Record of her reign (biogs.: *JTS* 88, pp. 2862–65; *XTS* 116, p. 3943). In neither case is there any mention in their biographies of their having held the title *Beimen xueshi* although Wei himself speaks of “working within the northern gate” (see text).

CFYG 550, pp. 2b–3a, dates the first use of the title to 666–69. Another entry, *CFYG* 550, p. 10a–b, which gives no date but clearly refers to events of 674–75, gives the impression that it was a colloquial, unofficial title. It says that Yuan Wanqing, then a director of the Office of

司議郎) in the household of the heir-apparent Li Xian 李賢, speaks in a remonstrance written in 679 of his having first “received access to within the Northern Gate.”²³ A recently published epitaph shows Li Yuanguai 李元軌,²⁴ a young recent graduate from an elite family background, being given the status of *Beimen xueshi* so that he could act as an instructor for the members of the emperor’s elite bodyguard, the *Yulin feiqi shi* 羽林飛騎士, who were quartered beyond the Northern Gate to the palace.²⁵ His epitaph tells us that he taught them ritual behavior and etiquette, but as he was well versed in the classics and in literary composition, he probably also instructed some of them in preparation for the simplified examinations that such guardsmen, many of whom were sons of high officials and from elite families, were entitled to take after thirteen years’ service in order to transfer to a career as a civil official. Li Yuanguai was clearly on a quite different footing from the empress’s elite writers, although he too was a *Beimen xueshi*.

The “Scholars of the Northern Gate” were thus not a formal institution, as many historians have assumed. The name simply indicated scholars of many types who were employed in the Inner Palace, and was not exclusive to the empress’s writers. The latter were an informally organized group of skilled writers retained at the disposition of the sovereign, and granted entry to the palace to undertake specific commissions, not an institutionally organized academy like the earlier but then still functioning Hongwen guan 宏文館 (set up in 621 under the Chancellery, or Menxia sheng 門下省), or Chongwen guan 崇文館 (established in 629 as part of the heir-apparent’s administration), or

Literary Composition (*zhuzuo lang* 著作郎) persuaded Gaozong to recruit officials with literary talents to undertake writing and compilation in the Inner Palace, and Wanqing was selected together with the diarist-of-the-left Fan Lübing, and the diarists-of-the-right Zhou Simao and Hu Chubin. They were called Scholars of the Northern Gate by their contemporaries.

²³ See *JTS* 88, p. 2864: 承於北門之內。

²⁴ For the text of the inscription see Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良, Zhao Chao 趙超 et al., eds, *Tangdai muzhi huibian, shang* 唐代墓誌彙編上 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1992), pp. 690–91. The original is in the Qian Tang zhi zhai 千唐誌齋 collection of steles in Henan, but was not included in the 1982 publication of its rubbings, Wu Zhiyuan 武志遠 and Guo Jianpang 郭建邦, eds., *Qian Tang zhi zhai zang zhi* 千唐誌齋藏誌 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1982). Its importance is discussed in a short study by Li Fang 李方, “Tang Li Yuanguai muzhi suo jian de Beimen xueshi” 唐李元軌墓志所見的北門學士, *WW* (1992.9), pp. 60–61. I owe this reference to my friend Lu Yang.

²⁵ The *Yulin feiqi shi* were cavalry of the two northern armies 北軍, the palace garrison quartered in the imperial park by the northern gate of the Inner Palace. They provided the personal guards and escort of the emperor and were responsible for the security of the Inner Palace. Many of them were sons of high ranking officials for whom such service was a form of *yin* privilege. They were classified as “guards officials” (*wei kuan* 衛官). After thirteen years of service they were eligible to take a modified form of examination to transfer onto the roll of potential civil officials held by the Board of Civil Office.

the later and far larger and more influential Jixian yuan 集賢院 (established in 718 under the Secretariat, or Zhongshu sheng 中書省) or the Hanlin yuan 韓林院 (founded early in Xuanzong's reign and directly dependent on the emperor). The empress's Scholars of the Northern Gate seem to have been more similar to the informal group of scholars once maintained by the future Taizong when he was still serving as the prince of Qin 秦王.

They were chosen for their literary skills. With one exception the standard histories group their biographies together among the collective biographies of literary men ("Wen yuan"), not among the Confucian scholars ("Ru lin"). Only Liu Yizhi has an independent noncategorized biography as a general service official. The group came into existence in the Shangyuan reign period (674–676), almost certainly in 675, when Gaozong, at the urging of empress Wu, recruited them to serve in the Inner Palace.²⁶ All were experienced men of proven literary ability who were already serving in elite "pure" scholarly offices 清官 of middle rank.²⁷ Liu Yizhi was an experienced scholarly official who as a young man had gained a reputation as a writer and had been appointed with a number of close literary associates as an auxiliary scholar (*zhi xueshi* 直學士) in the Zhaowen Academy 昭文館. In 675 he was serving as an auxiliary scholar in the Hongwen academy while holding a substantive post as one of the court diarists (*zuo shi* 左史) attached to the Chancellery.²⁸ Fan Lübing and Miao Chuke (see above) were his colleagues

²⁶ Denis Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 3, *Sui and T'ang China* 589–906, Part 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1979), p. 263, erroneously dates this event a decade earlier, following *JTS* 43, pp. 1853–54, which says that "in the Qianfeng period (666–67) the elder and younger brothers Liu Yizhi 劉懿之 and Liu Yizhi 劉禪之, Zhou Simao, Yuan Wangqing, and Fan Lübing were all summoned to the palace as 'officials awaiting the imperial command' (*dai zhao* 待詔) on account of their literary skills, and since they were constantly waiting at the Northern Gate to enter and attend the emperor, those at the time called them the 'Scholars of the Northern Gate.'" This passage wrongly assumes they were the forerunners of the later Hanlin Imperial Attendants (*Hanlin daizhao* 翰林待詔).

²⁷ There is no mention of passing any examination in any of their biographies. However Fan Lübing (a remote ancestor of the Sung statesman Fan Zhongyan) is said in one late source to have graduated as a *jinshi* from the Taixue at an unknown date (see Xu Song 徐松, *Deng ke ji kao* 登科記考, in *Nanjing shuyuan congshu* edn. (rpt. Taipei, 1972), p. 1741; while Miao Shenke, the alternative name given for Miao Chuke (see n. 29, below), appears as having passed the special *Yousu ke* 幽素科 decree examination held in 666. See *THY* 76, p. 1386; *CFYG* 645, p. 12a.

²⁸ There were normally four court diarists, two attached to the Secretariat and known as *qiju sheren* 起居舍人, and two attached to the Chancellery, known as *qiju lang* 起居郎. All four held the lower-sixth rank, upper division, the equivalent to the under-secretaries (*yuanywai lang* 員外郎) of the Six Boards of the Department of State Affairs. Under the wholesale changes in official nomenclature in force from 662–670 these posts were renamed after models from remote antiquity, the *qiju lang* becoming *zuo shi*, and the *qiju sheren* becoming *you shi*. Strictly speaking, these titles, as given in our sources, were anachronistic in 675 by which time they had reverted to their normal forms.

as court diarists attached to the Chancellery;²⁹ Zhou Simao and Han Chubin were the two court diarists (*you shi* 右史) attached to the Secretariat.³⁰ Yuan Wanqing, who was somewhat older, and according to one source had first suggested to Gaozong the assembling of the team of scholars,³¹ held a higher-ranking post as one of the two directors of the Office of Literary Composition (*zhuzuo lang* 著作郎), a subdepartment of the Imperial Library.³² This was also a “pure” post. The name of another shadowy figure, Wei Ye (or Wei Jingye) is also mentioned as their associate, but we know nothing about him, or what position he held. As holders of these court offices, all would have been known personally to Gaozong and the empress. Their service as one of the Scholars of the Northern Gate did not confer any rank, recognized title, or emoluments. The scholars continued to hold their substantive court offices, some of which, particularly those as court diarists, must have consumed much time and energy.

Working in the Inner Palace, they undertook the very extensive program of compilations listed above. In all, they are said to have produced more than one thousand *juan* of writings. In addition, they were employed to draft imperial edicts, taking over this duty from the drafting secretaries in the Secretariat (*Zhongshu sheren* 中書舍人) who normally fulfilled this duty. From time to time both the empress and the emperor also secretly consulted some of them about their own impending policy decisions, as a covert means of by-passing the authority of the chief ministers, with whom the empress had a long-running hostile relationship, which hardened after they had frustrated her attempt to have herself appointed as temporary regent during Gaozong’s serious illness in 675.³³

The Scholars of the Northern Gate were all men of intellectual distinction, selected from among the holders of elite scholarly “pure offices,” whose duties entailed the composition of important documents. Several of them had also served in the households of royal princes. They

²⁹ His name is written Miao Chuke 苗楚客 in *JTS* 87, p. 2846, but as Miao Shenke 苗神客 in *JTS* 190B, p. 5010; *XTS* 201, p. 5744.

³⁰ His name is given as Hu Chubin 胡楚賓 in *JTS* 190B, pp. 1510–12 and *XTS* 57, p. 1450, but as Han Chubin 韓楚賓 in *JTS* 87, p. 2846.

³¹ See *CFYG* 550, pp. 10a–b.

³² This post carried the fifth rank, upper division. On the Office of Literary Composition see Twitchett, *Writing of Official History*, pp. 11–13; David McMullen, *State and Scholars in Tang China* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1988), p. 22.

³³ See *JTS* 5, p. 100; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6375–76, which inserts its entry on the recruitment of the Scholars of the Northern Gate immediately following this event, implying a causal relationship, but it is not given a precise date.

included all of the court diarists responsible for the ongoing official record of events, and were thus responsible for the ultimate source of the official historiography of the events at court. The diarists were among the court officers “in constant attendance” on the emperor (*gongfeng guan* 拱奉官). Another of them was one of the two directors of the Office of Literary Composition, a subdepartment of the Imperial Library, another “pure office” whose staff were responsible for composing formal and ritual documents. All those about whom we have specific information seem to have come from distinguished social backgrounds.

They were also highly competent general service officials. After the empress became the *de facto* ruler, following Gaozong’s death in 683, some of them for a while enjoyed successful careers in court office, and were steadily promoted to higher ranks, two of them eventually becoming chief ministers. Only Hu Chubin died in office while still serving as a diarist. We do not know the date of his death.³⁴

By far the most successful of them was Liu Yizhi 劉禕之 (631–687). A southerner from Changzhou 常州, his grandfather had served under the Chen dynasty, and his father, Liu Ziyi 劉子翼 (died *circa* 650) had been a famous scholar whose works extended to twenty *juan*, and had also been an exemplary model of filial piety. He had served under Taizong in pure scholarly posts, as director of the Office of Literary Composition, and auxiliary scholar of the Hongwen Academy, and had been one of the compilers of the *History of the Jin* (*Jin shu* 晉書).

Liu Yizhi was himself a prolific writer, whose collected works, totaling seventy *juan*, were said to have been widely circulated in his lifetime, although nothing of them survives except five unremarkable occasional poems.³⁵ When he was summoned to serve in the Palace in 675, he had already been a court diarist in the Chancellery, and an auxiliary scholar in the Hongwen Academy, and was concurrently a drafter of edicts in the Secretariat (*Zhongshu sheren* 中書舍人). His elder brother Liu Yizhi 劉懿之 held a parallel position as a chief secretary (*jishizhong* 給事中) in the Chancellery, and an elder sister was serving

³⁴ For a convenient listing of their careers, see the meticulous table in Zhang Rongfang 張榮芳, *Tangdai de Shiguan yu shi guan* 唐代的史館與史官 (Taipei: Sili Dong Wu daxue, 1984), p. 227. Unfortunately no dates are available for their promotions.

³⁵ See *Quan Tang shi* 全唐詩 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960) 44, pp. 539–60. The writings of most of the prominent contemporary statemen active in the later years of Gaozong’s reign have also been completely lost, although several are known to have left large collections of writings. Of his colleagues among the Scholars of the Northern Gate, Yuan Wanqing has four surviving poems (*j.* 44, pp. 541–42) and two prose pieces on the rituals of the Hall of Enlightenment (*Mingtang* 明堂); see Dong Gao 董誥, [*Qinding*] *Quan Tang wen* 欽定全唐文 (Taipei: Yiwen shuju, 1964; hereafter *QIW*) 168, pp. 7a–9b, and Miao Shenke also has two surviving prose pieces (see *QIW* 201, pp. 1b–10b).

as a female official (*nüguan* 女官) in the Inner Palace.³⁶ In 677 he was promoted in nominal rank,³⁷ and appointed acting vice-president of the Secretariat (*jianjiao Zhongshu shilang* 檢校中書侍郎),³⁸ and concurrently as the assistant administrator of the household (*sima* 司馬) of prince Yu 預王, the empress's youngest son and the future emperor Ruizong.³⁹ Gaozong valued him highly and chose him to serve as a mentor to the prince partly because, like his father Liu Ziyi, he was widely respected as a model of filial behavior.

Yüan Wanqing was a descendant of the royal family of the Northern Wei. His grandfather Yuan Baize 元白澤 had served Gaozu and been ennobled as duke of Xin'an. On the strength of his family background Wanqing entered official service as a Secretarial receptionist (*tongshi sheren* 通事舍人). During the invasion of Korea in 668, he had been the chief of the field secretariat (*zongguan jishi* 總管記事) of the aged general Li Ji 李勣 (Li Shiji 李世勣, 594–669). He was ordered to write a manifesto against the Koguryō government, in which he taunted them for not being able to hold the line of the Yalu, as a result of which Koguryō strengthened its Yalu defenses, blocking the advance of the

³⁶ This relationship had earlier led to the first setback in his career. His sister was ordered by the empress to pay a sick-visit to her mother, née Yang, who had been granted the title Lady of the State of Rong 榮國夫人, with precedence over all the other wives and mothers of princes and royal dukes, on November 17, 660 (see *JTS* 4, p. 81). She resided in a mansion in Jiaoyi ward 教義坊 in the southwest area of Luoyang, next to the Forbidden Park; see Xu Song 徐松, *Tang liangjing chengfang kao* 唐兩京城坊考 (n.p.: Lianyunyi congshu 連筠移叢書, 1848) 5, pp. 32a–b; *Henan zhi* 河南志 1, p. 19a (both rpt. in Hiraoka Takeo, *Chōan to Rakuyō* 長安と洛陽, vol. 6 of *Tōdai kenkyū no shiori* [Kyoto: Kyoto daigaku Jimbun kenkyusho, 1956]). Liu Yizhi, according to *XTS* 117, p. 4251, with the help of Helan Minzhi 賀蘭敏之, the notorious son of the empress's elder sister, secretly spied upon her, and for this offense was banished to Suizhou in southwestern Sichuan. But some time later, at the empress's own request, Gaozong summoned him back to the capital, where he was appointed to the important post of acting drafter of edicts.

The account of these events in Liu Yizhi's very confused and poorly edited *JTS* biography gives the impression that his banishment occurred some time after the appointment of the Northern Gate scholars in 675. This cannot be so, since empress Wu's mother died on October 3, 670, and was given a grand state funeral attended by all the officials and nobles in the capital (see *JTS* 5, p. 95; *ZZTJ* 201, p. 6365). Helan Minzhi, as the result of a flagrant sex scandal, was exiled to the south with many of his corrupt associates and was subsequently killed on July 22, 671. I therefore follow Liu's biography in *XTS* (see *XTS* 117, p. 4251), which introduces this anecdote with "Prior to this...."

³⁷ He was promoted first to *chaoyi dafu* 朝議大夫 (rank 5A.1), then shortly after to *zhong dafu* 中大夫 (rank 4B.2).

³⁸ The biography in *JTS* 87, pp. 2846–47, has seriously muddled these appointments, and makes him appointed a full vice-president of the Secretariat at this point. It makes better sense to accept the *XTS* 117, p. 4251, account which makes this an acting appointment.

³⁹ Ruizong's titles as a prince were repeatedly changed, as was his personal name. After his birth on June 22, 662, he was appointed prince of Yin 殷王. In 666 his title was changed to prince of Yu 預王. In 669 he was appointed prince of Ji 冀王, in 675 prince of Xiang 相王, and in 678 again prince of Yu. Thus Liu Yizhi was first appointed to his princely administration when he was prince of Xiang, and continued in his service when he was made prince of Yu.

Chinese army. Yuan Wanqing was held guilty of having revealed the plan for the invasion, and was exiled to Lingnan. However, he later came within the scope of an amnesty and returned to court where he became Director of the Office of Literary Composition. He was an extremely facile and rapid writer, but careless over points of detail, and is said to have “lacked the manner of a Confucian scholar.”

Fan Lübing was recruited into the palace services from a post in the princely household staff of the prince of Zhou, the future Zhongzong, where he remained for more than twenty years.

Zhou Simao was from Changnan 漳南, and had made a literary reputation when still very young, as had his younger brother Zhou Si-jun 周思鈞. He was transferred from the position of court diarist, which he held when he was recruited as one of the Northern Gate scholars, to become secretary to the heir-apparent, and later became deputy-director of the Imperial Library (*Lintai shaojian* 麟臺少監) and scholar in the Chongwen Academy.

Hu Chubin conformed to a stereotype of the unconventional writer; a man able to dash off his writings at great speed, but who needed to be well primed with drink before he took up his brush. He was a favorite of Gaozong. When the emperor wanted him to compose something, he would first offer him a gold or silver cup full of wine, and when he was finished would give him the cup as a reward. A feckless spendthrift, whenever he was destitute he would return to the palace to await the emperor's next commission, and having been rewarded for his work would leave again. In spite of his life of dissipation, however, he was utterly discreet and never spoke about affairs in the palace. If anyone asked him about them, even when he was drunk, he would just turn the conversation to another subject. This virtue of discretion is also stressed in *Chen gui* as essential in a minister. Notwithstanding, it is hardly surprising that Hu's official career was unspectacular. After his stint as a court diarist he became an auxiliary scholar in the Chongxian Academy 崇賢館, attached to the heir-apparent's household administration, in which office he died, at an unknown date before 689.

At the end of 683 the political situation underwent a dramatic change. On December 27, 683, Gaozong died. On January 3, 684, the heir-apparent Li Xian succeeded to the throne (r. Zhongzong; 683–684; 705–710). It immediately became apparent that he was unwilling to remain a powerless puppet under empress Wu's tutelage. When he promoted the father of his empress Wei 韋后 to be a chief minister, on February 26, empress Wu forcibly dethroned him. Zhongzong was

banished to the provinces, and the next day the empress enthroned her youngest son the prince of Yu (r. Ruizong 684–90; 710–13) in his place. Although he was a grown man of twenty-one, she herself acted as regent with full executive powers. The empress appointed new chief ministers. Wang Dezhen 王德真, who became president (*shizhong* 侍中) of the Chancellery, had been the chief administrator (*changshi* 長史) of Ruizong's princely household administration, while Liu Yizhi, who had been his deputy (*sima* 司馬), was appointed as full vice-president of the Secretariat, and *ad hominem* chief minister,⁴⁰ and ennobled as baron of Linhuai 臨淮男. The empress shared the late emperor's high personal regard for and trust in Liu Yizhi, and when she enthroned Ruizong, Liu Yizhi participated in her planning, and he is said to have composed all the important edicts issued at this crucial time.

For more than three years he was the dominant chief minister. But the already tense political atmosphere at court deteriorated steadily after the unsuccessful rebellion in 684 of Li Jingye 李敬業,⁴¹ who aimed to remove the empress Wu and restore Zhongzong to the throne. The empress was now constantly on the watch for the slightest hint of enemies or signs of conspiracy and betrayal, and launched a reign of terror which decimated the ranks both of high officialdom and of the Tang royal family. In this atmosphere of paranoia every great official was constantly at risk of exposure to denunciations, true or false, and to ruthless investigation by the empress's inquisitors. In 687 Liu Yizhi made some indiscreet remarks about the empress to one of the chief secretaries in his own ministry, Jia Dayin 賈大隱, saying "The empress-dowager has already been able to destroy darkness and establish light, why does she still need to preside over the court and issue edicts (that is, act as regent)? It would be better for her to hand over the government, in order to put the hearts of the empire at ease." Jia Dayin reported his remark to the empress, arousing her furious displeasure. She declared "Yizhi was chosen and given employment by me, and now he has turned against my heart. How can he hope ever to enjoy my benevolence again?"

