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King, Clan, and Courtier in Ancient Ch'u

On the southern fringe of the Chinese world during the Chou 周 dynasty, which lasted from about 1045 to 221 BC, lay the state of Ch'u 楚. The role of Ch'u as a major power-broker in the struggles of the Eastern Chou period (770–221 BC) is fairly well understood, but its internal conditions, less so. This paper examines a critical aspect of Ch'u court politics from about 675 to 464 BC.[1]

The prevailing understanding of Ch'u court politics involves two interrelated points. The first is that Ch'u's rulers (in comparison to those in other states) were unusually powerful individuals. The second point is that such power was due (at least in part) to a high degree of political participation by the lineages of the royal clan, which supported and defended royal authority.[2] This paper demonstrates inaccuracies and deficiencies in this understanding.

It is true that the lineages of the Ch'u royal clan were politically active. However, there is no reason to assume that they would work to strengthen the throne. There is much, in fact, to suggest the contrary. Even on a theoretical level, enhancement of the personal authority of the kings would have infringed upon the royal kinsmen's share of power; and it is not to be expected that they would have willingly disenfranchised themselves by elevating royal authority. Moreover, in other states in which the lord's close kinsmen dominated, they were far from supportive of the authority of the rulers.[3] The history of dynastic systems, wherever found, is replete with

[1] The period analyzed falls within what is known as the Ch'un-ch'iu 春秋 era, which began in 770 BC. There is, however, very little information available on internal affairs in Ch'u for about a century after that date.

[2] An unusual degree of political centralization is often cited as another factor. See, e.g., Yang Fan-chung 楊范中 and Chu Ma-hsin 祝馬鑫, "Ch'u-kuo chi-ch'üan cheng-chih ch'u-t'an" 楚國集權政治初探, *Chiang-Han lun-t'an* 江漢論壇 (hereafter, *CHLT*) 1981.4, pp. 104–8; H. G. Creel, "The Beginnings of Bureaucracy in China: The Origin of the *Hsien*," *JAS* 23.2 (1964), pp. 176–78. But one should be careful not to confuse the strength of the central apparatus with the personal power of the lord.

[3] See Barry B. Blakeley, "Functional Disparities in the Socio-Political Traditions of Spring and Autumn China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20.2 (1977), pp. 231–37 ("Part I: Lu and Ch'i"); 20.3 (1977), pp. 324–33, ("Part II: Chou, Sung, and Cheng"); and 22.1 (1979), pp. 107–11 ("Part III: Ch'u and Chin). For doubts about the degree of royal authority in Ch'u, see Wen Ch'ung-i 文崇一, *Ch'u wen-hua yen-chiu* 楚文化研究 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1967), pp. 43–46, and Tung Shu-yeh 童書業, *Ch'un-ch'iu Tso-chuan yen-chiu* 春秋左傳研究 (Shanghai: Jen-min, 1980), pp. 62–63. Saitō 齊藤 (née

examples of relatives of rulers who took every opportunity to exercise control over the throne in their own interests. Finally, in China, when the groundwork for the despotic Ch'in 秦 empire was laid in the Warring States period (ca. 463–221), it was precisely the kinship-based political tradition of earlier times that rulers saw as the most serious threat to their own authority and which they strove to eradicate.[4] For all of these reasons, the expectation should be that the Ch'u royal clan sought to restrict the power of the kings, not to defend or strengthen it.[5] Much of what follows helps demonstrate that this was in fact the case.

The idea that the Ch'u kings were unusually powerful warrants reexamination from other angles. Dynastic systems by their very nature do not guarantee strong, qualified rulers, even if they ascend the throne as adults. Hereditary rulership also frequently results in minors and their regents. Given the social context within which political power was exercised in ancient China, the presence of an inept or young ruler was bound to result in a court that was dominated by his kinsmen. And only a capable and diligent lord had much chance of exerting control in such circumstances. Close attention to such issues is important in the case of Ch'u, since even a cursory survey of the ages at which its kings ascended the throne shows quite a few to have been minors.[6]

Abe 安倍) Michiko 道子 and I independently arrived at the conclusion that there were
serious limitations on royal power in Ch'u; see, e.g., her "Shunjū jidai no So no ōken ni tsuite
Sō ō kara Rei ō no jidai" 春秋時代の楚の王權について成王カら靈王の時代, *Shi-*
gaku 史學 50.1–4 (1980), pp. 389–410; Chinese trans., without notes, is in Wu-han shih-fan
hsüeh-yüan hsüeh-pao chi-pu 武漢師范學院學報輯部, eds., *Ch'u-shih yen-chiu chuan-chi*
楚史研究專輯 (Wuhan: Hu-pei-sheng Ch'u-shih yen-chiu-hui, 1983?), pp. 244–63. See
also her paper cited in n. 6. Melvin P. Thatcher, "A Structural Comparison of the Central
Governments of Ch'u, Ch'i, and Chin," *MS* 33 (1977–1978), p. 141, cautiously writes that
"... Ch'u was *generally* dominated by strong rulers." (Emphasis added.)

[4] See Cho-yun Hsu, *Ancient China in Transition* (Stanford: Stanford U.P., 1965), chap. 4;
Derk Bodde, *China's First Unifier* (1938; rpt. Hong Kong: U. of Hong Kong, 1967), chap. 7.

[5] This has been noted, in a general way, by Li Yü-chieh 李玉洁, in *Ch'u-shih kao* 楚史稿
(Kaifeng: Ho-nan ta-hsüeh, 1988), pp. 95–96.

[6] Age at accession is not always readily apparent, and only some of the evidence for
problematic cases can be offered here.

A thorough consideration of dynastic politics in Ch'u should address a related mat-
ter — a purported succession system (as described in two *Tso-chuan* dialogues) that did not
transfer title to the eldest son; see Takezoe Shin'ichirō 竹添光鴻, *Saden kaisen* 左傳會箋
(1907; rpt. Taipei: Feng-huang, 1977; hereafter, *TC*), (Wen 文 1) 8, p. 7 and (Chao 昭 13)
23, p. 13. Studies of the subject include: Yeh Yu-ming 葉幼明, "Ch'u-kuo wang-wei chi-
ch'eng k'ao" 楚國王位繼承考, *Ch'u-shih yü Ch'u wen-hua yen-chiu* 楚史與楚文化研究
(Changsha: Hu-nan-sheng Ch'u-shih yen-chiu-hui, 1987), pp. 270–82; Liang Chung-shih 梁
中實, "Ch'u-kuo chih chü heng tsai shao-che shih shih" 楚國之舉恒在少者試釋, *CHLT*
(1988.3), p. 59; Ho Hao 何浩 and Chang Chün 張君, "Shih-lun Ch'u-kuo ti chün-wei chi-
ch'eng-chih" 試論楚國的君位繼承制, *Chung-kuo-shih yen-chiu* 中國史研究 (1988.4), pp.

A final problem with the prevailing view of Ch'u politics is that it does not take into account the distinction between the main lineage and its collateral lines. Below, we see that the lineages of the proprietary clan of Ch'u did not function as a unified political faction and that they competed among themselves for control of the throne. Any analysis that ignores this fails to address a critical dynamic of court politics.

To place the issues involved into focus, it will be useful to sketch both the general socio-political background of the time and the circumstances in Ch'u itself.

The state in early China involved little distinction between clan and the polity.[7] It was essentially the communal or corporate property of the leading clan.[8] These were composed of two ranked elements. The upper one was the "great temple" (*ta-tsung* 大宗) group, here referred to as the main lineage.[9] It was composed of the hereditary lord and his closest agnatic kinsmen (essentially, his brothers, nephews, uncles, and first cousins). The descendants of the agnatic kin eventually segmented off to form collateral (*hsiao-tsung* 小宗, or "lesser temple") lineages of slightly lower stature.[10] The lowest rung of the aristocracy was composed of "independent" clans, ones unrelated through males to the clan of the ruler.[11]

3–13; Saitō Michiko, "Sō no ōi keishōhō to Rei ō to Hei ō ki" 楚の王位繼承法と靈王と
平王期 *Shigaku* 57 (1987), pp. 1–20.

[7] Early Chinese terms for kinship units were complex and somewhat fluid. For recent dis-
cussions, see M. V. Kryukov, "Hsing and Shih," *AO* 34 (1966), pp. 535–53, and Allen J.
Chun, "Conceptions of Kinship and Kingship in Classical Chou China," *TP* 76 (1990), pp.
16–48. Translation of terminology is complicated by the fact that western anthropologists are
reassessing the utility of the term "lineage." This semantic issue is not critical to the present
discussion. I use "clan" to refer to the larger proprietary kinship group *within a regional state*
(not, as is customary, the supra-state *hsing* 姓), and "lineage" refers to a segmented unit (*shih*
氏) of a "clan."

[8] Distinctions (in institutional or analytic senses) between clan and state may have existed.
Operationally, however, the two were largely indistinguishable, especially in those regional
states of Eastern Chou times in which the proprietary clans were dominant (see n. 12). For
recent considerations of the corporate nature of kinship groups in ancient China, see Ch'ien
Hang 錢杭, "Lun tsung chün ho i" 論宗君合一, *Hua-tung shih-fan ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao* 華東
師范大學學報 (1988.1), pp. 99–107 (rpt. in *Fu-yin pao-k'an tzu-liao yüeh-k'an* 復印報刊資
料月刊 [1988.5] [K21: Hsien-Ch'in Ch'in Han shih 先秦秦漢史]); Ch'en Sheng-yung 陳
剩勇, "Kuo Chung-kuo yü t'ien-hsia kuan-yü ch'uan-t'ung kuo-chia hsing-t'ai ti i-pan-hsing
k'ao-ch'a" 國中國與天下關于傳統國家形態的一般性考查, *Hsüeh-hsi yü t'an-so* 學習
與探索 (1991.1), pp. 137–42 (rpt. in *Fu-yin pao-k'an tzu-liao yüeh-k'an* [1991.6]).

[9] In an earlier study I labeled these as "ruling" lineages, simply because these were the
lineages of the rulers. However, this can be somewhat misleading, as the main lineage did not
always control the political apparatus (and thus actually "rule"); see n. 12.

[10] In some states, secondary segmentation (resulting in sublineages) was common. This
almost inevitably impaired lineage cohesion and resulted in friction among the sublineages.
In other states (including Ch'u), however, lineages did not readily segment.

[11] Some of these were indigenous; others descended from immigrants from other territo-
rial states.

Given the corporate tradition, members of the proprietary clan of a regional state had a "constitutional" claim to share political power.[12] Competition among the clan's constituent lineages, though, was endemic and often intense. This can be seen most clearly in competition for court offices.[13] Close kinship to the lord meant that members of the main lineage could at least claim priority in this respect over those of collateral lineages. One factor that could offset this, however, was hereditary office tenure. Through it, an office originally held by a member of the main lineage would in time (as lineage segmentation occurred) become the preserve of a collateral lineage. All of the above aspects had profound implications for the role of the ruler. It meant that his clan constituted a potent stricture on his authority, for its right to participate rendered it difficult for all but the most adept lord to determine who was to serve under him and in what capacity.

The above applies to Ch'u with only some minor exceptions.[14] The lineages there may have exhibited some peculiarities in their internal dynamics,[15] but in the political sphere they behaved in much the same way as their counterparts in other states.[16] Hereditary office, though, was rare, at least over long periods of time.[17] Since the Ch'u rulers in the period under consideration were entitled "king" (*wang* 王), the proprietary group of Ch'u can be referred to as the royal clan.

The collateral lineages of Ch'u can be categorized according to when

[12] This resulted in the ruler's clan being the dominant political force in some regional states (Ch'u, Sung 宋, Lu 魯, and Cheng 鄭). In such states as Chin 晉 and Ch'i 齊, however, independent clans tended to dominate. See Blakeley, "Functional Disparities," part 1, pp. 208–42; part 2, pp. 307–43; and part 3, pp. 81–118.

[13] The resources of the state were also the communal property of the leading clan. This often resulted in the holding of landed estates by lineages. To what extent this was the case in Ch'u (at least before the fifth century; see the following discussion of king Hui's reign) is not entirely clear.

[14] The general character of the Ch'u elite is discussed in: Chang Chün, "Shih-lun Ch'u-kuo ti tsung-tsu-chih chi ch'i t'e-tien" 試論楚國的宗族制及其特點, *Wu-han shih-fan hsüeh-yüan hsüeh-pao* 武漢師范學院學報 (1984.4), pp. 91–99; Chu Chün-ming 朱俊明, "Ts'ung chia chin wen-tzu k'ao-ch'a Ch'u jen hsing-shih chi ch'i hsiang-kuan wen-t'i" 從甲金文字考查楚人姓氏及其相關問題, *Kuei-chou she-hui k'o-hsüeh* 貴州社會科學 (1987.12), pp. 44, 50–55; Chou Te-chün 周德鈞, "Shih-lun Ch'u-kuo ti she-hui chieh-kou" 試論楚國的社會結構, *Hu-pei ta-hsüeh hsüeh-pao* 湖北大學學報 (1988.4), pp. 62–64; Wen, *Ch'u wen-hua yen-chiu*, pp. 71–77.

[15] Either Ch'u lineage heads had a more limited role within their own groups than those elsewhere or the terminology used in reference to them differed from that of the north; see Creel, "Beginnings of Bureaucracy," pp. 179–80, nn. 118, 119.

[16] See Blakeley, "Functional Disparities," esp. part 3, pp. 100–5.

[17] At least one factor behind this may have been that Ch'u lineages rarely were able to maintain a high level of political involvement for more than two or three consecutive generations, as the following discussion shows. Whether or not this was the cause or the result of an unusual propensity to promotion through the ranks warrants further consideration; see Thatcher, "Structural Comparison," 140–47.

they segmented from the main lineage.[18] Several may be classified as "early." Of these, the Tou 鬥 and Ch'eng 成 are conventionally labeled as the "Jo Ao lineages," on the assumption that they descended from the ruler known as Jo Ao 若敖 (r. 790–764).[19] Also within the early category were the Ch'ü 屈 and the Wei 蔿 (or 薳) lineages. In the traditional literature, the Wei lineage was considered to have descended from the ruler Fen Mao 蚡冒 (r. 758–741), but it may have had more ancient roots.[20] The Ch'ü lineage probably emanated from a son or brother of king Wu 武 (r. 741–690).[21] Two other collateral lineages did not emerge until the sixth century and therefore may be termed "late" ones. These were the Yang 陽 (stemming from a son of king Mu 穆; r. 626–614) and the Nang 囊, descending from king Chuang 莊 (r. 614–591).[22]

Among the principal court offices,[23] the leading one was that of *ling-yin*

[18] Lineage segmentation in Ch'u seems to have followed the northern pattern generally; but the case of the Tou group (see below), which was comprised of several lines of descent sharing the same designation (see the appended Genealogical Chart) is rather at variance with northern practice. In addition to the collateral lineages identified here, there were others (of relatively minor significance in court politics) that were either archaic or problematic (see nn. 22, 64, 97).