Shortly afterwards, he was denounced for taking bribes from the Khitan 契丹 chieftain Sun Wanrong 孫萬榮,⁴² and also for committing

⁴⁰ He was appointed *zhongshu shilang* and *tong Zhongshu Menxia san pin* 同中書門下三品 on March 6, 684. His former senior in Ruizong's princely household, the president of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices *Taichang qing* 太常卿 Wang Dezhen 王德真, was appointed president of the Chancellery, and thus *ex officio* chief minister, on the same day. The date is given as March 9 in *JTS* 6, p. 116; as March 6 in *XTS* 4, p. 82; *XTS* 61, p. 1650; and *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6419.

⁴¹ Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien*, pp. 57–61; *Cambridge History of China* 3, pp. 294–98.

⁴² Sun Wanrong was the chieftain of a branch of the Khitan who had been vassals of the

adultery with a former concubine of the empress's long-dead favorite minister Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592–672). The empress sent a high official to interrogate him, but Liu Yizhi refused to accept the validity of the edict the envoy bore, saying that no edict was valid unless it had been issued through the Chancellery and the Secretariat, his own department. The empress, claiming that he had disobeyed an imperial edict, thereupon ordered him to commit suicide. Although Ruizong, still the nominal emperor, offered to intervene on his behalf, he refused, saying that since the empress had already made up her mind, Ruizong's coming to his aid would only speed his death. He died on June 17, 687.⁴³

When empress Wu came to power in 683, Yuan Wanqing, another of the Scholars of the Northern Gate, had been promoted to be a drafting secretary in the Secretariat (*Fengge sheren* 鳳閣舍人), and shortly after became its vice-president (*Fengge shilang* 鳳閣侍郎). However, his position too soon became insecure, and he was under constant threat. He had formerly been on friendly terms with Li Jingye, whose abortive rebellion in 684 had first sparked off the empress's reign of terror. Jingye and his brothers were grandsons of the great general Li Ji, under whom Yuan had served during the Korean campaign. In 689 Yuan, in his turn, was entrapped by the empress's inquisitors, and sentenced to exile in Lingnan, where he died on October 15, 690.

During the Chuigong reign-period (685–689), Fan Lübing also rose to very high office, serving as vice-president of the Chancellery (also called Luantai 鸞臺), vice-president of the Board of Civil Office (Tian guan 天官),⁴⁴ president of the Board of Rites (Chun guan 春官), and eventually, on December 5, 689, was appointed *ad hominem* chief minister (*tong Fengge Luantai pingzhangshi* 同鳳閣鸞臺平章事) and concurrently compiler of the National History (*xiu Guoshi* 修國史).⁴⁵ Within months, however, he too was caught up in one of the empress's purges, accused of having formerly promoted rebels, and was judicially murdered on May 24, 690.⁴⁶

Sui, and had served the Tang since 621, when they had been settled close to the Tang north-eastern fortress of Yingzhou 營州. Their leaders had been regularly granted Tang titles and noble ranks. In 696 he and another Khitan leader, Li Jinzhong 李盡忠, rebelled and invaded Hebei; see *JTS* 199B, p. 5350.

⁴³ Date according to *JTS* 6, p. 118.

⁴⁴ Yan Gengwang 嚴耕望, *Tang pu shang cheng lang piao* 唐僕尚丞郎表 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo, 1956) 1, p. 99, dates his promotion to vice-president of the Board of Civil Office as either in 688 or early 689, and his transfer as president of the Board of Rites as some time before the 10th mo., 689.

⁴⁵ *JTS* 6, p. 120.

⁴⁶ *ZZTJ* 204, p. 6464. This gives the date as May 24, 690, based on the Shilu and Liu

The others remained in scholarly offices, and were not directly involved in day-to-day politics. They had less successful official careers, and were well out of the limelight at court. But this did not enable them to escape the empress's purges. Zhou Simao, in spite of his posts in the imperial library and other scholarly offices, also perished. His brother Zhou Sijun, who served with him in the heir-apparent's household, was banished to a minor post in what is now the border of Guizhou after being involved as a bystander in the fall of Liu Yizhi. He had earned the wrath of the empress by expressing his deep feelings on reading the memorial written to the empress by Liu Yizhi before his enforced suicide. After this, Zhou Simao himself did not long retain the empress's good will. He was tried and executed on April 10, 688, on what grounds we do not know. Miao Shenke, who also remained in scholarly offices and was not directly involved in active politics, nevertheless became a victim of her purges. Having achieved the rank of director of the Office of Literary Composition, he was exiled and then executed on October 2, 690.

By the time empress Wu took the throne and established her new Zhou dynasty on October 17, 690, all of her former Scholars of the Northern Gate were dead, all but one of them victims of her own persecutions. It would seem clear that these scholars functioned as a group, the "Scholars of the Northern Gate," only for a short time, during the last years of Gaozong's reign, from 675 to 683. With the beginning of empress Wu's domination of the court after Gaozong's death, the most active and able among them were appointed to important substantive posts in government. They could hardly have continued to play their former role as informal advisers on political affairs, as they were now an integral part of the empress's government in power. Nor can they have had the leisure to devote themselves to any further large-scale literary compilations. Liu Yizhi was the dominant chief minister from his appointment in 684 until he broke with the empress and was ordered to commit suicide in 687. Fan Lübing also briefly served as a chief minister for a few months in 689 and 690, before he too was executed on June 25, 690. Yuan Wanqing, the last survivor, was vice-president of the Secretariat for some years after 684, but died in exile on October 15, 690. Our sources never mention these Scholars of the Northern Gate as a group after 683, although two other individuals at court are reported to have held that title during the empress's reign after 690.

Fang's 柳芳 mid-8th-c. *Tang li* 唐曆 (now lost; probably completed around 783), and rejects the June 25 date given in *XTS* 4, p. 90.

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION OF *CHEN GUI*

We do not know which of the Northern Gate scholars was responsible for any one of the works circulated under the empress's name, and it would be futile to speculate about the actual author of *Chen gui* (see item 4, above). There is also some confusion about its date of composition.

There are two main theories about its date. The first, based on a resumé of the edicts that gave *Chen gui* status as a prescribed examination text, dates its composition at that time, in 693. The other follows the date of composition as 685, given in various early Japanese manuscript copies, and included in the early printed edition that was reintroduced to China in the early-nineteenth century. Some scholars, notably Juan Yüan 阮元 (1764–1849),⁴⁷ cast doubt on this date, suggesting that it is a falsification interpolated in the text by some Japanese scholar. However Juan Yüan's argument rests on a misleading passage in *Tang hui yao* describing its adoption as an examination text in 693 and its subsequent rejection in 706. This reads:

In the third month of 693 empress Zetian herself composed *Chen fan* 臣範 (sic) in two chapters (*juan*), and ordered examination candidates to study it, and to cease studying *Laozi*.

The ninth-century compendium *Tong dian* 通典 has a similar account,⁴⁸ giving the book its correct title, *Chen gui*, and its contents incorrectly as two *pian* (sections). Both the *Hui yao* 會要 of Su Mien 蘇冕, upon which *Tang hui yao* was based, and *Tong dian* were compiled around 801–805, and both made extensive use of the *National History* (*Guo shi* 國史) of Liu Fang 柳芳 and the Veritable Records of individual reigns which were their ultimate source. However there is a parallel account of these same events in the later *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (completed 1013), which was also largely based on the Tang Veritable Records. This is worded quite differently:

In the seventh month of 693, examination candidates were ordered to study *Chen gui*, which the empress Zetian had compiled, and were no longer to be examined on *Laozi*.

This does not imply that the empress (or her writers) composed the book at the same time as it was made a part of the examination curriculum, but simply that it was already in existence.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Juan Yüan, *Ssu-k'u wei-shou shu-mu t'i-yao* 四庫未收書目提要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yin-shu guan, 1955), p. 34.

⁴⁸ Du You 杜佑, *Tong dian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988; rpt. 1996; hereafter *TD*) 15, pp. 354–55.

⁴⁹ *THY* 75, p. 1373, reads: 長壽二年三月。則天自製臣軌兩卷，令貢舉人習業。停老子；*TD* 15, p. 355, reads: 長壽二年太后自製臣軌兩篇。令貢舉習業。停老子；and *CFYG* 639, p. 12b, reads: 長壽二年七月。令貢舉人習則天所撰臣軌。停通老子。

There can in any case be no question of the *Chen gui*'s having been written in 693, since by that date all of its putative authors, the Northern Gate Scholars, had been dead for some time. Such evidence as there is suggests that the date 685 given in the Japanese manuscripts is probably correct.

There is, however, some tenuous evidence in the text itself to suggest that the text may actually have been written (or at least drafted) still earlier, perhaps before the death of Gaozong in 683. The textual analysis of *Chen gui* is a complicated matter. Like many similar works of the period, it is highly derivative, and a good deal of it consists of a patchwork of material quoted, either with acknowledgement or silently, from a wide spectrum of earlier books – from the canonical texts of Confucianism, from pre-Han Taoist and Legalist works, from what we would nowadays describe as the Huang-Lao tradition, and from syncretist political writings of the late Han, Three Kingdoms, and Jin periods. These quotations sometimes differ markedly from the received texts of the works cited, and often present a summary resumé, rather than a literal quotation of their contents. To complicate matters, there is every likelihood that the authors took at least some of their quotations not from the original works but at second hand, from citations in seventh-century encyclopedic works.

The only parts of *Chen gui* that were certainly composed afresh and in which the empress herself clearly had a hand, were the Preface (*xu* 序) and the short Argument (*lun* 論) with which the book ends. The opening paragraphs and some short link passages in each of the ten sections (*pian* 篇) were also probably written *ab initio*, but show no indication of her authorship or personal influence.⁵⁰ The Preface and the Argument contain some oblique and sometimes contradictory indications of the political situation of the empress, its nominal author, from which we might deduce its date of composition.

In the Preface, the author speaks of herself as occupying the position of *kunyuan* 坤元, symbolic of the empress, or of the supreme female (*yin*) power in the empire. Later she speaks of “the brilliant vision of the Heavenly Emperor (Tianhuang),” the title that had been adopted by Gaozong in 674, at which date she herself had taken the parallel title “Heavenly Empress (Tianhou).” This imperial title, which had strong Taoist resonances,⁵¹ was unique to Gaozong and had been deliberately

⁵⁰ The only exception to this is the ending of the section “Good Generals,” which consists of two anecdotes about the influence of mothers on their general sons' careers.

⁵¹ See Timothy H. Barrett, *Taoism under the Tang: Religion and Empire during the Golden Age of Chinese History* (London: Wellsweep, 1996), pp. 36–37, which points out that in early

adopted to set him apart from all previous sovereigns. After his death it became part of his original posthumous canonization title, Tianhuang Dadi 天皇大帝, granted in 684.⁵² It cannot refer either to Zhongzong or Ruizong, in whose names the empress ruled from December 27, 683, to October 16, 690. Neither was granted any honorific title until they resumed the throne in turn in the eighth century, after her dethronement and death. This might suggest that the text was written before Gaozong's death in 683.

On the other hand, in the text of the Preface as transmitted in Japan,⁵³ she uses the imperial pronoun *zhen* 朕, which might suggest that the text was written after 690, when she became sovereign in her own right. Surviving documents written by the empress during her Chou dynasty use the imperial pronoun freely, as would be expected. However its use was less exclusive in early Tang than it later became, and she might well have used it earlier, even while Gaozong was still alive. She thought of herself and the emperor as joint sovereigns, and her subjects also spoke of them informally as “the two saintly rulers (*er sheng* 二聖).”

However, too much should not be read into this because the text of the preface as it is preserved in *Wenyuan yinghua* omits this character altogether, perhaps because its Song period official compilers did not wish to recognize the empress's claims to status as a legitimate ruler.⁵⁴ The *Cefu yuangui* compilation of a few years later (1005–1013) systematically omits many of her edicts and acts of grace for the same reason. This evidence is therefore inconclusive.

CHEN GUI AS PART OF A PROGRAM OF NORMATIVE POLITICAL TEXTS

A glance at the titles of the writings produced by the Scholars of the Northern Gate for the empress Wu shows that *Chen gui* was not

Taoist texts, including some still current in the seventh century, Tian huang, was the first of the primeval sacred rulers of China who had ruled over an era of perfect peace.

⁵² On September 25, 684; see *THY* 1, p. 3; *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6420. For the edict conferring this title (attributed to empress Wu), see *TDZLJ* 13, p. 75. The title was retained in the newly augmented posthumous title granted to Gaozong on March 5, 754, Tian huang dasheng (or hong) xiao huangdi 天皇大聖(弘)孝皇帝. See *JTS* 5, p. 112; *THY* 1, p. 3; *CFYG* 30, p. 13a; *ZZTJ* 217, p. 6924.

⁵³ Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, ed., *Di fan, Chen gui fu jiaoji* 帝範臣軌附校記 (n.p: Dongfang xuehui, 1924, hereafter *CG*) shang, p. 1a.

⁵⁴ The text as cited in *QIW* 97, p. 11a, does include *zhen*. However, *QIW* was compiled in 1808–14, some years after the printing, in 1799, of Hayashi Shussai's *Ison sōsho* (see n. 2, above), through which the complete *Chen gui*, as it had been transmitted in Japan, was reintroduced to China.

conceived of as an independent work, but as part of a larger program of prescriptive texts providing models of appropriate conduct for various groups in Tang society. These were: the two compilations *Zishu yaolu* (item 1), on general principles of government, and *Zichen liyao* (item 2) on rites concerning the sovereign, which presented prescriptions for the ruler; *Bailiao xinjie* (item 3) and *Chen gui*, both related to the conduct of officials; *Qinggong jiyao* (item 5) and *Shaoyang zhengfan* (item 6) on the conduct of the heir-apparent; *Liefan zhenglun* (item 7) and *Weicheng dianxun* (item 8) on the conduct of the royal princes; *Gujin neifan* (item 14) and *Neifan yaolüe* (item 15) prescribed rules of behavior for women; *Lienü zhuan* (item 10) and *Xiaonü zhuan* (item 11) provided groups of exemplary women's biographies; *Xiaozi zhuan* (item 12) and *Xiaonü zhuan* (item 11) biographies of exemplars of filial piety male and female; *Huanglou xinjie* (item 17) and probably *Baofu rumu zhuan* (item 16) rules of behavior within the imperial harem; and *Zhaoren benye* (item 18) gave models for the conduct of the agrarian population at large.

We know from the Preface of *Chen gui* that the empress thought of these works as being interconnected. There she states:

Recently, instructions for self-cultivation have been compiled for the heir-apparent and for the princes. But as yet no model rules providing "information on loyalty and guidance on goodness" (in other words, moral instructions) have been set forth for the assembled nobles and the ranks of those appointed to office.⁵⁵

Empress Wu had already once tried her hand at drawing up prescriptive rules of conduct when in 655, still as one of Gaozong's senior consorts, she had composed *Nei xun*, essentially some rules of guidance for palace women.

The Political Background of Sponsored Scholarship

Sponsored scholarship on a grand scale was nothing new early in the Tang. Both Taizong and Gaozong had sponsored massive programs of canonical scholarship to produce standardized texts of and commentaries on the Confucian classics.⁵⁶ They had also organized the compilation of a huge series of official histories covering the period from Jin to Sui and of a wide variety of other historical works, and had commissioned a large gazetteer of the Western Regions in Inner Asia, and detailed empire-wide genealogical works. They had also supported a vast translation program to produce Chinese versions of Buddhist literature, and the compilation of a series of several very large literary antholo-

⁵⁵ *CG, shang*, pp. 1a-b.

⁵⁶ McMullen, *State and Scholars*, pp. 67-112.

gies and encyclopedias. The impetus behind this great outpouring of sponsored scholarship had run down somewhat by the 660s, with the completion of the works on the Confucian canon and the histories in the 650s, and the abandonment of the seemingly never-ending project of Buddhist translation after the death of Xuanzang 玄奘 in 664. But the state continued to support formal academies of scholars, and state-sponsored scholarship was still very much alive. It was now redirected into new fields. Just at the time the Scholars of the Northern Gate were beginning their program of instructional works in 675, Gaozong, who had developed a deep interest in Taoism, also ordered a compilation of the Taoist canon in memory of the deceased heir-apparent Li Hong 李弘,⁵⁷ while another group of scholars who had been working with the new heir-apparent Li Xian was just completing an important commentary on the fifth-century work *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 that was presented to the throne on January 10, 677, and still survives.⁵⁸

The Dynastic Crisis of the 670s

To understand the full significance of the empress's new program of social and political instructional works, it is necessary to consider in detail the precise historical context in which it was undertaken and completed. When, in 675 the Scholars of the Northern Gate were recruited and set to work compiling their ambitious series of works, Gaozong's government was facing grave difficulties.

Because of the generally negative image of Gaozong's reign given by the traditional historians, who tended to see him as completely overshadowed by the ever-growing domination of the empress Wu, it is easy to forget the very real achievements of his earlier years. In 666 Gaozong and the empress had finally celebrated the awesome Feng and Shan Sacrifices to Heaven on Mount Tai, in Shandong, a public affirmation of the dynasty's having achieved a pinnacle of power. Even the great Taizong had failed to perform these rites in spite of having made plans to do so more than once. And there was indeed much for Gaozong to celebrate. In the early 660s, Chinese power and political influence in Inner Asia extended more broadly than at any other period before the Manchu conquests of the eighteenth century. In the west, Tang armies had driven deep into present-day Xinjiang, and Chinese administrations were established there: Tang military power and political influence was felt far into Inner Asia, where nominal Tang protectorates

⁵⁷ Barrett, *Taoism under the Tang*, p. 34.

⁵⁸ *JTS* 5, p. 102; 86, p. 2832; *THY* 36, p. 657; *CFYG* 258, p. 14b.

extended briefly beyond the Tienshan range, into Trans-Oxania, the Pamirs, and the borders of Afghanistan. In Korea, Gaozong had revived his father's thwarted attempts to conquer Koguryō, and his armies stood on the brink of victory. In 668 he would establish a short-lived Tang protectorate based at the old Koguryō capital P'yongyang. In the far south Tang control was firmly established over northern Vietnam (Annan), and this area too would be consolidated in a protectorate in 679; while in the southwest the Tang had been exerting pressure periodically on the local peoples.

In civil affairs, too, the institutions set up under Gaozu and Taizong had been steadily consolidated. The codification of law continued. The entire body of codified laws was completely revised at the beginning of Gaozong's reign in 651, the important subcommentary to the *Code* was promulgated in 653, and thereafter the codified law was regularly updated and revised. A major revision was carried out in 665, and another would be completed in 676–677. The body of law completed during Gaozong's first years in power provided not only a penal code that would remain authoritative until the fourteenth century, but also established standards and models for the uniform organization of all civil and military administrations throughout the empire, and made provision both for regular updating and supplementation and for detailed rules covering variations in implementation due to local conditions. Taizong's state ritual code of 637, the parallel corpus of normative rules on ritual observances applicable to the royal family, officials, and people alike, remained in force, and ritual scholarship was actively cultivated. In the more practical fields of administration, the control of central government over the provinces was strengthened, and the network of civil administration rationalized and extended as new civil administrations were set up in marginal regions, especially in the Yangzi basin and in the south.