The Genealogical Chart is offered as an aid to readers. It should be noted, however, that it sidesteps a number of problems. In the interests of clarity, individuals are generally referred to throughout this discussion by only one of their various names.

[19] Certain chronological anomalies impinge on this idea (emanating from traditional commentaries). A tenuous solution would not change the chronology enough to be of concern here; see Chang Chün, "Ch'u-kuo Tou Ch'eng Wei Ch'ü ssu-tsu hsien-shih k'ao" 楚國鬥成蔿屈四族先世考, *Ch'u wen-hua mi-tsung* 楚文化覓踪 (Cheng-chou: Chung-chou ku-chi, 1986), pp. 175–79.

[20] I have reservations about recent attempts to disprove the long-standing assumption that these two graphs were interchangeable (and thus referred to the same lineage). Suggestions that origins of the Wei lineage dated back to the ninth century are worthy of consideration; see Chang Chün, "Ch'u-kuo Tou Ch'eng Wei Ch'ü," pp. 180–82, and Li Ling 李零, "Ch'u-kuo tsu-yüan shih-hsi ti wen-tzu-hsüeh cheng-ming" 楚國族源世系的文字學証明, *WW* (1991.2), pp. 47–54, 90. The issue is not of direct concern to the present analysis, since Wei figures appear here only from the late seventh century, by which time the lineage would have been long established even if it descended from Fen Mao.

[21] The presumed progenitor, Ch'ü Hsia 屈瑕, has been assumed to have been a son of king Wu. Chang Chün's suggestion ("Ch'u-kuo Tou Ch'eng Wei Ch'ü," pp. 183–85) that he was instead that king's brother has merit but would not substantially alter the picture here. Chao K'uei-fu 趙逵夫, "Ch'ü shih hsien-shih yü Kou-tan wang Hsiung Po-yung" 屈氏先世于句亶王熊伯庸, *Wen-shih* 文史 25 (1985), pp. 223–34, offers the unconventional view that the Ch'ü lineage dated back to Western Chou times.

[22] Some scholars believe that *shen-yin* 沈尹, originally an office title, became the name of a lineage descended from king Chao. Others disagree, maintaining that it always meant a title of a court (or possibly local) official.

[23] Significant studies of Ch'u court administration not cited elsewhere are Liu Hsien-mei 劉先枚, "Ch'u kuan yüan-liu k'ao-so" 楚官源流考索, *CHLT* (1982.8), pp. 57–61; Li Chin 李瑾 and Hsü Chün 徐俊, "Lun Hsien-Ch'in Ch'u-kuo chih-kuan ming-ch'eng chi ch'i yu-kuan wen-t'i" 論先秦楚國職官名程及其有關問題, *Hua-chung shih-yüan hsüeh-pao* 華中師院學報 (1982.6), pp. 121–30; Tso Yen-tung 左言東, "Ch'u-kuo kuan-chih k'ao" 楚國

令尹, combining features of prime minister and field commander.[24] Also of importance was the position of *ssu-ma* 司馬 (master of the horse), presumably in charge of day-to-day military administration. Assistants and deputies (*tso* 左 and *yu* 右) to these two filled out the upper level of the administration. In the traditional literature, the term *mo-ao* 莫敖 was taken to be an office of high rank (at least in early times).[25] Recently, arguments have been offered against this, but the issue is not critical for present purposes and *mo-ao* is treated here as an office of secondary rank.[26] Below, various lesser posts are identified in passing.[27]

The following sections move chronologically through the twists and turns of Ch'u court politics over a span of about two centuries. Attention is given to the lineage composition of the court roster of officials at various junctures and to the people responsible for the configurations of these rosters.

MAIN LINEAGE ASCENDANCY (675?–664)

China's earliest general history, *Shih-chi* 史記, written about 100 BC, recounts that after king Wen's 文 relatively short reign in Ch'u (690–675), his son and successor Chuang 莊 (or Tu 堵) Ao 敖, plotted to kill his brother. In response, the latter is supposed to have overthrown Chuang Ao and become king Ch'eng 成 (r. 672–626).[28] However, the earlier *Tso-chuan* 左傳

官制考, *Ch'iu-so* 求索 (1982.1), pp. 118–21.

[24] Office titles are translated (in some cases, tentatively) on the first occurrence but are left thereafter in transliteration. On *ling-yin*, see Wen, *Ch'u wen-hua yen-chiu*, pp. 46–51; Wu Yung-chang 吳永章 and Shu Chih-mei 舒之梅, "Ch'u Ling-yin ch'ien-shuo" 楚令尹淺說, *CHLT* (1980.6), pp. 78–80; and esp. Sung Kung-wen 宋公文, *Ch'u-shih hsin-t'an* 楚史新探 (Kaifeng: Ho-nan ta-hsüeh, 1988), pp. 1–34, 75–96, 97–198.

[25] This view is followed by such modern writers as Chang Chen-tse 張震澤, "Ch'u mo-ao k'ao" 楚莫敖考, *Tung-fang tsa-chih* 東方雜志 42.15 (1946), pp. 47–54; Liu Hsin-fang 劉信芳, "Ch'u-kuo chu ao so-i" 楚國諸敖瑣議, *CHLT* (1987.8), pp. 75–79; and Wang T'ing-hsia 王廷洽, "Ch'u-kuo chu ao k'ao-shih" 楚國諸敖考釋, *CHLT* (1986.9), pp. 76–80, 65.

[26] *Mo-ao* appears only in association with figures of the Ch'ü lineage; moreover, if an office, it would have been the only long-term hereditary post in Ch'u. Ts'ai Ching-ch'üan 蔡靖泉, "Ch'u-kuo ti mo-ao chih kuan yü Ch'ü-shih chih tsu" 楚國的莫敖之官與屈氏之族, *CHLT* (1991.2), pp. 70–72), suggests that the term was (or at least became) a designation for the head of the Ch'ü lineage. While clearly not a significant post in the period under consideration here, those bearing the title enjoyed some sort of standing. In the present study, only one Ch'ü-lineage *mo-ao* (under king K'ang) played a notable political role.

[27] From the titles, some offices seem concerned with state administration; others, with running the royal household. In practice, however, there was no strict distinction between the two spheres in the Ch'u political system at this stage of its development.

[28] Takikawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太郎, *Shiki kaichū kōshō* 史記會注考證 (Tokyo, 1932–1943; rpt. Taipei: Chung-hsin, 1977; hereafter, *SC*), 40, pp. 12–13 [633].

text renders both brothers far too young to have behaved in this way.[29] The question is, then, if king Ch'eng did not engineer his own rise to the throne, who did? The evidence, while largely circumstantial, points rather directly to Kung-tzu Yüan 公子元, an uncle of the boys:[30] he was *ling-yin* by at least 666; he was, as far as we know, the senior male in the main lineage; and he led the armies on the only campaign recorded for these years. In addition, he cast a covetous eye on a royal consort and even took up residence in the palace.

Unfortunately, we know very little about the officials who served under *ling-yin* Kung-tzu Yüan.[31] We do know, however, that Tou Pan 班 was the commandant (*kung* 公) of an important border outpost, that another Tou (either Pan or Lien 廉, his father?) occupied the post of *she-shih* 射師 (archery master), and that two other Tou men (Yü-ch'iang 御彊 and Wu 梧) played lesser roles. Thus, it is obvious that the Tou lineage was a major presence during Kung-tzu Yüan's years at the helm.

THE ERA OF THE JO AO LINEAGES

First Phase: The Rise of the Tous (664–637)

It is not likely that much love was lost between the Tous and Kung-tzu Yüan. The prime minister's personality would be enough to insure this; but relevant, too, is the fact that a Tou figure had occupied the post of prime minister in earlier days.[32] It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Tou Pan killed Kung-tzu Yüan in 664. One motive behind this act may have been the king's approaching majority. This would have presented the Tous with the opportunity to kill two birds with one stone—rid themselves of the egotistical and domineering Kung-tzu Yüan and ingratiate themselves with a maturing king who faced continued domination by his uncle. In any event, the Tous profited considerably from the turn of events. One of their number,

[29] The passage in Chuang 莊 14 from which the ages of Chuang Ao and Ch'eng can be computed is incidental to the narrative and thus more reliable; *TC* 3, p. 42.

[30] There is no direct evidence to explain his desire to replace Chuang Ao. However, since the future king Ch'eng was at least somewhat younger than Chuang Ao, Yüan's objective may have been to retain control of the court for a longer time.

[31] Either the sources simply fail to record many office-holders or the administrative structure was still rather simple at this early stage. Among the actors during Yüan's ascendancy were several "king's grandsons" 王孫, at least one of whom (Wang-sun Ch'i 啓) was his own son. It may be, then, that he was supported by a cohort of the main lineage.

[32] Tou Ch'i 祁 had been *ling-yin* under king Wu and presumably for a time under king Wen. There reportedly had been an alien serving as prime minister between Tou Ch'i and Kung-tzu Yüan. If so, Yüan's assuming the post may have threatened the Tous with permanent exclusion from it.

Tzu-wen 子文, became *ling-yin*,[33] and the main lineage (that of Kung-tzu Yüan) disappeared from the scene.[34] This set the stage for the composition of the court roster for the following six decades.

Second Phase: Rise of the Ch'engs (637–632)

In 637, after a nearly thirty-year tenure as *ling-yin*, Tou Tzu-wen voluntarily stepped aside in favor of Ch'eng Te-ch'en 得臣, thereby raising a member of that lineage to the leading post for the first time. Tzu-wen's motivation in this is not apparent. Perhaps advanced age rendered him incapable of fulfilling his military responsibilities. However, his not passing on the office to a member of his own lineage, from which candidates were available, requires explanation. There are hints that Ch'eng Te-ch'en coveted the post, and (as we see below, concerning his personality) it is conceivable that Tzu-wen felt it wise to acquiesce. Then, too, if the Tou and Ch'eng lineages were as closely related as tradition presumes, it is also possible that they had agreed to share the spoils. At least in the short run, this was in fact the case, for the Tous continued to play a significant role during the half-dozen years of Ch'eng Te-ch'en's administration. Tou I-shen 宜申 occupied the office of *ssu-ma*, Tou K'o 克 was a *kung*, and two others (Chang 章 and Tzu-yüeh 子越) figured in minor capacities.[35] Still, given Te-ch'en's personality, which in many ways was reminiscent of that of Kung-tzu Yüan, it is safe to conclude that he dominated the scene: he dressed above his station (presumably in royal fashion) despite criticism of him on this account.[36] The Tous must have chafed under his administration and clearly were disturbed by his failure to repatriate one of their men being held in enemy hands.

We turn now to the rulers. Chuang Ao, a young boy, must have been a political cipher. The prevailing historical judgment of Ch'eng is that he became one of Ch'u's strongest kings, with particular emphasis given to his string of successes abroad. Yet, there is virtually no evidence to substantiate this view and a good deal that argues against it.[37] Although he was an adult

[33] The *ssu-ma* post may also have been occupied by a Tou at this time.

[34] Kung-tzu Yüan's son fled to safety abroad, and with one possible exception, no other member of the main lineage was active at court during the remainder of the reign. (This might have been due to a decrease in the number of men in the main lineage; see Genealogical Chart.)

[35] The Ch'ü lineage was also active. Ch'ü Yü-k'ou 禦寇 was a *kung*, and Ch'ü Wan 完 probably a *mo-ao*.

[36] See also his behavior in connection with the events of 632, discussed below.

[37] Accounts picturing him as a vibrant ruler at the outset of his reign (e.g., *SC* 40, p. 13 [633]) are patently unreliable, given his age at the time.

when the events occurred, there is no evidence to suggest that he played any direct role in either the fall of Kung-tzu Yüan in 664 or the appointment of Ch'eng Te-ch'en as *ling-yin* in 637. In fact, there is no record of his being concerned about the composition of the court staff until the very last years of his reign (see below). He did not accompany the armies until 654, by which time he must have been at least thirty years of age. Furthermore, he was absent on several later campaigns.[38]

Third Phase: Tou Revival (632–626)

King Ch'eng finally became involved in court affairs in 632—forty years into his reign. This was in connection with the well-known military confrontation with Chin 晉 at Ch'eng-p'u 城濮, in which the Ch'u forces suffered a humiliating defeat. Afterward, the king held the field commanders, Ch'eng Te-ch'en and Tou I-shen, responsible and ordered them to commit suicide. In Te-ch'en's case, an additional factor was undoubtedly his disobeying the tactical decisions of the king. It would hardly be surprising, though, if a further consideration in the king's mind was a perceived opportunity to restrict the Tou-Ch'eng domination of his court. Whatever the case, and perhaps also because of his faulty military decisions, he soon had second thoughts and dispatched a reprieve. This arrived in time to save Tou I-shen, but not Ch'eng Te-ch'en. The king then conferred on I-shen a *kung* post; but this did not entirely please the man, and suspicions between him and the king continued.[39] Eventually, though, the two were reconciled and I-shen was given the court post of *kung-yin* 工尹 (master of works).

While these events show that by a late time in his career the king was in a mood to exert his own authority, it is also clear that he found it wise to take into account the sensibilities of the Tous. His delicate treatment of Tou I-shen hints as much. More importantly, he appointed Tou Pai 勃 to replace Te-ch'en as prime minister;[40] and with at least two other Tous in office (I-

[38] It may be that the kings accompanied their forces more often than the available record suggests. (*Tso-chuan*, for instance, does not give the field commander for every campaign.) Nevertheless, for most reigns a general pattern of royal participation in military actions can be discerned; and in the absence of many other indicators of royal activity, I cautiously use this one.

[39] It may be presumed that the king cast the provincial appointment for I-shen as recompense for the order to commit suicide. Behind this, though, may have been the motive to remove the man from the capital scene; and I-shen may have viewed the appointment in this light.

[40] Tou Pai is not mentioned specifically as such until 627. This has led some to conclude, from an ambiguous (and predictive) text (*TC* [Hsi 喜 28] 7, p. 29), that Lü-ch'en 呂臣 of the Wei lineage served as *ling-yin* between Ch'eng Te-ch'en and Tou Pai. If so, a Wei appointment might have been designed to offset the influence of the Jo Ao lineages. However, there

shen as *kung-yin* and either K'o or Tzu-liang 子良 as *ssu-ma*), the fortunes of the Tou lineage recovered. Their relationship with the king continued to be a delicate one. On the one hand, king Ch'eng declined to reward Tou K'o for an important diplomatic achievement; on the other, Tou Pai openly opposed the king's choice of an heir. The details of the latter episode tell us much about king Ch'eng.