However, both in the northwest and Inner Asia, and in Korea, the Tang had overreached itself, and Gaozong's military and diplomatic successes proved shortlived. In the far west Tang forces, largely dependent on Turkish cavalry, were spread thinly and dangerously over-extended, and the fragile political order that had been temporarily established in the 650s collapsed, as Tang influence was challenged by the arrival of the Arabs in Tokharistan and Trans-Oxania, by a resurgence of power among the Western Turkish tribes, and above all by the emergence of Tibet as a powerful, expansionist and aggressive military power, which was already becoming Tang China's major foreign adversary.

In Korea, rebellion against Tang control began in 670, the rebels being assisted by Silla, which had unified the south of Korea during the wars accompanying the Tang invasion. In 676 the Tang withdrew from P'yŏngyang, and recalled all administrators from Korea. In 678 the court wisely decided against further military action in Korea because of the far more serious threat now being posed by Tibet. Silla meanwhile consolidated its control over the entire Korean peninsula. Everywhere, Tang forces, which had appeared invincible and had advanced so easily in the 650s and early 660s, were now forced on the defensive.

These repeated campaigns and the subsequent series of setbacks on the frontiers had been ruinously expensive, and had caused massive losses of manpower. The costs of the rapidly expanding government and ever-increasing numbers of officials in the bureaucracy put the empire's finances under further pressure. The establishment of a new second capital at Luoyang, and the vast long-term building program this necessitated, increased the financial burden on the empire still further. A large proportion of the potential taxpayers and corvée laborers in the empire – probably more than half – were still not registered, and the system of local government was still evolving, especially in the south. The taxation system remained primitive and was largely levied in kind; the transportation system for tax grain was inefficient, and the government constantly resorted to requisitions of goods to meet their pressing needs. The money supply was totally inadequate, and the government's misguided attempts at intervention only made matters worse. The period from about 665 to the early 680s was one of growing economic hardship, of failed harvests, rising prices, floods, droughts and famines, in the face of which the government was powerless. The entire court was forced for both political and economic reasons to move every few years between its two major capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang, and these moves further disrupted and impoverished the political heartland of the dynasty through which the imperial cortege passed and were a constant drain on the empire's resources.

The Position of the Empress

Politically, too, things were not as simple as is sometimes assumed, particularly for the empress. Since Gaozong's first disabling illness in 659 she had constantly taken an active role in government, and it is commonly believed that her political dominance continued throughout Gaozong's reign. This was not so. In 664 she had survived a serious attempt to have her removed, which might easily have succeeded. She survived by sheer audacity and political acumen, and only after this

played an open role in government, attending Gaozong's court audiences and listening to the proceedings behind a screen.⁵⁹ Her prominent and unprecedented role in the Feng Shan Sacrifices and the broad participation of women in the ceremonial was a public affirmation of her real power.⁶⁰ When Gaozong in 674 adopted the grandiose new title of Heavenly Emperor (Tianhuang), the empress became Heavenly Empress (Tianhou) announcing their pretensions to be joint universal sovereigns.⁶¹ Their *de facto* joint rulership was widely acknowledged among the courtiers and the general population, prompting the references, as mentioned above, to "two saintly rulers."

But in spite of these claims to grandeur and her undoubted role in influencing public policy the empress's authority remained fundamentally insecure and was entirely dependent on her position as the consort of the sovereign and on her own instinctive skill in intrigue and political in-fighting. In 667 a powerful group of experienced new chief ministers were appointed, among them Yang Hongwu 楊弘武 (a relative of the empress's mother; d. 668), Dai Zhide 戴至德 (d. 679), and Zhang Wenjuan 張文瓘 (605–677). In 669 they were joined by Li Jingxuan 李敬玄 (615–682) and Hao Chujun 郝處俊 (607–681). These men remained chief ministers for a decade or more, and gave the bureaucracy a stable and comparatively independent leadership that had been lacking for years, since the downfall of the last survivors of Taizong's former great ministers in the period 657–659.

Yang Hongwu died in 668. In 670 the empress's position came under serious pressure. Her oldest and closest supporter, the sycophantic chief minister Xu Jingzong 徐敬宗, finally retired aged seventy-eight, and died two years later. In the same year, 670, the empress's mother, who had powerful political connections of her own,⁶² also died, and around this time other members of the Wu family were involved in serious and damaging scandals. In that same year 670, as a gesture in the face of severe natural disasters and setbacks suffered by the dynasty, the empress even offered to resign her position, although this offer was most likely not meant to be taken seriously. There was, nonetheless, a

⁵⁹ *JTS* 5, p. 100; *ZZTJ* 201, p. 6343. However, see Sima Guang's *Kaoyi* 考異 to this latter passage, which questions whether in fact they did hold court together.

⁶⁰ For details, see Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1985), pp. 184–88.

⁶¹ Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, pp. 232–34, speculates a connection between these titles and the title Heavenly Qaghan (*Tian Kehan* 天可汗) used by Taizong and later by Gaozong in their dealings with foreign peoples.

⁶² She was a daughter of Yang Da 楊達, a cousin of Sui Yangdi. Many members of the Sui imperial clan continued to exert a powerful influence at the Tang court well into the eighth century.

persistent undertow of uncertainty, and muted opposition to her power, that was always ready to surface.

Regency and the Succession Problem

In 672 Gaozong's health again gave way, and on October 27 the heir-apparent was appointed temporary regent. On March 19, 673, the heir was married to a daughter of Pei Judao 裴居道,⁶³ presumably to consolidate his position were he to succeed to the throne unexpectedly. The emperor temporarily recovered his health, but on April 12, 673, he withdrew to his favorite summer palace, Jiucheng gong 九成宮, about 150 kilometers west of Chang'an in the hilly uplands of Fengxiang prefecture 鳳翔府. Here, later in the year, he suffered a serious attack of malaria or intermittent fever, and on September 24, 673, the heir-apparent was again ordered to receive the officials and deal with government business in his place.⁶⁴ On December 7, the imperial entourage returned to Chang'an, where Gaozong busied himself writing the texts for a new set of formal pieces of court music.⁶⁵

By the next spring the emperor was again holding court and dealing with routine business, and there is no record of his retreating to the Jiucheng summer palace, as he had recently done each year. On April 30, 674, the empress personally performed the First Silkworm (*xiencan* 先蠶) ritual, which she had first revived in 656 after becoming empress, as a female counterpart to the emperor's Ploughing the Furrow (*jitian* 藉田) ritual, which signaled the beginning of the agricultural year. She and the emperor made further ritual changes to legitimize their position. On September 20, 674, they granted new and grander official posthumous titles to all the former Tang ancestors, emperors, and their empresses, while for themselves Gaozong and the empress took unprecedented titles, as mentioned earlier. To mark the occasion a new reign title Shangyuan 上元 (Highest Prime) was adopted, followed by the promulgation of the obligatory Act of Grace. On September 26 an edict was issued changing the colors of dress designated for the various ranks of officials and for commoners. On October 9 the emperor entertained all the officials of the capital, dressed in their new finery, at a grand banquet in the Linde Hall 麟德殿 of the Daming Palace 大明宮.

On October 11, in an act of reconciliation towards the clan of Gaozong's mother, Taizong's empress Wende 文德皇后, the ranks and

⁶³ *JTS* 5, p. 97; *JTS* 86, p. 2829. Pei Judao later became a chief minister under empress Wu, serving from 685 to 690, in which year he too was purged, and died in imprisonment.

⁶⁴ *JTS* 5, p. 98; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6371.

⁶⁵ *JTS* 5, p. 98.

titles of nobility of her brother Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 were posthumously restored, and he was reinterred as a secondary burial at Taizong's mausoleum. Wuji, who had been perhaps the most prominent of empress Wu's victims in her rise to supreme power, had been the brother-in-law and long-term great minister and confidant of Taizong, and had continued to serve as chief minister under Gaozong. He had been the principal opponent of Wu's promotion to empress in 655, and had subsequently been charged with plotting rebellion by empress Wu's supporters and exiled in 659, and finally forced to commit suicide in 664, accused of collusion with another conspiracy.

At the end of 674 the court was removed to Luoyang (the journey took from December 3 to 25). The emperor was well enough to attend a formal hunt in the foothills of Huashan 華山 en route on December 6. Back in Luoyang he attended to business as usual. There was much activity in the field of foreign relations; the kings of Khotan and Kucha and the ousted king of Persia came to offer tribute; titles were distributed to various tribal groups that had assisted the Tang against the Tibetans, and a Tibetan envoy who had come to seek a peace settlement was sent home empty handed.

The Empress's Reform Proposals of 675

On January 28, 675, the empress presented Gaozong with a twelve-point memorial laying out a long-term program of reforms aimed at the fundamental problems facing the imperial regime. The specific proposals in the empress's memorial are nowhere preserved in full; as with so many important documents from the period, the full text is lost, and the fullest surviving summary is that given in *Xin Tang shu*.⁶⁶ The reforms covered the following subjects:

1. The suspension of military operations, and reliance on the use of the Way and its Virtue (that is moral suasion) rather than deterrent force to transform the broader empire.
2. Economy measures: Encouragement of agriculture, the reduction of taxes and labor services. Tax remissions were specifically to be granted to the metropolitan regions. A ban was to be placed on excessive expenditure on palace buildings, and on extravagantly fine workmanship, together with a reduction in the wasteful employment of corvée labor.
3. The opportunities for the expression of personal opinions at court were to be broadened, and steps taken to prevent the spreading of slander.

⁶⁶ *XTS* 76, p. 3477. Only a sample of the individual reforms are mentioned in *JTS* 5, p. 99, and *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6374.

4. Officials were given some concessions. Officers who had been granted “honorific ranks” and had received their formal documents of appointment before 674 were exempted from retrospective examination of their cases. All metropolitan officials received an increase in their stipends, and long-serving officials whose talents were higher than their present post required were allowed to be promoted in rank, and the reasons blocking their advancement disregarded.
5. Everyone from the princes and dukes downwards was to study the Taoist classic *Daode jing*.
6. As a sign of the empress’s concern for the status of women, the mourning period for a mother, even when the father was still alive, was extended to three years, the same as in the case of a father.

Gaozong promulgated edicts putting most of these suggestions into effect in concrete form. Unfortunately these too, like the full text of the empress’s proposals, do not survive.

But by the third month of 675 the emperor was again so sick that all government business was being decided by the empress, and Gaozong discussed with his ministers whether formally to place her in temporary control of the empire’s affairs. The prospect of her acting as formal regent roused violent opposition among the chief ministers, who, led by Hao Chujun, blocked the suggestion.⁶⁷

The empress once again busied herself in strengthening her position in the Inner Palace, and destroying any palace women who enjoyed the emperor’s special regard. She had faced such a problem before in 666 when her elder sister, the Hanguo furen 韓國夫人, died. Her daughter had been a frequent visitor to the palace and had enjoyed the emperor’s favor. She was now granted the title Weiguo furen 魏國夫人, and Gaozong wished to appoint her to a post in the palace. She suddenly died of poisoning, and it was widely supposed that the empress had committed the crime. She settled the matter by having two of her own half-brothers, against whom she and her mother both bore personal grudges, tried and executed as the perpetrators.

In 675 the particular object of her hatred was Gaozu’s youngest but now elderly daughter, the princess Changle 常樂公主, who was on excellent terms with Gaozong. The princess was married to Zhao Gui 趙瓌, a general in the imperial bodyguard, and their daughter was married to the prince of Zhou 周王, the future Zhongzong. On May 7, 675, the daughter was found guilty of an unspecified offense warranting her dismissal as the prince’s consort. The empress had her sequestered in the eunuch-staffed Inner Palace Intendancy (Neishi sheng 內侍省) where she

⁶⁷ *JIS* 5, p. 100; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6375–76.

died within a few days.⁶⁸ Her father was posted in disgrace to a distant prefecture, and her mother the princess Changle was specially ordered to accompany him to his post,⁶⁹ and no longer to attend court.

The heir-apparent Li Hong, Gaozong's eldest son by empress Wu, now raised another palace scandal – that involving the fate of his two half-sisters, the princesses Yiyang and Xuancheng, the daughters of Xiao Shufei 蕭淑妃, Gaozong's favorite in the early 650s who had been brutally murdered in 655 by empress Wu together with his original empress née Wang. Since her murder her two daughters had been secluded in the imperial harem, and had now passed the age of 30 and were still unmarried. When the heir-apparent discovered this he was overcome with grief, and straightaway memorialized the throne asking that the two women should be released and marriages arranged for them. Gaozong agreed. The empress was furious, and the same day had them unceremoniously married off to two of the standby guards officers (*yiwai* 翊衛) who were currently on duty in the palace.⁷⁰

At this time the emperor had taken up residence in his Luoyang summer palace, Hebi gong 合璧宮. There, on May 25, the heir-apparent, who had brought this embarrassing scandal to light, suddenly died of poisoning. He was only twenty-three years of age. Gaozong had held him in the highest regard, and during his spells of acting as temporary regent during his father's illnesses he had shown every promise of growing into a distinguished emperor. Upon his death, Gaozong was distraught with grief and rushed back to his main palace in Luoyang. He heaped posthumous honors on the prince. He was given a mausoleum, named Gong ling 恭陵, built on an imperial scale, and was offered the ritual observances proper for a deceased emperor, and was granted the posthumous imperial title Xiaojing Huangdi 孝敬皇帝 as though he had actually reigned. His death was a great blow for the emperor and for the dynasty, but for the empress it very conveniently removed a potential rival for power with an unchallengeable claim to the succes-

⁶⁸ *JTS* 5, p. 100; *XTS* 83, p. 3644.

⁶⁹ By convention a royal princess did not accompany her husband on his assignment if he was posted away from the capital.

⁷⁰ *THY* 6, p. 64; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6376; *XTS* 83, p. 3649. The elder sister, princess Yiyang 義陽公主, was married to Quan Yi 權毅, about whom nothing further is known. The younger, princess Xuancheng 宣城公主, who was later given the new title princess Gaoan 高安公主, was married to Wang Xu 王勣 (or Wang Suigu 王遂古 according to *ZZTJ*), who became prefect of the important Yingzhou 潁州 prefecture in Henan, but was executed by empress Wu in the Tianshou period (690–92). After the empress's fall in 705 the princess was promoted to the rank of senior princess, and given her own household officers and a lavish fief income that was doubled by Xuanzong on his accession in 710. She died in Xuanzong's reign, and was specially mourned by the emperor.

sion should Gaozong have died, a widely respected young man who had already both shown his capacity to rule and demonstrated his independence and willingness to challenge her will. Many believed that she had had him murdered.⁷¹

On June 4 he was replaced as heir-apparent by his equally able younger brother Li Xian 李賢, the second son of empress Wu. As Gaozong was still critically ill, Li Xian was almost immediately appointed acting regent, and like his predecessor won high praise for his clear and perceptive adjudication of disputes. Within a few years he too would become a perceived threat to the empress's influence, and also come to an untimely end.⁷²

On August 5 another of the empress's pet hatreds among the royal family was removed from the scene. Her stepson, Li Shangjin 李上金, prince of Qi 杞王, Gaozong's third son by an untitled palace lady surnamed Yang, was another potential candidate for the throne. He was currently serving as prefect of Cizhou 慈州 in southwestern Shanxi. Conveniently, he was falsely accused of some crime by one of his subordinates, who hoped to gain the empress's notice. The prince was stripped of his noble title and official rank, and banished to Lizhou 澧州, far away in Hunan.⁷³

⁷¹ See *Kaoyi* 考異 to *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6377, which points out the wide discrepancies between the various accounts of his death and the empress's part in it. *XTS*, which is implacably hostile to empress Wu, bluntly states that she murdered him (or had him murdered). Sima Guang's *Kaoyi* quotes *Tang li*, which records it sardonically as follows; "Li Hong, as a result of his humanity, filial behavior and outstanding character had won the emperor's profound affection. From the time of his elevation to heir-apparent he treated the high officials and men of great learning with the utmost respect, and never once took up a false position. But because he requested that marriages should be arranged for the two princesses, he lost the love of the Heavenly empress, and did not die of old age!" Neither the Veritable Record (which is also now lost), nor his surviving biography in *JTS* 86, p. 2830, mentions poison. The latter simply says he died shortly after visiting Hebi Palace 合璧宮. The Basic Annals (*JTS* 5, p. 100) also simply records that he died in the Qiyun Hall 綺雲殿 of the Hebi Palace." Both the Basic Annals for the relevant period and the biography derive from Liu Fang's own National History but were based eventually on the Veritable Records of Gaozong's reign. The earliest mention of murder found by Sima Guang is in a remark made by Li Mi 李泌 to Suzong, the original source of which I cannot identify. "The eldest of Gaozong's four sons by empress Wu was 'Emperor' Xiaojing. When he acted as heir-apparent and temporary regent, he showed humanity, clear perception, filial piety, and brotherly love. At the time the Heavenly Empress was planning to take control of the court, and so murdered Xiaojing by poison, and set up Li Xian, prince of Yong, as heir-apparent." Eventually, Sima Guang concludes that the evidence is inconclusive and simply records that many people at the time thought that the empress had been guilty. I would add the further caveat that these suggestions of her having murdered the heir-apparent surface for the first time between eighty and one hundred years after the event, around the time when the legitimacy of her reign was first being seriously questioned. They can hardly be described as remarks by "men of the time."

⁷² He was also an accomplished scholar (see above and n. 58). The Northern Gate scholars were thus not the only group working on a royal scholarly project.

⁷³ *JTS* 5, p. 100; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6377. His biog. in *JTS* 86, p. 2825, misdates this case in 666.

Another of Gaozong's sons was in trouble in 677. Li Sujie 李素節, the prince of Xun, was Gaozong's fourth son, by Xiao Shufei. Although the emperor was very fond of him, after his mother's murder the empress had had him banished from Chang'an and sent away as nominal prefect of Shenzhou 申州 by claiming, quite falsely, that he suffered from a long-established disease that made him unfit to attend court. The prince, like most of his brothers, was a scholarly young man, and, hoping to gain the favorable attention of the empress, wrote a "Discussion of Loyalty and Filial Piety" ("Zhongxiao lun" 忠孝論) to express his feelings toward her, a most appropriate topic, as we shall see. However, the member of his household who was entrusted to deliver it at court sealed it in a packet for presentation to her. The empress, simply seeing the sealed package, was angry and falsely declared it to be a bribe. The unfortunate prince was demoted to be prince of Poyang 鄱陽王 and exiled to Yuanzhou 袁州 on the border between Jiangxi and Hunan, and in 678 he was ordered to be imprisoned for life and exiled to Ezhou 鄂州, although he was released from prison soon after.⁷⁴ All of Gaozong's children by other women were now either dead or safely out of harm's way.⁷⁵

It was in the context of these events that the Scholars of the Northern Gate were appointed, and began their labors. They set about compiling a large program of what might be considered ideological texts, which as we shall see had a close connection with the contents of the empress's reform program. They also acted as a personal secretariat that would enable the emperor and empress to bypass the chief ministers and the normal channels of decision making and drafting of rescripts and thus facilitate putting some of their policies into practice.

OFFICIAL RECRUITMENT AND EXAMINATIONS

One major contemporary issue needs further discussion because of its importance in understanding the relations between sovereign and ministers during the Tang. This has to do with the changes in the recruitment of officials. It has become a historical cliché that empress Wu was an enthusiastic promoter of the examination system of "meri-

⁷⁴ *JIS* 86; *XIS* 3587; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6381-82.

⁷⁵ The first son, Li Zhong 李忠, prince of Yan, was born of an untitled palace lady named Liu. He had been appointed heir-apparent in 652, had been deposed after the empress Wu had been installed as empress in 655, and given the title prince of Liang. In 660 he was reduced to commoner rank and banished to Qianzhou 黔州 in modern Guizhou. In 664 he was falsely accused of involvement in the conspiracy of Shangguan Yi 上官儀 against the empress, and ordered to commit suicide. The second son died of natural causes in the same year.

tocratic" selection as a means of undermining the virtual monopoly on political power and office-holding at the highest levels which had been held by members of the great aristocratic clans with which she was at loggerheads. Her work *Chen gui* gives us a clear picture of the sort of official she sought to recruit, and how he would relate to his ruler.