The prospective heir, Shang-ch'en 商臣, irked by Tou Pai's opposition to his appointment, made unfounded accusations against the prime minister and convinced the king of their validity. As a result, in 627 Ch'eng ordered the execution of Tou Pai. In doing so, the king at long last took decisive action against the Tous. But he had been duped by his own son, and subsequent events hardly picture him as a competent judge of character:[41] when he finally came to comprehend Shang-ch'en's maneuver, he decided to replace him as heir with another son, Wang-tzu Chih 職. Hearing of this, Shang-ch'en besieged his father with a force of palace guards and pressured him into committing suicide.[42]

Fourth Phase: Ch'eng Revival with Tou Participation (626–614)

Shang-ch'en (king Mu 穆; r. 626–614) ascended the throne as an adult and clearly ruled as well as reigned, even though there is no indication that he ever led armies into the field. Among his first acts was to confer rewards on his tutor P'an Ch'ung 潘崇, who had urged him to patricide.[43] He also accorded some role to the main lineage, but not any of the major court posts.[44] The *ling-yin* post was returned to the Ch'eng lineage, in the person of Ta-hsin 大心 (a son of Te-ch'en). The Tous occupied several lesser offices: *kung-yin* (I-shen), *ssu-ma* (probably K'o), and a *kung* post.[45]

is no evidence that the appointment was ever made. If it was, it did not last very long. In sum, if there was a royal attempt to bypass the Tous, it soon failed.

[41] It is unlikely that senility was a factor; Ch'eng was under sixty years of age at the time.

[42] The fact that the palace guard rebelled suggests that the Tous were not king Ch'eng's only enemies.

[43] P'an was given an enhanced title (*t'ai-shih* 太師, tutor emeritus) and the post of commander of the palace guard (*huan-lieh chih yin* 環列之尹). These were relatively minor posts, but the fact that P'an became a key figure after Mu's death suggests that he may have exerted some degree of influence on his former protégé. That he was not named to a higher post may have been because he was from an independent clan, one conceivably of alien origin.

[44] One prince (Kung-tzu Chu 朱) was a *kung*. He and two others (Kung-tzu Fei 茷 and Kung-tzu Hsieh 燮) were of considerable importance in the military. It is conceivable that Mu's treatment of the main lineage involved a delicate balance between giving close kinsmen (who presumably were not enthusiastic about how he had come to the throne) too prominent a role and totally alienating them.

[45] *Kuo-yü* 國語 (SPPY edn.; hereafter, *KY*) 17, p. 4a, implies that K'o was a tutor (*shih* 師)

Mu's treatment of the main and Ch'eng lineages represented a revival of the fortunes of both. The former had been in political oblivion since the murder of Kung-tzu Yüan in 664 and the latter since the death of Ch'eng Te-ch'en in 632. Mu's placement of a Ch'eng at the head of the court almost certainly was designed to counter the Tous, who had given Mu's father considerable trouble and had opposed his own designation as heir. In the light of such actions, the fact that the Tous were in any way represented in the official roster under Mu indicates their staying power. The king's preference for the Ch'engs, though, undoubtedly did not please the Tous. And this may have underlain a plot against the king hatched by Tou I-shen in 617. The plot was foiled and I-shen executed. The presumably chastened Tous caused no further troubles for king Mu in his few remaining years. In the meantime, however, upon Ta-hsin's death in 615 Mu appointed Ch'eng Chia 嘉 to succeed as *ling-yin*. This broke a pattern of Tou-Ch'eng alternation in that post dating back to 637,[46] a fact that undoubtedly influenced the course of events after Mu's death.

Fifth Phase: Tou-Ch'eng Struggle and Tou Revival (614–605)

The succession of Mu's son, king Chuang 莊 (r. 614–591), was not contested. Circumstances during the first decade of his reign, however, are clouded by ambiguities in and inconsistencies among the sources. One question concerns the king's role at the outset of his reign. The dramatic *Shih-chi* version (echoed in other works obviously from the same tradition) runs as follows. During his first three years king Chuang willfully ignored state affairs, concentrating instead on a life of debauchery. He forbade any criticism of this behavior, and only remonstrations by daring officials caused him to reform his ways.[47] Unfortunately, there is much to show that this well-known story (absent, however, in both *Tso-chuan* and *Kuo-yü*) is not to be trusted. One such counter-evidence is that while the last-mentioned sources do not contradict the idea that the king was politically inactive in his early years, both imply that this was due to factors beyond his control. The *Kuo-yü* account seems to suggest that he was too young to rule.[48] The safest solution to

at this time, but this is inconsistent with evidence from *Tso-chuan*. In general, the strong Tou presence under a Ch'eng lineage prime minister is reminiscent of the earlier eras of Kung-tzu Yüan and Ch'eng Te-ch'en.

[46] Presuming that Wei Lü-ch'en had not served (see n. 40), the sequence had been Tou (Tzu-wen), Ch'eng (Te-ch'en), Tou (Pai), Ch'eng (Ta-hsin).

[47] *SC* 40, pp. 17–18 [634].

[48] *KY* 17, p. 4a, describes him as *fang jo* 方弱. This is taken by commentators to mean "not yet twenty [*sui* 歲]," although literally the phrase can mean "still weak."

this impasse is to follow the lead of the most sober of the sources—*Tso-chuan*.[49]

Upon Chuang's accession, the government was in the hands of Ch'eng Chia (still *ling-yin*) and P'an Ch'ung (the old tutor of king Mu).[50] Setting off on a distant campaign, they left Tou K'o and Kung-tzu Hsieh 燮 (probably an uncle of king Chuang) in charge of matters at the capital. Taking advantage of this opportunity, K'o and Hsieh attempted a coup and dispatched an agent to the front to kill Ch'eng and P'an. This having failed, the conspirators fled from the capital with the king in tow but were captured and killed by elements loyal to the *ling-yin*.

One factor behind this attempted coup was Tou K'o's and Kung-tzu Hsieh's resentment towards the Ch'eng lineage over earlier events.[51] On a more general level, Tou pique at Ch'eng occupancy of the *ling-yin* post (without the customary alternation with themselves) may have been at work.[52] In sum, the prospect of a Ch'eng-lineage *ling-yin* and an independent clan upstart in control of the king could hardly have been a pleasing prospect to either the Tou or main lineages.

Circumstances between the date of this attempted coup (either 614 or 613) and 605 also are far from clear.[53] There is no mention of any active role at court on the part of the king.[54] Also, there is no record of what happened to Ch'eng Chia, so it is uncertain whether he was replaced or died in office. We do know that a member of the Tou lineage (K'o-huang 克黃) was *chen-yin* 箴尹 (chief remonstrator) by 605,[55] but detecting anything further about the official roster before that date requires making some sense of the *Tso-chuan* flashback passage paraphrased below:[56]

[49] *TC* (Wen 14) 9, pp. 19–20. At the very least, this lacks the suspicious didactic quality of the *Shih-chi* story.

[50] *KY* 17, p. 4a, gives the contrary impression, that Tou K'o and Kung-tzu Hsieh had the upper hand over Ch'eng Chia and P'an Ch'ung at the outset. This, though, is totally inconsistent with the lineage profile of the court at the time of Mu's death as recorded in *Tso-chuan*.

[51] It will be recalled that Ch'eng Te-ch'en had done nothing to repatriate Tou K'o (in king Ch'eng's time). Kung-tzu Hsieh aspired to be *ling-yin* but had been thwarted in this by the Ch'eng stranglehold on the position.

[52] It may be, too, that the main lineage, that of Kung-tzu Hsieh, was upset that they had remained in the wings for half a century.

[53] *Tso-chuan* does not record the death of Mu (dated 614 by *Shih-chi*) and ambiguously alludes to the uprising as taking place "when Chuang succeeded," under the entry for 613.

[54] He participated to some extent in a military action in 611, but took a serious role in this sphere only in 608. That the 611 incident was the first recorded activity of any kind concerning Chuang may have prompted the idea in later minds that he ignored state affairs in his first three years.

[55] A bronze inscribed with his name was recently found in tomb no. 1, Ho-shang-ling 和尚嶺, Hsi-ch'uan 析川 county, Ho-nan; see *Chung-kuo wen-wu pao* 中國文物報, Aug. 30, 1992, p. 1, and Oct. 18, 1992, p. 3.