Attempts to contain the pretensions of the great families had been going on since Taizong's reign. In 632 the emperor appointed a committee of high-ranking ministers to produce a grand genealogy of the empire's notable clans, the work titled *Zhenguan Reign-Era Compendium of Clans* (*Zhenguan shizu zhi* 貞觀氏族志). This huge work, running to one hundred chapters, and listing 1,651 separate lineages from 293 surnames, was based on existing compilations and genealogies submitted by individual families, which were cross-checked against the historical record, and attempted to place each family in one of nine degrees of social importance. Completed and presented to the throne in 638, the result displeased Taizong, because the imperial family was relegated to the third grade. He ordered its revision, promoting the imperial clan and those of his mother, née Dou, and of his empress, née Zhangsun, to the first rank. After this had been done it was finally accepted and promulgated to the empire later in 638.

Taizong's *Compendium of Clans* remained a very influential work, but it was replaced as the official state genealogy by Gaozong in 659 with a new and even larger work named *Xingshi lu* 姓氏錄 comprising 200 chapters, and listing 2,287 lineages from 245 surnames. He is said to have been motivated in ordering this great undertaking by the fact that empress Wu's clan was omitted from Taizong's list, and he wished to have this omission corrected.⁷⁶ But in fact the new compendium of genealogy was based neither on existing genealogies nor on generally recognized social standing, but simply determined the ranking of lineages in accordance with the ranks achieved in official service by present and recently deceased members of each family. Already the criteria for social recognition were shifting from a family's accepted standing in society as defined by the state, or through its own perceived historical and social prominence (such things as marriage ties, scholarship and writings, and impact upon local education and culture), to the ranks achieved in the bureaucratic service by its individual members.

⁷⁶ There is a bulky literature on these registers of families, and the Dunhuang manuscripts believed to be copies or derivatives of Taizong's compilation. The clearest summaries of this material are in Denis Twitchett, "The Composition of the T'ang Ruling Class: New Evidence from Tunhuang," in Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1973), pp. 47-85, and David G. Johnson, *The Medieval Chinese Oligarchy* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977).

This same principle had always applied to the system of “hereditary privilege” (*ziyin* 資蔭, or more commonly, *yin* 蔭), which was one of the most important methods of entry onto the roll of officials. Hereditary privilege was the right for the sons of high-ranking officials to enter into the bureaucracy at a level proportionate to their father’s or paternal grandfather’s final rank. It was accorded to the sons and grandsons of any official who had achieved the fifth rank or above. His sons were entitled to enter the roll of officials at the bottom of the eighth rank if their father had achieved the lower-fifth rank, this entitlement rising to the upper-seventh rank for sons of officials of the first rank. Grandsons were given the right of entry at one step lower in rank than sons, and in the case of officials of the third rank and above the entitlement to privileged entry was extended to great-grandsons, at one step lower still. *Yin* privilege was both an important means of recruitment for the bureaucracy, and also a means by which families could perpetuate, for a generation or two at least, the official status won by its more successful members.

Apart from the very small enfeifed nobility, this was the only form of “hereditary rank” or “hereditary office” incorporated in the Tang legal and administrative system. It conferred only the right of entry onto the roll of officials from which appointees to office were selected, not of appointment to office. It did not give the right of entry into the roll of officials automatically to all the members of any lineage or clan, however high their social esteem or their relative standing in the current genealogical lists, but only to the immediate descendants of an individual who had achieved high office. Nobody challenged this system, which was itself based upon the principal of selection through merit in official service, though in this case on the merit achieved by the father.

The reasons why the early-Tang emperors, until the reign of Xuanzong, felt threatened by the great families were more subtle than those reflected in any legal system of hereditary right to office-holding attaching to membership in a charmed circle of “aristocrats” or powerful lineages. These clans themselves operated a system of exclusivity, through their extensive intermarriage networks, and their well-entrenched custom of allowing marriage with members of outsider clans whom they considered their social inferiors only after receiving exorbitant betrothal presents. Taizong banned this practice in an edict of 642, but it seems to have been widely rejected and not to have had the desired outcome.

In 659 Gaozong issued an edict to the same effect, and went further by banning all intermarriages between seven of the most highly regarded clans. These bans, too, proved ineffective. And his new genealogical compilation was not highly thought of and seems to have been disregarded. There is no evidence that a candidate for office whose lineage was not on the list would be excluded from appointment.

The great clans did not simply identify themselves by common blood-lines. They were in many cases the inheritors and guardians of strong traditions of family learning and of literary values and standards. They had their own codes of behavior and their own rigid traditions of correct behavior, ritual observance, and morality. During the long centuries before the Sui, when dynastic authority had been superficial and fragmented, fragile and unpredictable, they, rather than the state, had been the symbolic guardians of cultural commitment, the solid foundation of social continuity, and the upholders of order and stability. They were the natural bearers of authority, both at and away from the court. In the seventh century the Tang had no option but to rule through and with them, to coopt them into government. At first the new dynasty met with their hostility and reluctance to serve. But gradually, as the permanence of the Tang regime was firmly established, the great clans came to accept the inevitable, and to accept office under them. Their collective experience, social connections, and political and administrative know-how gave them a competitive edge even within a governmental structure that gave no formal, legal recognition to their exclusivist pretensions. Gradually, they became an important part of a much broader administrative elite, dependent on the office holding of some of their individual members for their wealth and continuing influence.

The examination system only very slowly brought about any broad changes in the composition of the ruling class. Indeed many of the examination candidates themselves came from the great nationally influential lineages, whose wealth and traditions of scholarship gave their members an unquestioned advantage in preparing for the examinations. The idea of a broader elite brought into government by the examinations is largely a product of the wishful thinking of twentieth-century political historians. The Tang examinations produced only a small percentage of new entrants for the roll of officials, and most of the examination recruits seem to have come from the many regional elite families that composed a majority of those included in the seventh-century clan lists.

The examination system for official recruitment had been in existence since the beginning of the Tang dynasty. However, it seems that the numbers of successful graduates had been relatively few, although the evidence is scanty and difficult to evaluate. Most of the research on this topic has been forced, *faut de mieux*, to rely on the evidence about the method of entry by which known officials had come into the bureaucracy. This has involved looking at the careers of officials who reached high ministerial posts, and were as a result given official biographies and memorial inscriptions after their deaths. Since most of these men achieved success only in their late-fifties or later – Tang China like its successor today was a gerontocracy, there was little chance of any considerable number of graduates achieving the highest offices until some thirty years after their examination. This meant that graduates of examinations held under the Tang would have begun to show up in our sources as high-ranking officials in the late-650s and 660s, with the first noticeable cohort around 670. This is in fact the case; but the question remains whether this is simply the result of simple demographic factors or whether it is related to deliberate recruitment and employment policies.

There is some strangely contradictory evidence regarding empress Wu's own use of examination recruitment. We have a full record of each year's number of graduates only for the *jinshi* examination, which is usually held to have been the cornerstone of her recruitment policy. This produced an average of only eighteen successful entrants annually between 660 and 683. Moreover, whereas the examinations were held each year during the rest of the Tang dynasty, with very few exceptions, no examinations were held at all in 663, 669, 671, 672, and 676–679. In addition, in 665 all the candidates were failed. In 681 the content of the *jinshi* examination was radically changed. In both 681 and 682 there were over fifty successful candidates, and this cohort of recruits would in time make its impact on the elite stream of officials. But this can have made little impact on the social composition of the bureaucracy as a whole. In both these years only a single individual among the successful graduates was a provincial candidate, which was almost the only route of entry to the examinations open to a man of non-elite origins. The rest were products of the Three Schools 三學 under the State Academy Directorate (Guozi jian 國子監) at the capital. Only one of these schools, the Simen xue 四門學, included any sons of commoners among its students. Entry to the other schools was restricted to the sons of high ranking officials and noblemen, who would have

been equally eligible to enter the roll of officials through yin privilege without taking any examination.

The empress's lasting influence on the examination system was nevertheless undeniable. In the last decade of Gaozong's reign, when the empress was already firmly in the ascendant, the examination and selection systems underwent extensive reforms and modifications which were to remain effective throughout the dynasty. But the essential object behind these developments was not, as has sometimes been suggested, to undertake an act of deliberate social engineering and pack the bureaucracy with the most able members of a broader "newly emerging class" at the expense of the "old aristocracy." The new examination entrants included many members of long-established great families, and almost all the graduates came from elite backgrounds. Some already held office when they took the examinations.

The real aim was both more subtle and more practical; to recruit into the elite of the bureaucracy men of the highest intellectual calibre irrespective of their social origins, and to ensure that their primary loyalty and sense of obligation would be directed toward the sovereign and the dynasty they served, rather than to their own families and clans. They should be men whose common identity and sense of purpose was to be defined by their public function as state servants and members of officialdom rather than by their family background and personal allegiances.⁷⁷

To provide an ideology encouraging the emergence of such an elite body of ministers and to provide them with a common set of beliefs about the nature and functioning of authority and an understanding of the principles of government was the basic aim behind the compilation of *Chen gui*. The guiding ideas that it incorporates and their background are analyzed in the next section.

THE CONTENTS OF *CHEN GUI*

The following sections summarize the contents of the whole *Chen gui* with a running commentary. The topical headings follow the sub-headings 章 in the original, in the same order as the various topics are raised in the text. I do not go into detailed points of interpretation, or attempt to identify all the works which are cited by name or quoted

⁷⁷ On this issue, see Denis Twitchett, *The Birth of the Chinese Meritocracy: Bureaucrats and Examinations in Tang China*, The China Society Occasional Papers 18 (London: The China Society, 1976), esp. pp. 24–25.

silently. These matters are dealt with in my forthcoming integral translation of the text.

1. *The Common Body Politic*

The first principle proposed in the *Chen gui* text is the unity of purpose of the sovereign and his ministers, who are presented as mutually interdependent parts of a body politic, but each with his own appropriate role and function.⁷⁸ Following the ancient model inherited from antiquity, which had been expounded afresh thirty years before by Taizong in his *Di fan*, the sovereign and his ministers constituted a single and inseparable body, which Taizong had called the “body of the sovereign” (*junti* 君體); *Chen gui* calls it the “common body” (*tongti* 同體). In this common body the ruler is the will, the heart and mind, and the guiding intelligence, while the ministers provide the senses, through which the ruler could ascertain what was happening in his state, and the limbs, with which he could put his intentions into effect. This model rests upon one unquestionable assumption: that the sovereign alone is the absolute head of state, ultimately responsible for all decisions, and that it is upon his decisions and the exercise of his powers that the well-being of his state depends. Authority issues, and is to be seen to issue, from a single source – the sovereign. The minister is not, however, merely an adjunct of the ruler, a passive and submissive component of the machine of governance. He has a will and an intelligence of his own, and can, and indeed is morally obliged to, give advice and to offer admonition when he considers his master to be taking a wrong course. But such admonition is a personal matter between the minister and the sovereign. Outwardly the minister should be self-effacing, and attribute all favorable outcomes to his lord, while accepting the blame himself for policy failures.

Another well-established traditional model that had been used by Taizong both in his *Jinjing* 金鏡 and *Di fan* 帝範 was used in *Chen gui* to describe imperial authority.⁷⁹ This model was a structural one, the analogy between the foundation of the state and the construction of a great building, which cannot exist without the integration into a grand overall design of a wide variety of component parts, large and small, each in its own way essential to the proper functioning of the structure as a whole. This model necessitated scrupulous care on the part of the sovereign in selecting the appropriate minister to fill each office. It

⁷⁸ *CG, shang*, pp. 2a–3b.

⁷⁹ Denis Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor,” *AM* 3d ser. 9.2 (1996), pp. 22, 66–67.

also assumes that the sovereign is the master builder and architect, in undisputed control of the grand design and of its realization.

Chen gui employs other metaphors inherited from early literature: comparing the minister to a part of the body essential to its functioning as a whole; to its eyes and ears, needed to gather information; to its limbs with which to exert his strength; to its legs necessary in order to walk. The military are compared to its claws and teeth, necessary when the sovereign's legitimate force and violence has to be used. It also compares the ministers with the wings or pinion feathers without which a great bird cannot lift off the ground and soar into the heavens; and to the implements necessary to perform a given task, such as the oars and sails necessary if a ship is to cross a great water.

All these metaphors were long-established clichés that had first appeared in the earliest political writings. All had been used by Taizong in his *Di fan*, and all would still be current until the end of Tang and far beyond. In the notes to the forthcoming translation I identify the origin of all the quotations in the text and commentary. But a contemporary reader would have accepted them without further thought as part of the commonplace language of discourse about political authority, without questioning afresh their specific scriptural origins and historical weight.

2. *Achieving Loyalty and Filial Obedience*

The major preoccupation of *Chen gui* concerns the nature of the relationship between ruler and ministers within this common body politic.⁸⁰ The crucial importance of loyalty in the empress's picture of this relationship is symbolized graphically by one of the new characters introduced at the beginning of the empress's reign. During her "Zhou dynasty" the normal character for *chen* 臣 ("subject," or "minister") was replaced by a new graph 𠄎 made up by combining the character *zhong* 忠 ("loyal") under either a *pie* 丿 or an *yi* 一 ("one"), to signify the minister's "exclusive loyalty" to his ruler.⁸¹

The text reinforces this relationship on a very personal level by stressing the amalgamation of the concept of "loyalty" toward the ruler with that of "filial piety," or "filial obedience" within the family. These are presented as comparable obligations, but with the over-riding ob-

⁸⁰ *CG, shang*, pp. 1b-3b. This section is entitled "Zhizhong" 至忠.

⁸¹ On the new characters introduced by empress Wu, see Tokiwa Daijō 常盤大定, "Bu Shū shinji no ichi kenkyū" 武周新字の一研究, *THGH* (Tokyo) 6 (1936), pp. 5-38; Dong Zuobin 董作賓 and Wang Hengyu 王恒餘, "Tang Wuhou gaizi kao" 唐武后改字考, *ZYY* 34.2 (1963), pp. 447-76.

ligation towards the state and sovereign (the “greater loyalty”) always taking precedence over the “lesser loyalty” owed to parents and family. There was nothing novel in this parallel conception of state and family. Its best known statement is that in the canonical Confucian text “Da xue” 大學.

What is meant by “In order rightly to govern the state, it is necessary first to regulate the family” is this: It is not possible for one to teach others, while he cannot teach his own family. Therefore the ruler, without going beyond his family, completed the lessons for the state. There is filial piety; therewith should the sovereign be served. There is fraternal submission; therewith elders and superiors should be served. There is kindness; therewith the multitude should be treated. ... Thus we see how the government of the state depends on the regulation of the family.⁸²

Similar formulations occur throughout early literature, establishing analogies between family and state; father and ruler; son and subject; filial piety and loyalty. Moreover these relationships are not simply analogies. In fact, the very existence of the state and of social order is held to depend on the firmly established hierarchical relations of discipline and subordination found and inculcated within the family.

Filial behavior was not only an important social obligation. As early as the Qin period the state had applied sanctions, even the death penalty, to uphold the authority of family heads.⁸³ Its observance had long been a legal obligation, incorporated in the codified law. In the *Tang Code* (*Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏議) lack of filial piety “Buxiao 不孝” was the seventh of the “ten abominations” (*shi’è* 十惡), the special category of offenses singled out as especially heinous.⁸⁴ The subcommentary to the Code, completed in 653, cites both the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經) itself and two apocrypha attached to that text as authoritative.⁸⁵

⁸² *The Great Learning* 91–95 (trans. J. Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1, pp. 370–71).

⁸³ See, for example, the models for adjudicating cases discovered among the Yün-meng documents in 1975 and translated by Robin D. S. Yates and Katrina C. D. McLeod, “Forms of Ch’in Law: An Annotated Translation of the *Feng-chen shih*,” *HJAS* 41 (1981), pp. 148–52, and also in A. F. P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp. 195–97.

⁸⁴ See Liu Junwen 劉俊文, ed., *Tang lü shuyi* 唐律疏議, by Changsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), article 6, pp. 12–14, trans. Wallace Johnson, *The Tang Code* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1979–1997) 1, pp. 74–77. On the Ten Abominations see Etienne Balazs, *Le Traité Juridique du “Souei-shou”* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), pp. 142–45 (n. 184).

⁸⁵ *Tang lü shuyi*, article 1, subcomm, pp. 1, 3–4. These apocrypha are *Xiaojing gou mingjue* 孝經鉤命訣 and *Xiaojing shoushen qi* 孝經授神契. The first of these is also cited in *Tai ping yulan* 太平禦覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960) 610, pp. 8a–b. The second may be the same as, or related to *Xiaojing zhong qi* 孝經中契, also cited in *ibid*.

Obviously, in a social and political context where the family held great importance as the primary unit of society, where elite clans prided themselves on the pure ethical conduct and moral standards of their members which, they claimed, set them apart from the rest of society; where the social pretensions of some of the most prominent families were such that they looked down upon the royal clan as their inferiors; and where the whole structure of family authority and subordination erected on the foundation of filial piety was both deeply entrenched in social usage and long embedded in the legal codes, the implicit conflict of obligations and loyalties towards state and family were of potentially crucial significance. A clear authoritative statement about which should take precedence was essential in establishing firm imperial control over the members of the old-established elite families whose members still made up a large part of the bureaucracy.

Chen gui makes this priority unequivocal. An official, once he has accepted office, should put his “public” duties and responsibilities first, and should clear his mind of all “private” considerations, whether these are purely selfish personal interests or thoughts of the broader interests and advantage of his own kin or social group. The whole document is designed to inculcate in ministers and high officials the idea that in performing their duties they should be wholly and unconditionally the servants of the sovereign and the state, and that the public interest should override any other social links, personal loyalties or commitments.

The presentation of this ideal of loyalty as a higher degree of that same sense of obligation and obedience that “filiality” demanded towards every man’s parents gave it an additional emotive force; and loyalty to the sovereign was thus intensely personalized. In her Preface, the empress stresses the part played by “family feelings” in the structure of authority by presenting herself in the role of the “ever-watchful” mother of her ministers:

I am concerned that my determination to rear and nurture should be without partiality, towards children and ministers alike.

She also states:

A mother’s kindly love for her children is especially profound,⁸⁶ and even when they have already achieved loyalty and virtue, a mother will still think about handing down exhortation and encouragement to them... . Mothers truly do this because their feel-

⁸⁶ This identical sentence had already been used by the empress in the memorial incorporating her twelve-part reform program in 675.

ings are abundantly full of motherly kindness toward their sons, and they wish to assist them to achieve success.

What we know about the empress's brutal treatment of her own children, not to speak of Gaozong's children by her palace rivals, and her ruthless and arbitrary domination of her court and great ministers may seem very far removed from this self-image of tender motherly care, but there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of her conception of herself as fulfilling the dual role of sovereign and parent.

Her *Chen gui* was neither the first nor the only vehicle used to disseminate this idea that the minister's relationship with the state and his sovereign should be comparable to an individual's submissive relationship to his parents. The *Classic of Filial Piety* had been a compulsory text for all examination candidates, together with the *Analects* of Confucius (*Lun yu* 論語), since early in the dynasty.⁸⁷ But the empress had already given a new importance to the political and social implications of filial piety, as the essential foundation-stone for authority and obedience, when in 678 she had had the *Classic of Filial Piety*, together with the *Daode jing*, reassessed as "major classics" (*da jing* 大經) for examination purposes, on the same level of importance as *Li ji* and *Zuo zhuan*.⁸⁸

Moreover, she had taken an important practical step to extend filial piety so as to make its demands applicable equally to both parents. In 675, as the result of one of her suggested reforms, the obligatory mourning period for a mother who died before the father was increased from a single year to three years, and this rule was incorporated into the *Chuigong Regulations* (*Chuigong ge* 垂拱格),⁸⁹ her codification of legislation previously embodied in edicts, which was completed in 685,⁹⁰ and was subsequently retained as a permanent measure.