[56] *TC* (Hsüan 宣 4) 10, pp. 27–28.

> When Tou Tzu-wen died, Tou Pan 般 became *ling-yin*;[57] Tou Tzu-yüeh, *ssu-ma*; and Wei Chia, *kung-cheng* 工正 (regulator of works). However, Wei Chia slandered and then killed Tou Pan, whereupon Tou Tzu-yüeh became *ling-yin*, and Wei Chia took his place as *ssu-ma*. Tzu-yüeh, however, came to detest Chia. With the assistance of his kinsmen, the families (*tsu* 族) of the Jo Ao lineages, Tzu-yüeh imprisoned and then killed Wei Chia.

The first problem with this account is that Tou Pan could not have succeeded Tzu-wen directly. As we have seen, Tzu-wen yielded the post of *ling-yin* to Ch'eng Te-ch'en in 637. Second, there is no place to fit Pan into either the later stages of king Ch'eng's reign or that of Mu. He must, therefore, have served during that of Chuang; and this must have been between the tenures of Ch'eng Chia (end date unknown) and Tzu-yüeh (who was in the post by 605, as shown below).[58] An important ramification of this is that there were two consecutive Tou *ling-yin* (Pan and Tzu-yüeh), which means that the Tou-Ch'eng alternation in the position was once again broken—this time in favor of the Tous. A Tou resurgence, then, had taken place at the expense of the Ch'engs.

The result of this turn of events is described in the sequel to the above passage. It is probably the most famous in the entire history of Ch'u court politics.[59]

> Tou Tzu-yüeh (with the families of the Jo Ao lineages) was about to assault king Chuang. In response, the king offered princes as hostages, but Tzu-yüeh refused them. An armed confrontation between the Jo Ao lineages and the royal forces ensued. During the battle, the king's soldiers became frightened and began to retreat; but the king emboldened them, ordered the attack drums sounded, and advanced with his army. Victorious, he destroyed the Jo Ao lineages.

This account suggests that the king had been maneuvering against the Tous (at least Tzu-yüeh) in some way, for otherwise there is no motive for the attack on him. It may be that Chuang sought to punish Tzu-yüeh for murdering Wei Chia or that he had cooperated with Wei Chia, or even that he had encouraged Chia to turn against Tzu-yüeh.[60] Whatever the specifics,

[57] He is not to be confused with the Tou Pan 班 of king Ch'eng's time.

[58] This holds, of course, for Tzu-yüeh's tenure as *ssu-ma* and Wei Chia's as *kung-cheng*.

[59] *TC* (Hsüan 4) 10, pp. 28–29.

[60] Any of these would explain the falling out between Tou Tzu-yüeh and Wei Chia. That there was some tie between Wei Chia and the king is strongly suggested by the fact that

the convoluted frictions within the court must have tempted the king to exploit them to his own advantage. If Tzu-yüeh's behavior was not enough to move Chuang to action, the long history of Tou machinations and threats to the throne surely was. And if the king had any hopes of controlling court affairs, he could hardly have been pleased with the prominence of the Tou lineage.

Whatever lay behind the confrontation between the Jo Ao lineages and king Chuang, the results of the royal victory were profound. The Ch'eng lineage almost disappeared from view, and the blow was one from which the Tous were not to recover for three-quarters of a century.[61] In a word, the era of the Jo Ao lineages came to an abrupt end; and this makes the year 605 the single most dramatic turning point in the history of Ch'u court politics.

A BALANCED COURT (605–591)

After suppressing the uprising of 605, king Chuang chose Ao 敖 (better known as Sun-shu 孫叔 Ao) of the Wei lineage as his *ling-yin*. Unfortunately, the basic history of this man's career, including the chronology of his tenure as *ling-yin*, remains unclear.[62] Thus we cannot construct with full confidence a list of those who served under him. Nevertheless, we may use the general court roster after 605 to reflect on Ao's career.[63] A notable point is that there

Chuang was soon to appoint a member of the Wei lineage (quite probably Chia's son) as *ling-yin*. The other conceivable scenario is that the king learned (or feared) that Tzu-yüeh was planning to take the throne for himself. If this were the case, however, we would expect to read of it.

[61] Chuang did not kill every member of either Jo Ao lineage. (The essential feature of the "destruction" 滅 of a lineage was the termination of its ancestral rites; and these could be revived at a later point.)

[62] The date of his appointment is clouded by the fact that he is not mentioned in *Tso-chuan* until 598. Moreover, although he reportedly died before king Chuang, both the date and the succeeding *ling-yin* are unclear. If late sources (of questionable reliability) are set aside, the most probable scenario is that Wei Ao acquired the post in 605, or very soon thereafter, and that he was succeeded (at an unknown date) by a brother of Chuang (Kung-tzu Ying-ch'i, on whom see below).

Wei Ao became an extremely popular theme in the later, quasihistorical literature. Separating fact from fiction in such stories is not an easy task; see William Nienhauser, Jr. "A Reexamination of 'The Biographies of the Reasonable Officials' in the *Records of the Grand Historian*," *Early China* 16 (1991), esp. pp. 218–22.

[63] The pertinent *Tso-chuan* passage may be read as attributing Wei Ao with an extensive list of reforms and policies. Of particular concern at this juncture are three policies concerning personnel (*TC* [Hsüan 12] 11, p. 6), which the court roster after 605 suggests were actually applied: 1) the able should be employed, whatever their social standing; 2) when candidates for political office are from clans 姓 other than that of the king, those whose ancestors had a record of service should be given preference; 3) when prospective officials are

were more members of the main lineage in significant capacities than at any earlier juncture: the king's brother Kung-tzu Ying-ch'i 嬰齊 was assistant (*tso-yin*) to the *ling-yin*; another brother Kung-tzu Tse 則 was probably *ssu-ma*; and three other princes (presumably brothers or uncles of the king) played lesser roles. There also were more court figures than ever before from independent clan backgrounds, most notably the P'an and Wu 伍 lineages, albeit in rather inferior positions. As for the collateral lineages, in addition to the Wei (in the person of Sun-shu Ao), the Ch'ü lineage was also represented. Ch'ü Wu-ch'en 巫臣 served as *kung* at a critical frontier outpost, and several others appear in minor capacities at court.[64]

The court roster, then, betrayed a heavy emphasis on the main lineage, but there was also an unprecedented role for independent clansmen and some collateral lineage involvement. Moreover, all the lineage categories were represented in substantive ways, a pattern totally without precedent. We may infer, with some confidence, based on the previous events, that this was designed to put an end to the long-standing domination of the court by a single lineage or group of lineages.

For all of Chuang's decisiveness in 605, and despite the fact that he was with his troops on almost every military foray, he does not come across as particularly strong or astute in other respects.[65] Several incidents show him as easily swayed by those around him and less than confident of his own decisions.[66] That he was not particularly forceful is shown by his being maneuvered by Ch'ü Wu-ch'en into foregoing his desire for a particular woman. Evidently a rare beauty, she was the cause of other frictions within the court as well. These indirectly reflect still further on the qualities of the king. The king's brother Kung-tzu Tse also wished to get his hands on the woman and understandably was perturbed when Ch'ü Wu-ch'en blocked him as well. Wu-ch'en also managed to alienate another prince, Kung-tzu

of the same clan as the ruler, those with the closest blood ties to him should be chosen.

[64] Two men from a poorly understood lineage, the Shen-shu 申叔 (presumably of the collateral category), also appear in passing, as well as figures from probably archaic (Western Chou) collateral lines having in common in their lineage designations the graph Hsiung 熊.

[65] I lend no particular weight to the well-known report (*TC* [Hsüan 3] 10, pp. 19–21; *SC* 40, pp. 19–20 [634]) that Chuang suggested (by inquiring about the symbols of sovereignty — the nine *ting* 鼎) that he should preside over the entire Chou ecumene. The historicity of this is quite suspect, as Ku T'ieh-fu 顧鐵符 has aptly argued; see "Ch'u Chuang wang wen ting tun-i" 楚莊王問鼎盾疑, in his *Hsi-yang ch'u-kao* 夕陽芻稿 (Peking: Tzu-chin-ch'eng, 1988), pp. 273–84.

[66] E.g., *TC* (Hsüan 11) 10, pp. 53–54, and (Ch'eng 成 7) 12, p. 55. It is noteworthy that at one point he followed the advice of an independent-clan favorite (Wu Ts'an 伍參) over that of his chief minister (Wei Ao).

Ying-ch'i. The king, though, came to the support of neither of these close kinsmen and did nothing to put Wu-ch'en in his place. This suggests that the king was either weak or unconcerned, even that Wu-ch'en was a pampered royal favorite.[67]

RETURN OF THE MAIN LINEAGE (591–551)

King Chuang died a natural death and was succeeded without incident by his son king Kung 共 (r. 591–560). The new king was not yet in his teens at the time, and state affairs were handled by two of his uncles, Kung-tzu Ying-ch'i (*ling-yin* by 589) and Kung-tzu Jen-fu 壬夫 (as *yu-yin*). Kung-tzu Tse (also an uncle) probably continued to serve as *ssu-ma*, and another prince (Kung-tzu Shen 申) was deputy (*yu*) *ssu-ma*. At the first available opportunity, Ying-ch'i moved to settle his old score with Ch'ü Wu-ch'en, murdering his kinsmen and associates and confiscating their wealth while Ch'ü was away on a diplomatic mission.[68] And not a single member of a collateral lineage held a major post for the remainder of the reign.

By 568 Kung-tzu Jen-fu had moved up to the post of *ling-yin*. He held it, though, for only about two years and was succeeded (for the balance of the reign) by a brother of the king, Tzu-nang 子囊. Another brother (Kung-tzu Wu 午) succeeded to the post of *ssu-ma*.[69] A number of other members of the main lineage appear in less prominent roles. At least a half-dozen men from independent clans are recorded, although only one of them held a post of any significance — that of *kung-yin*.

Thus, the court roster was dominated by the main lineage throughout king Kung's reign — and to a degree totally without precedent. The initial establishment of this pattern clearly was not the king's doing, because he was too young (ten *sui* 歲, that is, around nine years old) at the outset. When he began to be active in 575, he may have been attempting to replace the senior generation of the main lineage (that of his uncles) with his own (his brothers), but there are reasons to doubt this.[70] Whatever the case, in other

[67] The fact that Ying-ch'i waited until after Chuang's death before taking revenge on Wu-ch'en (see below) suggests that the latter was on more intimate terms with the king than with his own brother.

[68] Wu-ch'en, though, won out in one respect: the coveted beauty met him abroad.

[69] Bronzes inscribed with Wu's name have been discovered in tomb no. 2, at Hsia-ssu 下寺, Hsi-ch'uan county, Ho-nan.

[70] The shifts of the *ling-yin* and *ssu-ma* posts from Kung's uncles to his brothers involved royally-ordered executions of the incumbents; but for one execution there was a justifiable reason and, in the other case, no indication that it was occasioned by any personal differences with the throne.

respects he does not seem to have been the strongest of personalities. He seldom went on campaign. In addition, his stated preferences for a posthumous name for himself were not particularly flattering,[71] a sign of either harsh self-judgment or false modesty. Moreover, he was reluctant to trust his own judgment in naming an heir, relying instead on a divination procedure. The oracle pointed to his youngest son, Kung-tzu Ch'i-chi 棄疾; but after Kung's death this son was set aside, presumably by his uncles, in favor of another, who became king K'ang 康 (r. 560–545).[72]

The new king was inactive for about eight years, perhaps due to young age. His uncles, Tzu-nang (as *ling-yin*) and Kung-tzu Wu (as *ssu-ma* and then *ling-yin*), dominated the court roster, as they had in the previous reign. Serving as *chen-yin* under these two was another uncle of the king Kung-tzu Chui-shu 追舒, and Kung-tzu Pa-jung 罷戎 (as *yu-yin*) and Kung-tzu T'o-shih 橐師 (as *yu ssu-ma*) — probably uncles as well.[73] Thus, the main lineage clearly continued to dominate the court roster. Unlike the pattern of the previous reign, however, the collateral lineages were included. A member of the Wei lineage (Tzu-feng 子馮) was *ta* 大 (grand) *ssu-ma*,[74] and the Ch'ü lineage held posts of lesser significance (for example, Tao 到 was *mo-ao*). On the other hand, the independent clans virtually disappeared from view.

In 552 the mature K'ang attempted to exert authority. The death of his uncle Kung-tzu Wu afforded an opening. Consequently, he offered the *ling-yin* position to Wei Tzu-feng — that is, to someone outside the dominant main lineage. Tzu-feng, though, declined the honor; and the king (perhaps sensing this as shrouded advice) then turned to his uncle Kung-tzu Chui-shu.[75] In the following year, however, another opportunity presented itself when it was found that an independent clansman and bosom associate of

[71] One of these, Li 厲 ("harsh," "stern," "oppressive") certainly was not complimentary. Commentators have been at pains to explain why the other name, Ling 靈 ("spirit-like," "supernatural"), should be described in *Tso-chuan* as unflattering.

[72] To be fair, Kung's reticence may have been due to the fact that all of the candidates were still minors and therefore could not readily be judged on other grounds. Whatever the reason, Kung's failure to name an heir of his own choosing was to plague the house of Ch'u for three decades after his death. A factor in Ch'i-chi's disestablishment may have been that Ch'u was being pressured on the frontiers. K'ang was presumably somewhat older than the infant Ch'i-chi. The court may have decided that it would be best to have an adult at the helm as soon as possible (even if only as a figurehead).

[73] Since Chui-shu was an uncle and held a lesser post than Pa-jung and T'o-shih, it stands to reason that the latter two were also uncles.

[74] He is also referred to among the finds at Hsia-ssu (see n. 69).

[75] Tzu-feng claimed ill health. Since, however, he accepted the post in the following year, his action may have been designed as a subtle warning to the king that the time was not ripe to move against the main lineage.

Chui-shu named Kuan Ch'i 觀起 was living well beyond his modest legitimate means. This obvious favoritism towards a person of relatively low status caused resentment among the courtiers, and the king had both Chui-shu and Kuan Ch'i executed. This left the king at last free to pursue his own policies.

COLLATERAL LINEAGE INTERVAL (551–545)

K'ang then instituted a dramatic shift in the lineage thrust of the court roster. Only one member of the main lineage (Kung-tzu I 齮) was given a major post (*ssu-ma*), although several others appear in low capacities (largely without mention of an office). Thus, K'ang did not eliminate the main lineage entirely, but he greatly diminished its role. It seems that he pushed aside its senior generation (that of his uncles) in favor of his own generation.[76] As *ling-yin*, K'ang turned to his original choice — Wei Tzu-feng, whose previous post of *ta ssu-ma* passed to his own son Yen 掩. The Ch'ü, too, were active. One of their number (Chien 建) was *mo-ao*; and upon the death of Tzu-feng in 548 he succeeded to the post of *ling-yin* and Ch'ü T'ang to that of *mo-ao*. The choice of Chien may have been in part because of his personality, since he appears to have been a modest man. But the choice may also have been due to the fact that the Ch'ü lineage had never before held the lofty *ling-yin* position,[77] which should have made them grateful and obedient. In any case, the critical points to note are that K'ang employed two consecutive *ling-yin* from collateral lineages, and that this must have been a conscious move to remove the office from the grasp of the main lineage (including the king's own generation).[78] In sum, K'ang accomplished a more drastic change in the composition of officialdom than any early king except Chuang.