Among the other works compiled under her direction by the Scholars of the Northern Gate were a set of exemplary *Biographies of*

⁸⁷ *Tang liu dian* 唐六典 (Taipei: Wenhai, 1962) 21, pp. 6b-7a, which reproduces the lost "Statutes of 719" 開元前令. However, "Statutes for Schools (Xueling)" of 651, as copied into the Japanese *Gakuryō* 學令, articles 5, 6, 7 (see *Ryō no gige* 令義解 [Tokyo: Kadogawa kōbunkan, *Kokushi taikei* edn., 1951] 11, p. 130), show that at that earlier date the *Classic of Filial Piety* still did not have the status of a major classic.

⁸⁸ *THY* 75, p. 1373.

⁸⁹ On these Regulations see D. C. Twitchett, "A Note on the Tunhuang fragments of the Tang Regulations (*ko*)," *BSOAS* 30.2 (1967), pp. 370-81; Shiga Shūzō 滋賀秀三, "Kan Tō kan no hōten ni tsuite no ni san no kōshō" 漢唐間の法典についての二三の考證, *Tōhō gaku* 17 (1958), pp. 27-43. Empress Wu never promulgated a full legal codification, only sets of *Regulations, ge* 格, which collected together rules that had originally been promulgated as parts of imperial edicts, and gave them provisional force as a part of the body of codified law.

⁹⁰ See *JTS* 27, p. 1023; *THY* 37, pp. 675-76; which give a full version of this part of the empress's memorial. A memorial presented in 717 by Lu Lübing 盧履冰, a traditionalist opposed

Filial Sons (item 12) and a parallel set of *Biographies of Filial Daughters*.⁹¹ The *Biographies of Filial Sons* was certainly written with a very specific political purpose in mind. It was completed shortly before the eighth month of 680, when the empress presented a copy to the then heir-apparent Li Xian, whom she considered to be taking too independent a political stance toward herself. This copy was accompanied by personal letters (the texts of which unfortunately are not preserved) criticizing his behavior.⁹²

We have already seen how the exiled royal prince Li Sujie had unsuccessfully attempted to recommend himself to the empress in 677 by writing a *Discussion of Loyalty and Filial Piety*. Such conflation of loyalty and filial conduct were not purely vague theoretical ideas. Similar considerations of political loyalty coupled with filial piety often emerge in the accounts of various events in the historical sources for the period. For instance, when in 677 Liu Yizhi, one of the Scholars of the Northern Gate, was appointed as assistant administrator of the Household of Prince Xiang (the future Ruizong), and as acting vice-president of the Secretariat, the emperor told him:

The prince of Xiang is our beloved son. With your own family, [being famed for its] loyalty and filial piety, our son can depend upon you, my minister, as a teacher and an example. "When the berry grows among hemp, it can stand upright without support."

The *Chen gui* principle that a loyal minister should give credit to the ruler for successful policies, while personally shouldering the blame for his ruler's mistakes, continued to be much on the empress's mind after Gaozong's death, after she became the de facto ruler early in 684. In the spring of 685,⁹³ it was the main issue in a significant political incident. One of the under-secretaries of the Transit Authorization Bureau in the Board of Justice (*simen yuanwai lang* 司門員外郎),

to the change, claimed that although Gaozong had assented, and the rule had been provisionally put into effect, the original ritual regulations had never been changed, and confusion had arisen between current practise and the formal rules 有紊彝典. A lengthy debate ensued, but the empress's change prevailed and was duly incorporated in the *Kaiyuan li* 開元禮 of 732. For a detailed discussion of this change see Ch'en Jo-shui, "Empress Wu and Proto-Feminist Sentiments in T'ang China," in Frederick P. Brandauer and Chun-chieh Huang, eds., *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 1994), pp. 77-116.

⁹¹ See items 12 and 11, respectively, where the early attributions are cited. The latter appears in no other source but *XTS*. It was presumably compiled by the Scholars of the Northern Gate together with the very extensive collection of biographies of model women, the newer *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳 (item 10); neither collection of biographies survives.

⁹² *JTS* 86, p. 1832; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6397.

⁹³ *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6434, places this event on April 4, 685.

Fang Xianmin 房先敏, committed an unspecified offense for which he was demoted to be the assistant prefect 司馬 of Weizhou 衛州. He laid a complaint about his demotion before the chief ministers. Qian Weidao 蹇味道, president of the Secretariat (Neishi 內史, a revised name for Secretariat at this time) and thus a senior *ex officio* chief minister, told him bluntly “This was the decision of the empress-dowager.” But Liu Yizhi, who was Qian’s junior as vice-president of the Secretariat and an *ad hominem* chief minister (*Tong Fengge Luntai sanpin* 同鳳閣鸞臺三品), said, “Cases of an individual’s office being changed on account of an offense are, according to precedent, to be settled in accordance with a request from the ministers, embodied in a memorial.” When the empress heard about this, she considered Qian Weidao had blamed the fault on herself, the ruler, and consequently demoted him to be prefect of Qingzhou, whereas because Liu Yizhi had taken the blame for the administrative decision on himself and his ministry, she promoted him to a higher prestige title, and rewarded him with a hundred lengths of fine hemp cloth, and a splendid horse. She then addressed her attendant officials:

The substance of acting as a minister lies in making known the virtue of his ruler. For them to acclaim their ruler’s virtue is surely the finest form of conduct in his ministers. Moreover, the ruler is the head, while his ministers act as his arms and legs. They all experience the feelings of joy and sorrow together; their righteousness is equal throughout the whole body: We have never heard of pains in the hands or feet being transferred to the belly or back, and the whole body still being able to remain comfortable. Now Weidao has not preserved loyal sincerity, and has therefore already been rejected. Yizhi has exhausted his loyalty in serving his ruler, and his nature is greatly to be admired!

The President of the Chancellery (Nayan 納言) Wang Dezhen 王德真, another senior chief minister, responded; “Formerly, whenever there was a good policy decision, Dai Zhide 戴至德 (d. 679) would be sure to attribute it to the ruler.”

The empress-dowager replied:

The previous court (that is, Gaozong) always praised Zhide’s ability to act like this, and when he reached his life’s end an edict was issued praising and honouring him. How could anyone surpass him in practising the Way of a Minister? It is surely good that his reputation be transmitted for ten thousand generations!⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *JTS* 87, p. 2847, but *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6434, has a slightly different version of the empress’s

There is, perhaps, more to this anecdote than appears on the surface. Wang Dezhen had been appointed president of the Chancellery, and thus an *ex officio* chief minister, on March 12, 684, only eleven days after the empress had dethroned Zhongzong and replaced him as emperor by Ruizong. He had previously been president of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*Taichang qing* 太常卿), and also concurrently the chief administrator of Ruizong's princely administration, in which Liu Yizhi had been his deputy as the assistant administrator. Liu Yizhi had also been appointed an *ad hominem* chief minister on the same day.⁹⁵

In bringing up the loyal conduct of Dai Zhide, Wang Dezhen was either unbelievably naive or perhaps more likely was deliberately goading the empress. Dai Zhide had been a powerful and long-serving chief minister under Gaozong, holding this office from 667 until his death in 679. During these years he was one of the principal opponents of the empress, and had been instrumental in frustrating her attempt to have herself declared regent in 674, and in opposing her later attempts to strengthen her personal position. In 675 he had succeeded in having the heads (*puye* 僕射) of the executive Department of State Affairs (Shangshu sheng 尚書省) being given the status of chief ministers (*zaixiang* 宰相), as had been the case with Taizong's chief ministers, thus giving them once again a voice in determining policy and reinforcing their authority.⁹⁶

Wang Dezhen soon paid the price for his temerity in reminding the empress of an old adversary. Two months later, on June 8, 685, he was dismissed as chief minister, at first appointed prefect of Tongzhou, and then on the very same day exiled to remote Xiangzhou 象州 in Guangxi.⁹⁷

Loyalty reinforced by filiality was not only expected of ministers. It was expected of all those in the Tang political system. It was even to be expected in relations with other powers. After the empress had seized the throne, in 695 the Tibetans mounted a series of attacks on the Gansu corridor, first against Lintao 臨洮 (modern Ledu, in Qinghai) and then against Liangzhou 涼州 (modern Wuwei). They then sent ambassadors to ask for a peace settlement that would involve the Tang

remark: "Prince and ministers form a common body, how is it possible to put the blame for the bad on the ruler, while taking credit oneself for good things!"

⁹⁵ *JTS* 6, p. 116; *XTS* 61A, p. 1650; *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6418. He does not appear in the list of chief ministers given in Guisso, *Wu Tse-t'ien*, pp. 165-98.

⁹⁶ *Cambridge History of China* 3, pp. 266-69; brief biogs. in *JTS* 70, p. 3319; *XTS* 99, p. 3911.

⁹⁷ *XTS* 61A, p. 1651; *JTS* 6, p. 117; *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6434.

withdrawing its troops from the Tarim Basin, and a partition of the Western Turkish territories. Guo Yuanzhen 郭元振 was sent to Tibet in response, and, meeting the all-powerful Tibetan commander Qinling 欽陵 began by addressing him as follows:

[Your father] Dongzan 東贊 served our court and pledged eternal friendship. Yet now you have wantonly taken it upon yourself to break off these relations, and repeatedly cause trouble on our frontier. If the father has had good relations with somebody, is it following filial piety for his son to break them off? If the father has served a lord, is it loyal for the son to rebel against him?⁹⁸

Too much should not be read into this: in the course of Tang diplomacy, as in court politics, the Confucian virtues were frequently mentioned but were rarely to be taken literally and are often a smoke screen for raw self-interest. The Tibetan minister would have recognized this rhetorical flourish as a cynical attempt to seize the moral high ground, and quickly brushed this opening gambit aside, and got down to negotiating in terms of realpolitik, authority and power relationships. But nevertheless, this incident should remind us that the concepts of loyalty and filial obedience in family relationships were deeply entwined in Tang political thinking

In the same way, the implications of filial duty were an important aspect of another institutional device used in international relations. The designation of the relationship between the Tang emperor and the monarchs of other states as those of “father and son”, or “uncle and nephew,” all implied obedience due to the senior party, which usually happened to be the Tang emperor. Even in the case of dynastic marriages this principle was cited. When, in 758 the princess Ningguo was married to the Uighur Khaghan, the Tang prince who escorted her to Karabalghasun reminded her royal bridegroom:

You, Khaghan, are now the Tang emperor’s son-in-law, and appropriate ritual behavior is to be expected of you!

This, in spite of the fact that Suzong had been compelled by *force majeure* to accept this demeaning royal marriage, in which the bride, unprecedentedly, was his own daughter and not some obscure member of the imperial clan. He had done so in order to secure a crucial military alliance that would ensure the Tang’s survival, in the face of the An Lushan rebels.

⁹⁸ *XTS* 216A, p. 6079 (trans. Paul Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* [Paris: Librairie d’Amérique et d’Orient, 1961], p. 92).

Similar overtones of meaning were also implied in the granting of the imperial surname to loyal tribal allies, where the granting of status as very distant adoptive kinsmen carried with it the expectation that their loyalty would be made more demanding by being mixed with a sense of “family obligation.”

3. *The Minister and the Way*

Chen gui, section 3, is a statement that the actions of ruler and minister alike should be taken in the light of the Way, or *dao*.⁹⁹ It is composed almost entirely of quotations from the classical Taoist texts: *Daode jing*, *Zhuangzi*, *Wenzi*, the Taoist sections of *Guanzi*, and *Huainanzi*. Although it never mentions the term “non-action” the underlying idea is that the business of ruling men should be carried out in conformity with the universal natural principles embodied in the Way. Once these principles are apprehended all political action will spontaneously follow whatever pattern is appropriate, and as a result will be readily accepted by all the people. Men with such an understanding of the Way are rare, but may be found anywhere, not necessarily holding office at court, and a ruler should ensure that the advice and assistance of such men is actively sought.

There is nothing very novel in this section, but its inclusion is a telling statement of the fundamental place Taoist and related ideas still held in the political thought and political discourse of the seventh century.¹⁰⁰ It also needs to be read in the specific historical context of the last half of Gaozong’s reign. After the mid 660s, both the emperor and empress had become more and more involved with Taoism and with eminent Taoist adepts.¹⁰¹ In 666, after the Feng and Shan sacrifices on Mount Tai had been completed, the imperial cortege had visited first the temple to Confucius at Qufu 曲阜, and then the shrine to Laozi at his reputed birthplace in Bozhou 亳州.¹⁰² Laozi was granted the new grand honorific title Taishang Xuanyuan huangdi 太上玄元皇帝, and his temple was rebuilt and provided with a permanent establishment of officials.¹⁰³ In that same year a state-supported Taoist monastery was ordered to be set up in every prefecture of the empire, to parallel the existing network of Buddhist state monasteries.¹⁰⁴ In 672 the empress’s

⁹⁹ *CG*, *shang*, pp. 3b–5a. This section is headed “*shoudao* 守道.”

¹⁰⁰ On this point see Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor,” pp. 92–98.

¹⁰¹ See Stanley Weinstein, *Buddhism under the T’ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987) pp. 35–37, and the account given in Barrett, *Taoism under the T’ang*, pp. 30–42.

¹⁰² *XYS* 38, p. 990. This shrine was in Guyang county 谷陽縣, which was renamed Zhenyuan 真源縣 (“True Origin” county) and raised in administrative status as part of this measure.

¹⁰³ *JTS* 5, p. 90.

¹⁰⁴ *CFYG* 36, p. 4b; 51, p. 18b.

only daughter, the Taiping princess 太平公主, was ordained as a Taoist nun.¹⁰⁵ One of the major points in empress Wu's 675 reform proposal, already mentioned above, was the important place to be given in formal education to Taoist thought, as encapsulated in the text of *Daode jing*. After the death of the heir-apparent Li Hong later in 675, the entire corpus of Taoist scriptures was ordered to be copied in his memory, and both Gaozong and empress Wu wrote prefaces for the collection. In the same year a special official directorate, the Qiyuan jian 漆園監, was established to administer a Taoist cult centred at Qiyuan in Caozhou 曹州, a site associated with the other great classical Taoist author, Zhuangzi.¹⁰⁶

In 678 the Taoist clergy, who had been, as had members of the Buddhist *samgha*, under the supervision of the Court for Diplomatic Reception (Honglu si 鴻臚寺), were placed instead under the jurisdiction of the Court for the Imperial Clan (Zongzheng si 宗正寺), thus underlining the royal family's claimed descent from Laozi, and the *Daode jing* was made a compulsory text for examination candidates.

Gaozong had long fallen under the powerful influence of a series of notable Taoist masters. Ye Fashan 葉法善 (615–720) was a quintessential holy-man, prognosticator, expert at exorcising demons, and alchemist.¹⁰⁷ He had first come under Gaozong's patronage as a comparatively young man in the late-650s, when he was installed in the palace chapel to attempt to transmute gold. He also conducted mass exorcism ceremonies for the metropolitan elite. He later lived as a recluse on various holy mountains, but was summoned to court periodically by Gaozong and by his successors to conduct important ceremonies, or to give them personal instruction in the Way. Yin Wencao 尹文操 (d. 688) was a complete contrast, although he too performed ceremonies and miracles for Gaozong. He was a scholarly man who wrote a biography of Laozi and other works, and also completed a catalogue of the scriptures in the Taoist canon.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ *XTS* 83, p. 3650; *THY* 50, p. 870.

¹⁰⁶ *XTS* 48, p. 1252, and *THY* 50, p. 867. The latter says that a complement of officials and students was established, the latter probably acolytes as at other important ritual sites. *XTS* informs us that it was shortly afterwards abolished, but either this is incorrect, or the site was later reestablished, perhaps under Xuanzong. The "Table of Official Postings" discovered at Dunhuang (P.2504), dated between 742 and 752, lists its director (*jian* 監) with rank Lower 7B; Tatsuro Yamamoto, Ikeda On, and Makoto Okano, *Tun-huang and Turfan Documents concerning Social and Economic History*, vol. 1A, *Legal Texts* (Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 1980), p. 84. However, none of the official Tang geographical compilations lists this shrine. It is only noted in the Sung-era *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1964) 13, pp. 14a–b, that there was formerly a directorate at the site, with no further specific information.

¹⁰⁷ *JTS* 191, p. 5107–8; *XTS* 204, p. 5805.

¹⁰⁸ On Yin Wencao, see Barrett, *Taoism under the Tang*, pp. 33–35.

Some time before 665 Gaozong had heard of the reputation of Liu Daohe 劉道合, a recluse living on the holy Song Mountain 嵩山, and summoned him to court. Before the performance of the Feng and Shan sacrifices, the emperor ordered him to perform a ceremony to stop the incessant rain that was threatening the preparations for the sacrifices, and then sent him to the mountain in advance of the imperial cortege to pray that all would go well. Later Gaozong ordered Liu to compound an elixir for him. He died in the Xianheng reign period (670–674).¹⁰⁹

Subsequently, both Gaozong and the empress came especially to venerate Pan Shizheng 潘師正 (585–682),¹¹⁰ the immensely aged eleventh Shangqing patriarch, together with whom Liu Taohe had once lived as a recluse on Mount Song. Pan's teacher and predecessor as patriarch, Wang Yuanzhi 王遠知 (510–635),¹¹¹ had played an important role in the founding of the Tang, giving advice to both Gaozu and Taizong, and had also been instrumental in entrenching the Shangqing school as the state-sponsored Taoist orthodoxy.¹¹² From 675 onward, Gaozong planned to perform the Feng and Shan sacrifices for a second time on Mount Song,¹¹³ where the emperor had temples built for the aged Pan, and where he personally visited him in 676, 679, and 680.¹¹⁴ In 682 Pan Shizheng died, and this affected both the emperor and empress deeply. Gaozong had the Fengtian summer palace 奉天宮 built in the foothills of the mountain close to the valley where Pan had lived. Here the emperor spent four months during the winter of

¹⁰⁹ Biogs. *JTS* 192, p. 5127; *XTS* 196, p. 5605.

¹¹⁰ Biogs. *JTS* 192, p. 5126; *XTS* 196, p. 5605.

¹¹¹ The dates may look surprising. However, he is said to have died aged 126 (Chinese style). Florian C. Reiter, who gives a good critical account of his career in *The Aspirations and Standards of Taoist Priests in the Early Tang Period* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), pp. 20–28, states his date of birth as ?528, but this seems too late, because he is also said to have had studied on Maoshan 茅山 with the great Tao Hongjing 陶弘景. In any case, his grandfather had served under the Liang dynasty, his father was regional inspector of Yangzhou under the Chen and he himself was once consulted by the Chen emperor, and later by Sui Yangdi, who established him in a temple on Song shan. Tang Taizong, then Prince of Qin once visited him incognito in 621 and was initiated into his school of Taoism. See biogs. in *JTS* 192, pp. 5125–26; *XTS* 204, pp. 5803–4. See also *Maoshan zhi* 茅山志 (*DZ* no. 304; rpt. Taipei: Yiwen, 1977) 10, pp. 15a–16a; trans. Reiter, *Aspirations and Standards*, pp. 22–23.

¹¹² See Edward Schafer, *Mao-shan in T'ang Times* (Boulder: Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1980), pp. 45–46.

¹¹³ This celebration was first planned for the end of 676, and again for 679, but in both cases had to be canceled because of warfare on the frontiers. Preparations for the ceremonies were made in 683, and reached an advanced stage, but once again had to be cancelled, and Gaozong died almost immediately afterwards. See the excellent account in Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, pp. 88–89.

¹¹⁴ *JTS* 5, p. 106, which dates this last visit to March 20, 680.

682–683, and another two months shortly before his own death late in 683. After he died the palace was converted into a Taoist monastery.¹¹⁵ These relationships undoubtedly colored the pro-Taoist activities of the emperor, and they provide the background to *Chen gui*'s passage on the inestimable value to the ruler of those who had mastered the Way but who chose to live as recluses. It also probably influenced the commentator, at those places where he draws analogies with the Yellow Emperor and the sage-emperor Yao having left their capitals in order to consult Taoist adepts in high antiquity.

The prominent place that *Chen gui* gives to Taoist ideas thus corresponds precisely with Gaozong's increasing devotion to Taoism, and with the measures enacted in the later years of his reign. But the favorable treatment of Taoism and patronage of Taoists did not come to an end after his death. Although we rightly remember the empress as a devout Buddhist, and as a lavish patron of Buddhist monasteries and of the Buddhist clergy,¹¹⁶ she too had come under Pan Shizheng's spell, and she continued to patronize prominent Taoists. Among them was Pan Shizheng's former disciple and successor as the Shangqing patriarch, Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735), whom she summoned to Luoyang in 686, although he shortly after retired to his residence on Mount Tiantai 天台 in Zhejiang.

Even during her short-lived Zhou dynasty (690–705), in spite of her having granted precedence to the Buddhist clergy over the Taoists in 691, and abandoning the *Daode jing* as an examination text in 693, she continued to maintain her support of the cult of Mount Song, where she herself finally conducted the Feng and Shan sacrifice in 696 as Gaozong had planned to do before his death in 683.¹¹⁷ On this occasion she renamed the mountain the "Divine Peak" (Shenyue 神岳), and gave its presiding deity the title Tianzhong wang 天中王. In these dynastic ceremonies, and in the accompanying offerings to the cults of the Five Holy Peaks and Four Sacred Rivers 五岳四瀆 throughout the 690s,¹¹⁸ Taoist masters, prominent among them Ma Yuanzhen 馬元貞,¹¹⁹ played

¹¹⁵ *THY* 30, pp. 556–57; *CFYG* 14, p. 8a; *CFYG* 113, p. 17a.

¹¹⁶ Edouard Chavannes, *Le T'ai Chan: Essai de monographie d'un culte chinois*, Annales du Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque d'études 21 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1910), pp. 200–2.

¹¹⁷ *JTS* 6, pp. 124–25;

¹¹⁸ On these cults see *JTS* 24, pp. 934–35; *THY* 22, pp. 427–29. The offerings to these cults took two forms, one conducted in the palace to intercede for rain, described in *Da Tang kaiyuan li* 大唐開元禮 (*Dai Tō kaigen rei* [Tokyo: Kyūko shoten, 1972]) 67, the other conducted at the cult sites for each of the divinities, usually by a minor royal prince, described in *juan* 35 and 36.

¹¹⁹ Lei Wen 雷聞, "Daojiaotu Ma Yuanzhen yu Wu Zhou geming" 道教徒馬元貞與武周革命, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 (2004.1), pp. 73–80.

a major role. Later, like Gaozong, the empress had a new summer palace, the Sanyang gong 三陽宮, built in the foothills of the holy peak, and resided there during the summers of 700 and 701.¹²⁰

During her short-lived Zhou dynasty, the Taoists may have taken second place to the Buddhist clergy, but they were not subject to any new restrictions or persecution, and the influence of Taoist literature and of Taoist ideas about government remained undiminished.

4. *Public-Spirited Correctness*

This section of *Chen gui* was designed to reinforce in ministers and high officials the principle that they should be wholly and unconditionally servants of the sovereign and of the state, and that for them in their official capacity the public interest should override any other social involvements, personal loyalties, or commitments.¹²¹

Most essential in a minister, or any state officer, was that he should possess *gong* 公, “public spiritedness,” or “impartiality.” Once an official has accepted office, he should put his “public” duties and responsibilities first, and should clear his mind of all “private” considerations, whether these are purely personal motives and interests or thoughts of the interests and advantage of his own kin.

When the public-spirited minister administers the affairs of his office, he does not handle the affairs of his private family. When he is in his official premises he does not speak of material gain. When he is adjudicating public laws, he does not show favor to his relatives; when publicly employed to recommend worthy men, he does not avoid [recommending even] his own sworn enemies.¹²²

The concept of “public spiritedness” or “public interest,” in contrast to “private” or “personal” interest, *si* 私, was not limited to what was in the state’s interest. “Public” and “private” could refer to any situation where the individual’s interest clashed with that of society or of any collective group of which he was a member. In such contexts the interests of the corporate group or collective were held to outweigh those of the individual. Public had implications of “altruism,” “impartiality,” “objectivity,” and “the common good.” Private carried with it overtones of “individual,” “self-centered,” “selfish,” “partial,” and in

¹²⁰ *JTS* 6, p. 129; *THY* 30, p. 557; *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6547; Zhang Yue 張說, *Zhang Yangong ji* 張燕公集 (Wanyou wenku edn.; Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1937) 11, pp. 121–22. This palace was a long journey from the capital, 160 *li* southeast of Luoyang. In 701–03 the empress returned to Chang’an, and on her return to Luoyang a new summer place, the Xingtai gong 興泰宮 was built for her in a less distant location on Wan’an mountain in Shouan county.

¹²¹ *CG, shang*, pp. 7a–9a; sect. titled “Gongzheng 公正.”

¹²² *CG, shang*, p. 7a.

legal contexts often acquired the overtones of “devious,” “secretive,” and “illicit” in the sense of antisocial, self-interested behavior. Apart from government, the most obvious place where this ideal of public spiritedness needed to be applied to conflicts of interest was the family, and this parallel is made explicit in this section:

Only a public-spirited mind can promote the country’s interest:
Only a public-spirited heart can manage a family.¹²³

The attempt to eliminate conflicts of interest and to isolate an official’s public duties from his personal interests was as immediate a concern in Tang China as it is in our modern world. It was reflected in stark terms in the distinction, enshrined in the law, between public and private offenses committed by men in office. “Public offenses” (*gongzui* 公罪) were essentially errors committed in handling official duties. Every serving official was held responsible for a wide range of matters, from simple errors in routine administration to the multitude of specific types of malpractice and malfeasance defined in the dynasty’s legal *Code*. Holding office also enmeshed the official in a network of mutual responsibility, and involved him in collective responsibilities for the errors and misjudgements of colleagues, subordinates, and others. For this reason great care was taken to document all official actions, in an attempt to apportion blame.

Generally speaking, such public offenses were considered less heinous, and were less heavily punished, usually by a demotion or career set back, than were an official’s “personal offenses” (*sizui* 私罪), which included not only any crimes committed by the official in his private capacity, but also any offense connected with his public duties where he could be shown to have acted deliberately out of self-interest, or with the intention of subverting the law. The official might also find himself responsible for criminal acts committed by members of his own family within the area of his jurisdiction, particularly in cases of bribery or corruption, and if the official were found to be implicated in any offense together with commoners resident within his jurisdiction, he was automatically charged as the principal offender, whatever may have been his actual part in the offense.¹²⁴

Achieving public-spirited impartiality, however, went much deeper than simply avoiding the intrusion of personal motives into public actions. It was an essential element in rectifying the mind, and

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ See the following articles in the General Provisions (*mingli*) 名例 of *Tang lü shuyi*: art. 17, pp. 44-47; art. 21, pp. 58-64; art. 22, pp. 64-65; art. 40, pp. 112-114; art. 41, pp. 114-5.

correcting the personality of a man whether or not he was engaged in public life. A superior man was to scrutinize his own actions and thoughts in his “mirror of lustrous jade,”¹²⁵ a metaphor for the perfectly cultivated mind illuminated by cumulative personal and historical experience, which would endow him with clear vision, or against “his reflection in totally still, pellucid water,” which would give him pure vision.¹²⁶ In other words they were constantly to compare themselves with utterly impersonal, objective standards and models totally free of any personal interest, ambition or bias.

The second part of this section is not original, but is taken as an integral unit from the Han-era compilation *Shuo yuan* 說苑,¹²⁷ and applies these ideas to a range of good and bad stereotypes of minister and of ministerial behavior. These exemplify how impartiality or public-spiritedness in ministers affects government and hence reflects upon their ruler. A parallel range of specific examples shows how personal ambition and self-interest can play havoc with orderly government.

5. Remonstratation

This section discusses a duty that was considered crucial in all officials,¹²⁸ that of remonstrating with the emperor either to improve or refine the policies which he was thinking of introducing, or to dissuade him from adopting policies which the official perceived as wrong and dangerous to the state. Taizong had also devoted a section in *Di fan* to this subject, one that had been endlessly discussed since early antiquity. In Tang times there were elaborate institutional provisions to ensure that the emperor would receive advice. Each of the great consultative ministries, the Chancellery and the Secretariat, included among their personnel a hierarchy of remonstrating officials, ranging from two

¹²⁵ *CG, shang*, p. 7b. The “mirror of brilliant jade 瑩鏡” was one of the terms used for symbolic “precious mirrors” at the disposal of one wishing to scrutinize his own actions by comparing them with the ideal models provided either by the past exemplars or by ideal goals of personal perfection. Several of these terms derive from the apocryphal writings of Han times, such as 金鏡, 寶鏡, and 玉鏡; see Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor,” p. 8, n. 5.

¹²⁶ This passage refers to Taoist techniques of mental and spiritual cultivation; like the adept in the “Neiye” 內業 chapter of *Guanzi* who is able to “Mirror things with Great Purity; observe things with great clarity” 鑒於大清; 視於大明; trans. Harold D. Roth, *Original Tao* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1999), p. 76, and discussion pp. 150–51. A related use of this metaphor is in *Daode jing*, 10: 滌除玄鑒 “Wipe clean your mysterious mirror.” This is paraphrased in Wang Bi’s commentary, translated in Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of the Way and Virtue* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1999): “*Xuan* means the ultimate extent and subtlety of things.” In other words the text says “Can you cleanse away the misleading and the specious, and so attain vision capable of grasping the ultimate and the subtle, not allow things to get in the way of its brightness or flaw its numinous power?”

¹²⁷ *Shuo yuan* (Shanghai: Tongji daxue, 1982), sect. “Chen shu” 臣術, p. 64.

¹²⁸ *CG, shang*, pp. 9a–11a. Section entitled “Rectifying remonstratation” (“Kuangjian” 匡諫).

grand counsellors (*sanqi changshi* 散騎常侍) and four state counsellors (*jianyi dafu* 諫議大夫) down to two lowly omissions (*bujue* 補闕) and two remembrancers (*shiyi* 拾遺). These duplicated positions, although providing their incumbents little real effective power, were nonetheless all “pure posts” (*qing'guan* 清官), reserved for the cream of officials, and they were classed among the “officers in constant attendance” at court. They were not the only officers at court who were expected to remonstrate with the emperor. The imperial court diarists (*qiju sheren* 起居舍人 and *qiju lang* 起居郎), also “pure officials,” had the duty of remonstrating, as had the various members of the Censorate. The chief ministers (*zaxiang* 宰相), of course, did so constantly.

Remonstrating at court was not to be undertaken lightly, and its consequences could be deadly.

To take his place in the great court, and with an angry face correctly evaluate the situation, offending against his lord's will in the presence of his awesome countenance, so that the promise of the reward of a grandee's carriage will not move him, and even the prospect of punishment by the headsman's axe and the block will not intimidate him, such is the heroism of a loyal minister.”¹²⁹

In the previous section, an “upright minister” (*zhichen* 直臣) is described as follows:

Even when the state is in disorder and confusion, he never ingratiates himself with his ruler by acceding to his improper wishes, but dares to offend against his lord's stern countenance, and speak of his faults to his face. His resolution cannot be broken even by the threat of execution; even if he himself should die for the stability of the state, he does not repent his actions.¹³⁰

The section on remonstrating in *Chen gui* lays its greatest stress on the role of the remonstrator as a necessary check on a ruler's errors, and it deals harshly with those who slavishly agree with everything their royal master proposes. But they should not oppose every part of a proposal, but simply object to those parts they find unacceptable. Again drawing a parallel with the family, it rejects the idea that a son blindly following his father's commands is acting filially, or that a minister blindly following his ruler's orders is acting loyally. For the father, having a son remonstrate with him will prevent him falling into excess or errors of behavior; for a gentlemen, receiving remonstrating from a friend will prevent him falling into errors or unrighteous be-

¹²⁹ *CG, shang*, pp. 10b-11a.

¹³⁰ *CG, shang*, pp. 8a-b.

havior, and for this same reason since ancient times rulers have been provided with an establishment of remonstrators whose duties were to prevent them making errors.

To follow orders and in so doing profit one's lord is called obedience; but to follow orders and in so doing to harm one's lord is called sycophancy. To disobey orders so as to profit one's lord is called loyalty. To disobey orders and so harm one's lord is called treason.¹³¹

The courage demanded from a remonstrator is described as the highest form of heroism, exceeding the purely physical bravery of the huntsman, of the soldier, or (somewhat curiously to our eyes) of the builder.¹³²

The second part (*juan xia*) of *Chen gui* begins with three sections taking up the character requirements desirable in any public servant. These are very practical and equally valid today. The minister should be a man of complete integrity, trustworthy and reliable, retaining the confidence of ruler and the people alike. He must be cautious and scrupulously attentive to minor details. He should be able to keep secrets and exercise discretion; and he should be honest and incorruptible.

6. Sincerity and Trustworthiness

The combination of utter sincerity and reliability, dependability, and trustworthiness are portrayed as essential if any relationship is to survive.¹³³ Sincerity implies never saying or doing anything on false or empty grounds. Trustworthiness means always to be dependable and reliable. Men need to be clearly understood and to be able to depend upon one another in all their dealings. When this is the case the superior will be able to conduct his duties easily, and will be able clearly to understand the feelings of the people.

Inferiors need to be able to rely upon and trust their superior without any doubt. And the lord equally expects good faith from his

¹³¹ *CG, shang*, p. 10b.

¹³² *CG, shang*, pp. 10b–11a. Perhaps it is worth remembering that the reigns of Gaozong and empress Wu were a period of massive construction projects, particularly in Luoyang, some of their buildings being of unprecedented size and height. See Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1988). Even if one finds implausible the author's estimate of the height of empress Wu's Tiantang at 300 metres (almost as tall as the Chrysler Building in New York, or the Eiffel Tower), both it and the Mingtang were certainly remarkably tall structures, and their construction workers must have been as intrepid as steelworkers on a modern skyscraper, and very visible to the public.

¹³³ See *CG, xia*, pp. 1a–2b.

people. Trust and good faith are depicted as the essential mutual linkage upon which all social relationships depend, “like the linchpin connecting the collar bar to a carriage.” Just as all life depends upon men and other beings being able to rely upon the predictable natural rhythms of Heaven and Earth and the cycle of the seasons, so perfect governance and social stability cannot be achieved except on the basis of dependability and trust. According to a dictum attributed to Confucius, the trust of the people is more essential for a state’s survival than a supply of food or weapons.

All human relationships, between subject and ruler, minister and sovereign, father and son, or between friends exist on the basis of reliability and trust, without which they cannot achieve perfection. Even such fundamental virtues as humanity and wisdom need to be exercised only in the appropriate circumstances and must then be put into practise with unbreakable sincerity and good faith. In the choice of officers it is important to choose them first for their integrity and trustworthiness, before further selecting them on the grounds of their wisdom. This trust works both ways: the minister serves his lord above and cherishes the people below on the basis of unspoken and implicit good faith. It is essential in all public actions and utterances. Speech is not simply words spoken by the mouth. What is said is the articulation of what has first been formulated in the mind. It is imperative that what has once been uttered is maintained unchanged. Once a decision has been made, the minister (and the ruler) must comply with what he has said and never go back on his word.

Sincerity and trustworthiness not only breed reciprocal trust in other men, they even enable the individual to communicate with the spirits and with Heaven and Earth. Absolute sincerity and truth are the only basis for our relations with the supernatural world.

7. Attention to Detail and Confidentiality

A minister must be careful and meticulously attentive to details.¹³⁴ Trouble and disaster can result from inattention or carelessness over apparently trivial matters, and these disasters may come about not only as the immediate consequence, but follow long after their ultimate cause. The clear-sighted minister must be able to foresee the outcomes of his actions far in advance. The true planner prepares for events which have not yet even been presaged by omens. Survival depends on planning for every eventuality. It is essential never to speak or act wrongly,

¹³⁴ See *CG, xia*, pp. 2b–3b; sect. titled “Shenmi” 慎密.

even in order to avoid present disaster or peril, because these wrong words or actions will eventually bring their own bad consequences. One should always be on one's guard and anxious about the possible results of what one says or does.

It is equally essential to keep one's own counsel and maintain secrecy. One whose words are easily disclosed "is like a go-between courting disaster." Once words have been spoken they are beyond recall, and their consequences may rebound and damage oneself. Once one has taken an action close to home, its reactions will spread afar, uncontrollably. These consequences will reflect one's words and actions just as irrevocably and inevitably as the echo follows the sound, or the shadow the body.

Silence and secrecy are a prime defense against disaster. The true gentleman should be constantly watchful over himself, even when he is alone. He should be still more watchful when in attendance on his ruler or in administering the people. Even when he is remonstrating with his ruler, when his counsel may well have serious and public consequences, he should keep the subject and the substance of his remonstrations to himself. His advice is given in confidence and not revealed to others, so that they will never question whether the ruler's resulting actions reflect his minister's advice rather than his own policies. If the outcome is good, the minister will attribute it to his ruler, if the outcome is bad he will take the blame himself. As far as possible he should conceal his own part in affairs, taking no credit himself for successful policies, should strive to avoid either personal authority and power or royal favors, should not wish for any sign to reveal that he is the person behind any policy or any choice of personnel. He should be indifferent to his own pivotal role, and to fame and recognition. He keeps his wisdom and talents concealed.

With one of supreme prudence, his heart knows, but he does not wish his mouth to know it; with those of the next degree of prudence, their mouths know, but they do not wish other men to know. Those of supreme prudence keep their minds shut; those of the next degree of prudence keep their mouths shut; those with the lowest degree of prudence keep their gates barred.¹³⁵

8. *Incorruptibility*

This is a very perfunctory section,¹³⁶ repeating well-worn clichés

¹³⁵ *CG, xia*, p. 3b.

¹³⁶ *CG, xia*, pp. 3b-4b; sect "Lianjie" 廉潔.

concerning the primacy of moral standing over ambition and material advantage.

The good minister who understands the correct way of conduct for an official will not injure his moral integrity by seeking luxury or wealth. He should eschew outward show and pretension. He should uphold and apply the law equitably for the benefit of the people, never manipulating the law to exploit them. Incorruptibility and equity are his most treasured moral capital, and his defense against calamity. He should never strive for positions or responsibilities beyond those that are his proper lot, and never attempt to gain anything that is not properly his to have. Riches are not the equal of the possession of righteousness; high rank is not the equal of being esteemed for virtue. Incorruptible honesty outweighs all considerations of wealth or the distinction between luxury and poverty. He should be prepared to refuse gifts, lest they should be interpreted as inducements and compromise his morality and good name.

9. Good Generals

The inclusion of this section reminds us that the empress ruled a state in which the military played a vital role,¹³⁷ in which her great commanders were as important to the sovereign as were her civil ministers, equally essential in the smooth exercise of power. A sovereign had to aim at the state's enjoying peace and good order, to achieve which he had to exert dominant civil authority; but when circumstances demanded it, he also needed to be able to make appropriate use of deterrent force. This dual role was not confined to the ruler. In the same way, during the seventh and eighth centuries many of his officials were called upon in the course of their careers both to fill civilian posts and to hold military commands. Selected great commanders regularly held office as chief ministers under Gaozong and empress Wu, as they had done under Taizu and Taizong and would continue to do under Xuanzong.

The empire remained on a war footing throughout Gaozong's reign and the empress's period in power, notwithstanding the announcement in 675 that the empire was to renounce military might in favor of a peaceful strategy of persuasion, "transforming the empire by means of the Way." This was supposed to signal the end of the Tang's period of aggressive territorial expansion, but the Tang were in no position to relinquish the use of arms unilaterally, and certainly never had any real intention to do so. The emergence of Tibet as a major rival impe-

¹³⁷ *CG, xia*, pp. 4b-7b; sect. "Liangjiang" 良將.

rial power, vying for control over the trade routes across Inner Asia, and challenging the Tang for the possession of the rich grazing lands around Lake Kokonor, had already repeatedly involved the Tang in large scale hostilities, with operations conducted at great distances. The Tibetan threat had taken on a new urgency in 663, after Gaozong, preoccupied with the defeat of Koguryō, had failed to intervene as the Tibetans had destroyed the buffer state of the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾 in the Kokonor area. This critical strategic blunder and lack of foresight had left the whole of Tang's western frontier and the Tang protectorate in the Tarim Basin open and vulnerable to direct Tibetan pressure. This ever-present threat, and constant cross-border raids led to the slow piecemeal buildup from the 670s of a massive and costly fixed defense system of permanent armies and fortified places backed up by numerous military colonies on the north-western frontier in what is now Gansu, Qinghai, and northwestern Sichuan.¹³⁸

Then in 679 the Eastern Turks, having partially recovered from their dramatic defeat by Taizong in 630, rebelled and again began to pressure Tang's northern border defenses. In 682 an East Turkish confederation was reestablished. Their menace steadily increased during the 680s and 690s, requiring further strengthening of the border defenses in the north and northwest, and eventually the construction of a network of fortifications and the quartering of large permanent garrisons and armies.

Finally, during the late 680s and 690s, a new threat began to grow in the northeast. The failure of the Tang occupation of the former territories of Koguryō was followed by the withdrawal of the Tang Andong protectorate 安東都護府 from northern Korea to the Liao River basin, and the emergence of the powerful, but generally friendly kingdom of Silla 新落 in control of the entire peninsula. In the Yalu basin and the eastern parts of the modern provinces of Jilin and Heilongjiang a new state, at first called Zhen 振, and later Parhae (Bohai) 渤海 emerged. Finally the Qidan 契丹 and Xi 奚 tribes, long loyal vassals of the Tang, turned against them, and in 696–697 invaded northern Hebei in force, and were driven out, with the aid of the Turks, only after costly campaigns.¹³⁹ They and the new Zhen kingdom then offered

¹³⁸ Denis Twitchett, "Tibet in Tang's Grand Strategy," in Hans Van der Ven, ed., *Warfare in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 106–79.

¹³⁹ It is interesting to see that the menace of the Qidan and northeastern peoples was already felt in the 680s. In 687, when one of the most prominent of the empress's scholars, Liu Yizhi offended the empress, he was charged with accepting bribes from their chieftain Sun Wanrong. (see not above) The charge may well have been false, but the imputation is that there was a real danger of collusion between a dissident at court and the Qidan.

their submission as vassals to the Turks. These developments necessitated the strengthening of the defense system in north Shanxi, Hebei, and Liaoning.

A powerful frontier defense system needed professional armies of career soldiers led not by noblemen nominated to an ad hoc command only for a specific campaign but by loyal and dependable officers with an appropriate sense of commitment and dedication to service, willing to spend lengthy periods, even their entire careers, in the barren and inhospitable frontier regions, far from Chang'an. Taizong, himself a brilliant commander as a young man, had incorporated a short section on military preparedness in his *Di fan*.¹⁴⁰ The emphasis in this, however, was on the absolute necessity of keeping the empire in constant readiness for war, and its population in a state of military preparedness. This was of course in keeping with his motives in imposing the *fubing* 府兵 militia system, under which part-time units were based among the local farming population in northern China. In his day, armies were to be assembled for a campaign by mobilizing men from some of these trained militia units and selecting and appointing expedition commanders and extemporizing their logistical structure as the situation required. But this unwieldy system was incapable of rapid response and was no longer satisfactory as the scale of Tang military commitments expanded. A more permanent professional military, capable of rapid response to highly mobile attacking forces was required.

In Taizong's days, as a result of the long drawn out warfare preceding and accompanying the Tang conquest, most of the elite had experienced war or had served as military officers. Moreover, in those early years the Guanlong 閔隴 aristocrats who dominated Gaozu's court and remained powerful under Taizong retained something of their ancestral martial character of "warrior officials." By Gaozong's time this was no longer the case. The political dominance of the Guanlong families (which has in any case been exaggerated) had come to an end, and many of their members were gradually being transformed into scholar-officials, their ambitions focussed on careers in civil government.

¹⁴⁰ Twitchett, "How to be an Emperor," pp. 85–87. For further views of Taizong on military matters, see also *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (*variorum* edn. Harada Taneshige 原田種成 *Jōgan seiyō teihon* 貞觀政要定本 [Tokyo: Tōyōbunka kenkyūjo kiyō, 1962]) 9, pp. 265–89. The probably spurious military classic attributed to him, *Tang Taizong Li Weigong wentui* 唐太宗李衛公問對 (see trans. included in Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China* [Boulder: Westview Press, 1993], pp. 311–60) is largely based on near contemporary early material, and also reflects a credible impression of Taizong's views on war; see also n. 144, below.

Apart from the massive invasions of Koguryō, in which very large numbers of infantry recruited from the *fubing* militias had been employed, the main Tang campaigns of expansion had made extensive use of Turkish and other non-Han cavalry led by their own tribal commanders who had submitted and taken service under the Tang after Taizong's defeat of the Eastern Turks in 630. Although the basic concept behind the *fubing* system, that of local units implanted among the civilian population in a state of readiness for mobilization when needed for a campaign, survived, in practice the empire came to depend on a defensive strategy that presumed the existence of an outer first line of defense of loyal dependent nomadic or semi-nomadic tribal peoples, organized in "loose-rein" prefectures and counties 羈糜州縣 under indirect control, who would also provide an "early warning system" to give time for the mobilization of Han Chinese troops. There were also permanent frontier defenses in small forts and outposts manned in rotation by *fubing* detachments, but these were totally inadequate to deter a determined infringement of the border, and this multilayered defense had proved ineffectual. To provide a rapid and effective response to attacks by highly mobile enemies substantial permanent frontier armies were built up, the officer corps of which was largely filled by career soldiers, many of whom had risen from the ranks.

Empress Wu and her "ghost writers" (one of whom, Yuan Wanning, had served as a staff officer during Gaozong's campaigns of conquest in Koguryō) included the military among the "ministers" they addressed for very good reasons. There was still no sharp division between civil and military service; great officials often held military commands, while successful generals were often transferred and appointed to high civil service offices. They were acknowledged to be just as important for the dynasty's survival as its civil officials. It was essential that their loyalty to the throne was ensured, and it was also important that they should not be alienated from the elite of civilian society. They continued to be a cause of concern after the empress established her new dynasty in 690, and this concern resulted in the last of her major institutional reforms, the establishment in 702 of a system of military examinations, conducted by the Board of War (Bingbu 兵部), parallel to those for civil officials conducted at that time by the Board of Civil Office (Libu 吏部) and later by the Board of Rites (Libu 禮部). These examinations were designed to set the standards for military service and to give the government some degree of control over

the recruitment of officers. The military examinations empress Wu had begun survived as a permanent institution until modern times.¹⁴¹

This section on “Good Generals” stresses two main points. The first is that the general must personally care for and cherish his troops, ensure that they receive their share of any due rewards, and are provided with good rations and clothing. The general must maintain strict but fair and incorruptible discipline:

If the laws and commands are not clear; if the rewards and punishments cannot be relied upon; if the gong will not make them halt, and the drum will not make them advance, even if one had an army of a million men, what use would it be?¹⁴²

Moreover, he must also gain the affection and trust of his army, and weld them into a single body united by mutual trust and with an undivided common purpose, in much the same way as ruler and ministers are seen to be united to form a common body. He must not exploit his men; never employ his troops for his own purposes, nor seize any of their possessions for himself. He must show them kindness and compassion, share all their hardships and privations on campaign, and put himself equally with them in harm’s way on the battlefield. Their ideal relationship is described not simply in terms of inflexible discipline, but also in terms of the family, just as in earlier sections the loyalty expected of ministers had been given another, personalized dimension by making it a higher level of filial obedience. The general should regard his troops as his family, so that they will serve him like sons obeying their father, or brothers obeying their senior. This spirit of common identity would make them invincible:

An army composed of fathers and sons, elder and younger brothers cannot be contended with. This is because of its single unity of purpose and mutual feelings of close kinship.¹⁴³

The text says little about the conduct of operations, except for the need to plan thoroughly for all eventualities, and to foresee events. The commander should seek out and discover the enemy’s weak points while making his own position invulnerable. He must always maintain the initiative, but never become arrogant and over-confident.

¹⁴¹ On the establishment of the military examinations (*wu ju* 武舉), see *ID* 15, pp. 354-55; *Tang liu dian* 5, pp. 25b-26b; *THY* 59, p. 1030; *CFYG* 639, p. 20b; *WYTH* 462, p. 9b; *XIS* 44, p. 1170; *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6558. The best description and discussion in a western language is in Terrence O’Byrne, “Civil-Military Relations during the Middle Tang: The Career of Kuo Tzu-i,” Ph.D. diss. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1982), pp. 19-30.

¹⁴² *CG, xia*, pp. 5b-6a.

¹⁴³ *CG, xia*, p. 5b.

Once on campaign the general must become a totally dedicated man. We know from contemporary works that when a general was sent to begin a campaign both he and the emperor were supposed to undergo a series of ritual preparations which were designed to place him in a position of supreme authority, no longer subject even to the commands of his sovereign.¹⁴⁴ The general's duty is to maneuver and control his troops in battle, not to fight himself, sword in hand. In his command he is completely his own master with total responsibility for the outcome.

On the day he receives his orders he forgets his family. On the day he leaves his home he forgets his kin. When his army is deployed and the drums of command are set out he forgets his master. When he takes up the drumsticks and battle is joined he forgets himself.¹⁴⁵

This section of *Chen gui*, like its parallel in Taizong's *Di fan*, shows an easy familiarity with the language and content of the military classics, incorporating sections from *Sunzi* 孫子 and *Wuzi* 吳子, and reflecting passages from *Wei liaozhi* 尉繚子 and *Liu tao* 六韜. This all suggests an assumption that readers would also have had some acquaintance with this literature.

The second half of the section is also interesting because it may very well reflect the personal input of the empress. It consists of two anecdotes about generals and their mothers, which themselves obliquely justify her own intervention in this masculine sphere. In the first, a mother of a general remonstrates with him and turns him away from her home when she discovers that he has failed to share the hardships suffered by his men. As a result of her remonstrations he mends his ways and having gained the trust and affection of his army gains a great reputation. In the second a mother denounces her own son, a general,

¹⁴⁴ See *Tang Taizong Li Weigong wentui* (Kambun taikai edn., vol.13 [Tokyo: Fusambō, 1912]), pp. 62–63; trans. Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics*, p. 356; also in Peter A. Boodberg, "The Art of War in Ancient China; A study Based upon the Dialogues of Li Duke of Wei," Ph.D. thesis (U. of California at Berkeley, 1930), p. 89, in which Taizong suggests to his great general Li Jing the restoration of the ancient ceremony in which complete authority over the army was delegated to the general in preparation for a campaign, this authority to supercede that of the ruler. Li Jing replies that this is unnecessary, as the current practise already delegates these powers adequately. The status of the *Taizong Li Weigong wentui*, long dismissed as a late Tang or Northern Song period forgery, remains contentious. The forgery theory has been challenged (see Sawyer, *Seven Military Classics*, pp. 488–90, n. 4), but, whatever the truth may be, its material mostly derives from Tang sources, and this anecdote states the problem succinctly. For further information on military rituals see McMullen, "The Cult of Ch'i T'ai-kung and T'ang Attitudes to the Military," *Tang Studies* 7 (1989), pp. 59–103, esp. 84–85.

¹⁴⁵ *CG*, xia, p. 6a.

to the king who has appointed him to a major command, on the grounds of his greed and failure to share his rewards with his troops, unlike his deceased father who had been both generous to his men and totally dedicated to his duties, unmoved by personal or family interests. Her premonitions proved to be accurate, and she is praised for having predicted accurately the implications of her son's moral shortcomings.

A person like Zhao Kuo's 趙括 mother may be called one who recognizes beforehand what will be the turning point upon which victory or defeat will hinge.¹⁴⁶

Once again the issue is brought within the context of family relationships.

10. *Benefitting the People*

The last section of *Chen gui* also deals with another subject that had been included in Taizong's *Di fan*,¹⁴⁷ the importance of the settled agricultural population as the essential economic foundation for a stable empire, and the interrelated need for an orderly and peaceful society in which such production could flourish.¹⁴⁸ Both pay attention primarily to the need for improvement in the material circumstances of the people, which would result in a more prosperous and stronger state.¹⁴⁹ But the emphasis is different. Taizong points out that a well-fed and adequately provided society is a prerequisite for the moral transformation of the people. *Chen gui* is concerned rather that a well fed and prosperous population is more likely to be obedient and easy to govern. The "transformation of customs" is not an end in itself, but a step towards the creation of a docile population which will adequately provide the needs of the state. Taizong had laid stress on the need to accumulate agricultural surpluses as a cushion against natural disasters and war, and on the fact that economic stability was necessary if the population were to remain peaceful. *Chen gui*, on the other hand, while accepting these general propositions, focuses on an issue that was also touched on in passing by Taizong,¹⁵⁰ the necessity of preventing

¹⁴⁶ *CG*, *xia*, pp. 7a-b.

¹⁴⁷ *CG*, *xia*, pp. 7b-8b. The edition of Luo Zhenyu does not show the break at p. 8b, line 9 between this section and the Argument (pp. 8b-9a), which concludes *Chen gui*.

¹⁴⁸ Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor," pp. 81-83.

¹⁴⁹ For a clear statement of the different approach to "benefitting the people" of Confucian and Realist authors, particularly as the latter are exemplified in the recently discovered *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經 texts, see Yu Feng, "Might and Right: The 'Yellow Emperor' Tradition as Compared with Confucianism," in Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Wei-ming, eds., *Confucianism and Human Rights* (New York: Columbia U.P., 1998), pp. 156-60.

¹⁵⁰ Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor," pp. 82-83.

the rural population from abandoning the production of food grains and textiles in favor of pursuing short term profit through handicrafts and the manufacture of nonessential luxuries, and in doing so leaving their native homes in search of a better livelihood, and thus destroying social stability. To this end, *Chen gui* advocates a reduction in the state's demands for corvée labor to avoid the exhaustion of the people, which would in turn damage the state. Taxes should be lightened, and the people employed on public works only at the appropriate seasons, avoiding the months when seasonal agricultural labor already put them under great pressure.

It is a short and somewhat desultory argument, entirely based on traditional "physiocratic" doctrines shared by Legalists and Confucians alike. It cites *Guanzi* and Jia Yi's 賈誼 *Xin shu* 新書, as well as the Confucian *Analects*. And like other chapters, it too reverts to the simplistic idealized image of the state as the family writ large, that ever-present notion in *Chen gui*:

The people's relationship with their lord should be like that of sons with their father and mother. There has never been a son who is poor while his parents are wealthy, or a rich son with poor parents.¹⁵¹

It may well be that this section was left undeveloped not because the subject was thought of as relatively unimportant, but because it was treated fully in another of the works sponsored by the empress, the three-chapter *Zhao ren benye* 兆人本業 (item 18). This has not survived, but we know that it was highly regarded by the empress, and was one of the most widely circulated of all the works compiled by the scholars of the Northern Gate in her name. In 686 she had copies of it distributed to every prefecture in the empire. Like *Chen gui*, it was taken to Japan while empress Wu was still sovereign early in the eighth century, having been acquired by the same embassy that carried back a copy of *Chen gui*, probably on account of its contemporary authoritative standing. It was the only one of the works sponsored by empress Wu to be readopted under a later Tang emperor. In 828 the historian Li Jiang 李絳 presented a copy that had been preserved in his own library to the newly enthroned young emperor Wenzong (r. 827–840), who ordered that copies be made and sent out to all the counties and prefectures, so that it could be distributed to the empire's villages.¹⁵² We have no record of its reception or what, if any, effect it may have had.

¹⁵¹ *CG*, *xia*, pp. 8a–9b.

¹⁵² *JTS* 17A, p. 528, under *gengwu* (24th) day of the second mo. (March 13, 828).

SUMMARY

To a modern eye looking over the contents of *Chen gui*, one thing is conspicuously absent from its set of prescriptions for a good minister. It discusses the problem of official service in purely moral and ethical terms; of the personal qualities and character required in an official, and of the ways in which he should relate both to his imperial master and to the structure of royal authority within which he would have to work. There is not one word of discussion about what specific knowledge was desirable in an official, not a word about any practical skills he would need to acquire.

Of course it is generally accepted that the Tang bureaucratic ethos looked down on technical expertise and specialist professional skills, believing that all the basic problems in governing men could be resolved through the application of the humanistic skills inculcated by a thorough classical education and moral upbringing. However, it accepted the necessity for specialists, and unlike in later dynasties the examination system included not only the standard literary examinations, but also specialist examinations in law, mathematics, and philology and calligraphy. To produce candidates in these fields, the State Academy Directorate dedicated corresponding special schools. Those for law (*lǜxue* 律學) and philology and calligraphy (*shūxue* 書學, sometimes translated as “orthography”) had existed under the Sui and were reestablished early in Taizong’s reign. Mathematics (*suānxue* 算學) was added in 657. But, for reasons that remain obscure, from 658 until 662 all three schools were abolished, and although they were restored in 663 they were now no longer specialist schools forming part of the State Academy Directorate, but were attached to the main government departments in which such specialists would be employed. Law was placed under the Supreme Court of Justice (Dali si 大理寺), philology and calligraphy under the Imperial Library (Bishu sheng 秘書省), and mathematics under the Imperial Observatory Service (Taishi ju 太史局). In these offices, the specialist schools presumably gave a vocational education, and their students became in some sense trainee-apprentices, rather like the acolytes attached to various ritual offices. It is not clear whether this remained the position at the time *Chen gui* was written. By the early years of Xuanzong’s reign (by 719 at the latest), the specialist schools were again parts of the State Academy Directorate, but the date of their reinstatement is unknown.¹⁵³ From this

¹⁵³ See Robert des Rotours, *Traité des fonctionnaires et de l’armée: Traduites de la Nouvelle Histoire des Tang (Chaps. XLVI-L)* (Leiden: Brill, 1947-48) 1, p. 454, n. 8, who speculates that it may have taken place in 671 or 705.

it seems likely that in empress Wu's time, the esteem afforded to such specialists was even lower than in the eighth century. In Xuanzong's reign all three schools had very small enrollments, and their graduates had comparatively poor career prospects, limited to a narrow range of technical offices. It is hardly surprising that *Chen gui* does not raise the issue of specialist knowledge. However, it is dangerous to generalize broadly about models for official behavior from *Chen gui* alone. It was simply one of a broad group of texts defining normative behavior for different sections of the governing elite. Its companion works having been lost long ago, we cannot assess it in its full context.

There was a second and larger book on the behavior of officials among the writings produced in empress Wu's name, which may very well have included advice on more practical and technical matters. This was titled *Bailiao xinjie* 百寮新誠 (*New Admonitions for the Hundred Officers*; see item 3, above), written in four *juan*. It was considered important enough for copies to be distributed to every prefecture in the empire in 686. The "hundred officers" of the title was an inclusive term for all officials, covering a broad range of government employees, and the book probably provided guidance for the many local and lower-ranking officials who staffed the empire's field administration, rather than dealing, as did *Chen gui*, with the conduct of "imperial servitors," that is, the high-ranking court officials and ministers, and their personal relationships with the sovereign. This was presumably the reason for its empire-wide distribution in 686. Apparently having the same kind of appeal that *Chen gui* and *Zhaoren benye* generated, *Bailiao xinjie* was considered important enough to be acquired by a Japanese embassy and survived in the Japanese imperial library at least until the end of the ninth century.

CHEN GUI BECOMES AN EXAMINATION TEXT

Today the historian must give *Chen gui* a special importance among the writings compiled in the empress Wu's name because it is the sole surviving example. But there is no question that under the empress's rule, as an independent text her *Chen gui* attained a standing above and apart from the other works commissioned from the Scholars of the Northern Gate. It had the unique distinction of being the only post-Warring States writing of a non-exegetical type (that is, not a work of commentary or subcommentary to a pre-Han classic) ever to be designated as a text for study in the state examination system. That is to

say, it briefly achieved a status equal to that of the writings of the pre-Ch'in philosophers.

In an edict promulgated in either the third or seventh month of 693,¹⁵⁴ *Chen gui* was singled out as a text to be studied by all examination candidates, in place of the *Daode jing*.¹⁵⁵ Why *Chen gui* was both adopted for the latter and then later discarded is no mystery. It was clearly not done to reject the Taoist ideology found in *Daode jing*, because as we have seen one entire section of *Chen gui* is devoted to the importance of Taoism, and is compiled entirely from classical Taoist texts, *Daode jing* itself included. Moreover, the whole text shows influences from Taoist literature. The empress presumably decided to replace *Daode jing* not because she wished to undermine the influence of its Taoist ideas about authority, but because of its author Laozi's association with the Tang royal house of Li, who claimed him as their ancestor. In 690 empress Wu had placed herself on the throne and proclaimed her new Zhou dynasty, and in the course of her rise to supreme power had systematically decimated the Tang royal family. Ruizong, the young deposed emperor, had been given her own Wu surname and the title "imperial heir," and the few surviving Tang princes were given new and pejorative surnames. In 693 she was still searching, in vain as it turned out, for a way to ensure that after her own death the succession would pass to her own Wu clan rather than revert to the Tang imperial family, the Li. The new examination text, compiled under her name, was indisputably associated with her new dynasty rather than with the Tang.

The text of *Chen gui* retained its status on the examination curriculum for only a little over a decade. Empress Wu was forced to abdicate in 705 and almost immediately the work was discarded and *Daode jing* restored to its former canonical status. The restoration of the classic *Daode jing* symbolized the end of her self-proclaimed Zhou dynasty, and the restoration to the throne of Laozi's descendants, the royal Li clan, which had been a foregone conclusion since the once dethroned Zhongzong was made her designated heir in 698, replacing his younger brother the future Ruizong. There are conflicting accounts, which I

¹⁵⁴ *THY* 75, p. 1373, gives the date as 3d mo.; *CFYG* 639, p. 20b, in the most commonly used but corrupt late-Ming edn. of 1641, gives it as 2d, but the Song edn. (639, p. 12b) gives the month as 7th. *ZZTJ* 205, p. 6490, gives no exact date, but places its entry at the end of the 1st.

¹⁵⁵ It is significant that the inclusion of *Daode jing* in the syllabus had itself been an innovation introduced by empress Wu and Gaozong in the 1st mo., 675, at about the same time as the recruitment of the Scholars of the Northern Gate. In the 3d (according to *THY*) or the 5th (according to *CFYG*) mo., 678, both *Daode jing* and *Xiao jing* had been given the status of major canonical books 上經; *THY* 75, p. 1373; *CFYG* 639, p. 19a (Song edn., p. 11b).

am unable to resolve, regarding the precise date when *Daode jing* was restored to the examination syllabus. Some sources place this event immediately after the empress's abdication on February 21, 705; others date it in the second lunar month (either on March 2 or 8) of the following year, 706, after her death.¹⁵⁶

There can be no doubt that *Chen gui* was designated as a prescribed text with a view to enhancing the pretensions to legitimacy of empress Wu's Zhou dynasty. No previous sovereign had ever adopted for examination purposes a non-canonical work, much less a text recently compiled under his own name and at his own royal command. Yet it is equally certain that her promotion of *Chen gui* was not simply a grand but empty political gesture, but also contained a deliberate ideological and didactic purpose. It was certainly her intention to bring into existence a new generation of young officials indoctrinated with her conception of public service in which the potentially adversarial and confrontational relationship between sovereign and ministers would be replaced by a stress on their total interdependency. This interdependency had, of course, always existed in practice – no sovereign could rule without the assistance of his ministers and bureaucrats, and the ministers and bureaucrats had to issue orders in the name of their emperor, but the empress wished it to exist on the basis of a strict adherence to the principle that the sovereign should be the sole ultimate source of authority, the mind and will behind all political action, while the ministers' role was to remain that of valued servants and agents. Such servants would provide information and offer sincere advice, transform their ruler's ideas into detailed practical policies and also ensure that the ruler's subsequent decisions were put into action. But these decisions were to be represented as issuing from the will of the sovereign, the paramount authority in the state.

THE CHEN GUI COMMENTARY

The entry for *Chen gui* in the bibliographical chapter of *Jiu Tang shu* does not mention any commentary, as it does in the case of *Di fan*. However, most of the early manuscript copies of *Chen gui* surviving in Japan do have a substantial interlinear commentary, as do the early

¹⁵⁶ The Basic Annals for the reign of Zhongzong in *JTS* 7, p. 143, date it the 9th of the second mo. (March 8), 706, only days after Zhongzong resumed the throne on February 23. *THY* 75, p. 373, dates it the 2d of the second mo. (March 2), and quotes the entry as coming from an Act of Grace. On the other hand both *CFYG* 639, p. 20b (Song edn., p. 12b) and *TD* 15, p. 83b, give the date as in the 2d mo. of 706.

printed editions.¹⁵⁷ The printed editions give no name for the commentator. His identity is, however, preserved in some Japanese manuscript copies. One manuscript, once the personal possession of Tokugawa Ieyasu, which was in the Bakufu's Momijiyama Bunko 紅葉山文庫 library until the end of Tokugawa times but whose present whereabouts is unknown,¹⁵⁸ has a headnote reading:

Commentary submitted by Wang Dezuan 王德纂 of Yangwu county 陽武縣, Zhengzhou 鄭州.

Four other manuscript copies also have a postscript written by him at the end of the text, reading:¹⁵⁹

Your subject Dezuan writes, "Regarding the texts of the canonical books, the various philosophers, and the histories cited in *Chen gui*:¹⁶⁰ the appropriate meanings in passages from the canonical works are all taken from the old commentaries of former Confucian scholars, and we dared not change them to create differing interpretations. In the case of the philosophers and histories, we only took Heshang Gong's 河上公 commentary [on the *Daode jing*]; the rest came from our own minds, not from the past opinions of teachers or ancestors."

Nothing whatever is known about Wang Dezuan apart from his native place as given in the headnote. We do not know whether he was commissioned to write the commentary, or whether he submitted it to the throne as a private individual. The latter seems by far the more probable. The commentary was not the work of a skilled exegete or a widely-read scholar, as were Jia Xing's 賈行 and Li Nai's 李穉 commentaries on *Di fan*. Shimada Kan's 島田間 (1879-1916) evaluation of the commentary in his *Kobun kyū sho kō* 古文舊書考 is forceful and contemptuous.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ One exception is a Muromachi-period manuscript of uncertain provenance in the National Diet Library (Abe's "Ryōhon" 陵本) with an end-note in another hand recording that it had suffered fire damage in 1476. See Abe Ryūichi 阿部隆一, "Tei han, Shin ki genryū kō tsuketari Kōkan ki" 帝範臣規源流考附校勘記, *Shidō ronshū* 斯道論集 7 (1960), p. 228.

¹⁵⁸ On this copy, see Abe, "Tei han, Shin ki," pp. 222-23.

¹⁵⁹ Abe's mss. "Ryōhon," *ibid.*, p. 222; "Sanahon" 猿本, p. 223; "Chikuhon" 竹本, pp. 228-29; and the lost copy once belonging to Tokugawa Ieyasu, p. 232. The "Hokuhon" 穗久本, a Tokugawa-period manuscript in the Hokuni bunko of the Takemoto clan 竹本氏穗久邇文庫 that incorporates a note dated 1469 by Sugawara Kenchō 菅原顯長, preserves the special character 兪 used under empress Wu for *chen* 臣 in this note, but not in the body of the text. Nor does it employ any of the empress's new forms for other characters.

¹⁶⁰ In the ms described by Shimada Kan (see below), dated 2d lunar mo., 1251, with punctuation marks added in the 7th mo., 1252, the present whereabouts of which is unknown, the title was given as *Chen fan*, not *Chen gui*.

¹⁶¹ Shimada, *Kobun kyū sho kō, tsuketari Kokon shokoku* 古文舊書考, 附古今書刻 (Tokyo: Minyusha 民友社, 1905) 1, pp. 68a-69b.

If we now examine the commentary, it is superficial and simple-minded, shallow and ignorant, the work of someone who barely understood the meaning of the text. This Dezuan was probably some country bumpkin from an obscure hamlet... If we examine the words of the commentary, they are rambling and convoluted, unlike the simple clean style of scholars writing in early Tang, and probably its composition must date from Suzong's time or later.

Shimada's low evaluation of the commentary, exaggerated as it may be, is a matter of personal opinion. But his view that it must have been written in the later half of the Tang is quite certainly wrong. It is largely based on the confusion over the book's title, which is given as *Chen fan* 臣範 in a few places. Shimada believed that the original title *Chen gui* was later changed to *Chen fan* to avoid a taboo on the character *gui* 規 (**kjwi*), which in Tang Chinese was nearly homophonous with *ji* 基 (**kji*), the second character in Xuanzong's personal name Li Longji 李隆基. However, the usage of the two alternative titles appears to be promiscuous and does not conform to any regular pattern. The title *Chen fan* appeared already before Xuanzong came to the throne, when there would have been no reason for this taboo, while the form *Chen gui* appears in a source compiled in 721, during Xuanzong's reign when such a taboo would have been operative. Shimada's argument is thus not convincing. It may well be that the title *Chen fan* was simply an error influenced by the title of Taizong's better known and well-regarded *Di fan*.

The earliest mention of the work is in the *Jiu Tang shu* bibliographical monograph, which is an abstract of the *Gujin shulu* 古今書錄, itself a summary, compiled in 721, of the imperial library catalogue. This titles the work *Chen gui*. Two sources cite the edict giving the work official standing as a prescribed book for the examinations, both of which certainly derive from the Veritable Record of empress Wu's reign. The institutional compendium *Tang huiyao*, dating in its present form from 961, reproduces for its account of the period down to the end of Dezong's reign the entries from the *Huiyao* 會要 of Su Mien 蘇冕 and Su Pien 蘇弁, completed in 804 or 805. This gives the title as *Chen fan*. However, the account given in Du You's *Tong dian*, which was completed in its final form at almost the same time, in 801 or 803, and was based on the same sources, gives the title as *Chen gui*.¹⁶² Moreover the same edict is cited in *Cefu yuangui* (compiled in 1005-1013, but also based

¹⁶² See *TT* 15, p. 354, translated Penelope A. Herbert, *Examine the Honest, Appraise the Able* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, 1988), pp. 165, 168.

on the Tang Veritable Records), giving the title as *Chen gui*, and this same title is confirmed in its citation of the edict of 705, which ended the work's special status.¹⁶³ On the other hand, the Preface alone was included under the title *Chen fan xu* 臣範序 in the great literary anthology *Wenyuan yinghua* (compiled between 982 and 987). In the eleventh century, however, *Xin Tang shu* used the form *Chen gui*,¹⁶⁴ as did Sima Guang's *Zizhi tongjian*,¹⁶⁵ and the catalogue *Chongwen zongmu*.¹⁶⁶

Shimada's evidence based on the work's title is thus self-contradictory and unreliable, and moreover his theory takes no account of the known historical circumstances. As we have seen, *Chen gui* was originally written in 685, or possibly before, by the empress's Scholars of the Northern Gate working in the palace. It was one of a group of related didactic works designed to define the roles of different groups in society, but there is no evidence that it was ever promulgated as an official text and distributed throughout the empire before 693, when it became a prescribed text in the examination system. Indeed in 686 another of these didactic works written in the empress's name, and, like *Chen gui*, aimed at the members of the bureaucracy, namely *Bailiao xinjie*, was proffered for empire-wide distribution at the annual gathering of all the prefectural delegates to court. Had a commentary been deemed necessary at the time of *Chen gui*'s composition in or before 685, this could easily have been provided by the same group of scholars who were its authors. Only after it became an examination text in 693, by which time the scholars of the Northern Gate had all been dead for some time, must the *Chen gui* have been distributed nationwide, and only thereafter would there have been any point in a provincial scholar writing a commentary designed as an aid to candidates preparing for the examinations.

Chen gui retained its status in the examination system only until the second lunar month of 706. The sovereign to whom Wang Dezuan presented his commentary must have been the empress Wu. He is hardly likely to have offered to any subsequent ruler his commentary on a text that had been downgraded in status and replaced by *Daode jing*, and whose "imperial author" had been forced to abdicate. It is particularly unlikely that it was presented to Xuanzong, who was already showing serious interest in Taoism, and particularly in *Daode jing*, before 717. Later, in 735, he wrote and promulgated his own imperial commentary and subcommentary and established a new text of the classic that re-

¹⁶³ *CFYG* 639, pp. 20a–b.

¹⁶⁴ *XTS* 59, p. 1513.

¹⁶⁵ *ZZTJ* 205, p. 6490.

¹⁶⁶ *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (SKQS edn., vol. 674) 5, pl. 4a.

placed both the existing standard texts and the previously authoritative Heshang Gong and Wang Bi commentaries. Wang Dezuan would have been ill advised to have presented to Xuanzong a commentary in which he singled out the Heshang Gong commentary as authoritative.

The clinching evidence for the date of the commentary comes from another fragmentary Japanese manuscript dating from the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336–1392) that is preserved, together with an incomplete early manuscript of *Di fan*, in the Sanage jinja 猿投神社 shrine in the ancient town of Mikawa no kuni 三河國 (present-day Toyota city, Aichi ken). In this manuscript,¹⁶⁷ following Wang Dezuan's post-face translated above, there is the following separate copyist's note.

Chen gui, being an imperial compilation, is a wondrous work, which by examining the models handed down from antiquity through more than a thousand years, constructs a mirror for the hundred officials. It should cause servitors to feel their way to achieving the essential path for serving their lord. It is appropriate for them to recite it aloud, and sincerely store it away in their hearts. Then on reaching manhood they will quickly attract suitable friendships,¹⁶⁸ and will enjoy many far-reaching benefits.

Copied by Sun Xiang 孫祥 of Jiangdu county 江都縣.

The fourth day of the third month, fourth year of Chang'an (April 12, 704).

None of the scholars who have studied this manuscript has noticed the significance of this note, which not only gives us a *terminus ad quem* for Wang Dezuan's commentary, proving conclusively that it was written in empress Wu's reign while *Chen gui* was still an examination text, but also tells us indirectly how and when both *Chen gui* and *Di fan* reached Japan.

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE TEXT IN JAPAN

The first *Kentōshi* 遣唐使 mission to China for thirty years, led by Awata no ason Mahito, was appointed by the emperor Mommu 文武 (697–707) in the first month of 701, and embarked in the sixth month, but was turned back by bad weather and finally set sail in the sixth month of 702. They reached Chang'an, to which the empress's court

¹⁶⁷ This manuscript is identified by Abe, "Tei han, Shin ki," pp. 189–90, 223, as the "Sahanon." I am indebted to my friend and sometime student Kawaguchi Kiyoshi 河口清 for obtaining photographs of this manuscript for me and providing valuable information about other early manuscripts in the same collection.

¹⁶⁸ I am not certain of the meaning of 東髮什簪, which Abe suggests emending to 盞簪.

had temporarily returned from Luoyang, in the tenth lunar month of 702 and presented tribute.¹⁶⁹ Mahito was a learned and cultured man and made a very favorable impression. Empress Wu entertained him at a banquet in the great Linde Hall of the Daming Palace and bestowed upon him the honorary rank of president of the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*Sishan qing* 司膳卿).¹⁷⁰ His embassy arrived back in Japan at the beginning of the seventh month of 704.¹⁷¹ The ambassadors were received by emperor Mommū in the tenth month, and were repeatedly honored and promoted during the following two years. Even their ship was granted an official title.

Their embassy had landed on the coast of Yancheng county 鹽城縣 in the jurisdiction of Chuzhou 楚州, northeast of Yangzhou, the greatest seaport of the day, and the normal port of departure for Japan, where they would certainly have embarked for their return voyage. From the place and date inscribed on the manuscript,¹⁷² it is clear that the original copy they took back to Japan had been made for them in Yangzhou (Jiangdu) while they awaited their embarkation.¹⁷³ Some members of the embassy, led by vice-ambassador Kose no ason Oji 許勢祖父, remained in China until the third month of 707, when they returned, bringing with them three unfortunate Japanese who had been captured by the Tang army and subsequently enslaved during the Japanese intervention in Paekche in 662–663 and were now repatriated.

A further piece of evidence supporting this dating is found in other early Japanese manuscript copies, one a Muromachi period (before 1476) manuscript in the National Diet Library,¹⁷⁴ the other a copy made in 1571 by Yoshida Ken'ū 吉田兼右 and preserved in the library of the Kokugakuin University.¹⁷⁵ These manuscripts clearly derive from a Tang original, and as they employ some, but not all, of the special characters that were used under empress Wu from 689 to 705, includ-

¹⁶⁹ *JTS* 6, p. 131; *JTS* 199A, pp. 5340–41; *THY* 100, p. 1792, *CFYG* 970, pp. 18a–b. *Shoku Nihongi* 續日本紀 (in *Rikkoku shi* 六國史 [Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1929]) 2, pp. 18, 21, 29; 3, pp. 40–41. Translated in Charlotte von Verschuer, *Les relations officielles du Japon avec la Chine aux viii^e et ix^e siècles* (Geneva and Paris: Libraire Droz, 1985), pp. 261–63.

¹⁷⁰ This was the temporary title of the *Guanglu qing* 光祿卿 between 684 and 705.

¹⁷¹ Abe, “Teihan, Shinki,” p. 215, mistakenly give the equivalent western date as 705.

¹⁷² The existing manuscripts are of course later Japanese copies deriving from this original, possibly at second or third hand, but they clearly preserve the format and features of this original copy.

¹⁷³ On the delays and uncertainty of sea travel to Japan in Tang times, see Edwin O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Travels in Tang China* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), pp. 85–100.

¹⁷⁴ Abe's “Monhon” 文本, “Teihan, Shinki,” p. 228.

¹⁷⁵ Abe's “Kokuhon” 國本, “Teihan, Shinki,” p. 224.

ing that substituted for “minister” (*chen* 丞),¹⁷⁶ the original of this copy probably dated from the empress’s reign. Because the Yoshida copy of 1571 includes both the Wang Dezuan commentary and his postscript, it is clear that the commentary must have been written between 693 and 704, not later in the eighth century.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFYG	<i>Cefu yuangui</i> [宋本]冊府元龜
CG	Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, ed., <i>Di fan, Chen gui fu jiaoji</i> 帝範臣軌附校記
JTS	<i>Jiu Tang shu</i> 舊唐書
QTW	<i>Quan Tang wen</i> 全唐文
TD	<i>Tong dian</i> 通典
TDZLJ	<i>Tang da zhao ling ji</i> 唐大詔令集
THY	<i>Tang hui yao</i> 唐會要
XTS	<i>Xin Tang shu</i> 新唐書
ZZTJ	<i>Zizhi tongjian</i> 資治通鑒

¹⁷⁶ Although these characters were officially abandoned after the empress’s abdication, they continued to be used until later, when making “authentic” copies of texts produced in her reign, as we can see among the Dunhuang manuscripts and in some stone inscriptions. Their use in Yoshida’s copy is therefore not in itself conclusive proof that the original from which he was working was written before 705. But, coupled with the dated copyist’s note, it is powerful corroborative evidence, which proves that the manuscript represents the authoritative text as it was distributed during the empress’s reign.