[76] Favorable to the continuity of the main lineage was the fact that a faction within it was sympathetic to K'ang. (Chui-shu's son, at least, had not disapproved of the king's move against his own father.) Concerning the shift of generations, Kung-tzu I's genealogical position is uncertain. But since all other main-lineage men were K'ang's brothers, it stands to reason that I was too. Theoretically, this shift could have been due to natural depletion of the elder generation, but the obstacle to Kang's personal authority represented by his uncles and the fact that the prime beneficiaries of the 551 coup were the collateral lineages (see below) strongly suggest that the changed pattern of main-lineage involvement was the king's doing.

[77] Nor was it ever to do so again. The level of involvement of the Ch'üs and the Weis represented a limited revival of their fortunes (in the Ch'ü case after three decades, since receiving the wrath of Kung-tzu Ying-ch'i; and for the Wei, after nearly fifty years, since the time of Sun-shu Ao).

[78] The latter exclusion is shown by the fact that such candidates were available (at least two of K'ang's brothers being active in lesser capacities).

MAIN LINEAGE INTERLUDE (545–541)

Upon K'ang's death, Chia Ao 郟敖 (r. 545–541) was raised to the throne of his father without difficulty. He was, however, a political cipher.[79] This, plus the demise of *ling-yin* Ch'ü Chien at about the same time as king K'ang paved the way for a main lineage renaissance.

The new *ling-yin* was Chia Ao's uncle Kung-tzu Wei 圍. Two other uncles held positions — Kung-tzu Pi 比 as *yu-yin* and Kung-tzu Hei-kung 黑肱 as *kung-chiu-yin* 宮廄尹 (chief of the palace stables). The Wei collateral lineage (with Yen as *ta ssu-ma*), and perhaps the Ch'ü, remained active; and aliens and members of independent clans were present in low capacities. Thus, a broad spectrum of lineages was represented, but the main lineage was clearly the most prominent, with Kung-tzu Wei as the dominant figure. In 543 he found a pretext to execute Wei Yen. This was only one indication that he was a man in the mode of such earlier *ling-yin* as Kung-tzu Yüan and Ch'eng Te-ch'en. Like them, he was arrogant and appropriated such symbols of rulership as the royal standard. Thus it comes as no surprise that in 541, learning that Chia Ao was ill, perhaps terminally, Wei personally strangled Chia and made certain that the succession would not follow through his nephew's line by killing Chia's sons. Wei then ascended the throne, becoming king Ling 靈 (r. 541–529). He was the second of king Kung's sons to reign.

RETURN OF THE COLLATERAL LINEAGES (541–CA. 505)

The Early Collaterals to the Fore (541–ca. 528)

Upon Ling's usurpation of the throne, two of his brothers, Kung-tzu Pi and Kung-tzu Hei-kung, fled abroad. They undoubtedly feared for their lives, since the new king was power-hungry, devious, and extravagant. He was, in a word, the most autocratic ruler in Ch'u history.

At the outset, the lineage composition of officialdom was similar to that in the previous reign: the Wei collateral lineage continued to be prominent (the *ling-yin* was Wei Pa 罷; the *t'ai-tsai* 太宰 [chief of protocol] was Wei Ch'i-ch'iang 啓彊; and other Wei figures played lesser roles). Moreover, a considerable number of independent clansmen (mostly at low levels, but one

[79] Age is not a likely factor, since he had more than one son by his death in 541. There is, however, evidence to suggest that he was chronically ill.

as *kung-yin*) and several aliens (one as *yu-yin*, another as a favorite) were active. A significant difference in the roster was the virtual absence of the main lineage, the only person from its ranks being Ling's brother Ch'i-chi, who took on a number of military, diplomatic, and administrative assignments. Also, after their long eclipse (ever since 605), the Tou lineage reappeared on the scene. Presumably willing to accept any crumbs thrown in their direction, they held only relatively minor positions (Tou Ch'i-chi 棄疾, for instance, was *kung-chiu-yin*).

Thus, under Ling the upper ranks of officialdom were occupied by early collateral lineage figures, especially the Wei. Given Ling's recent execution of Wei Yen, it is rather curious that any member of this lineage should have been willing to serve under him. It may be that they were cowed by this tyrant or that they found the appointments too tempting to resist, or both. On the other hand, those who served may represent only a pro-king faction of the Wei ranks.[80]

Ling treated his officers with haughty disdain. Especially noteworthy is his program of property confiscations. Starting with the property of Wei Chü 居 (a son of Yen?), he then turned to that of two members of the Tou lineage — Wei-kuei 韋龜 and his son Ch'eng-jan 成然. (He attempted to make amends to Ch'eng-jan by appointment as *chiao-yin* 交尹, superintendent of the suburbs.) Behind these confiscations was Ling's need to finance his elaborate and costly building projects — the Chang-hua 章華 Palace and its renowned pleasure pavilion. Adding insult to injury, the king staffed these with runaway retainers of the aristocracy, whom he refused, despite protests, to return to their masters. The properties of members of the Ch'eng and Ch'ü lineages seem to have remained unaffected, but the same cannot be said of their persons. The king took stock in the slander leveled at a certain Ch'eng Hu 虎 and had him executed. Then, accusing Ch'ü Shen 申 (presumably the *mo-ao*) of responsibility for a military defeat, he had him killed as well. Perhaps in an attempt to offset this, Ling appointed another Ch'ü figure, Sheng 生, as *mo-ao*. Exactly what Ling expected to achieve by such behavior can only be inferred, but the conclusions to be drawn from subsequent events are not very flattering.[81] What is clear is that the result

[80] That the Wei were not politically united is suggested by the fact that Wei Pa executed another Wei on flimsy grounds and by the diction of a *Tso-chuan* passage ([Chao 13] 23, p. 4) that describes Wei participants in the ensuing rebellion against king Ling.

[81] If the confiscations and executions were intended to cow the collateral lineages, this failed. If the recompense he bestowed on some of those he had wronged was designed to mollify them, he was naive. If his employing men of low social standing was to play them off against the higher-ranking collateral lineages, then it was a miscalculation.

was an uprising in 529 hatched by an array of disaffected court elements — most notably the Wei and Tou lineages, but including an alien favorite of the king. On their own, they might not have succeeded in overthrowing Ling, but developments on the northern frontier were to play into their hands.

Because Ch'i-chi was the only brother of Ling who had not fled, the king may have felt confident of his loyalty and commissioned him as *kung* of the recently incorporated state of Ts'ai 蔡.[82] On the other hand, sending this brother to the frontier could have been designed to distance him from the brooding collateral lineages at court. Whatever the case, in the end the appointment proved to be a serious mistake.

Elements in Ts'ai, unhappy at its loss of independence and encouraged by the unrest developing in the capital, sent a forged message under the name of Ch'i-chi to his exiled brothers, asking them to join him in Ts'ai. Ch'i-chi, understandably, was taken aback when Kung-tzu Pi and Kung-tzu Hei-kung appeared, and he initially declined to participate in any move against the king. But when the troops decided in favor of rebellion, he went along. Thereupon, the three princely brothers, backed by forces from a range of border outposts and sympathetic neighboring states,[83] marched on the capital. Upon learning of this military alliance, courtiers murdered the king's sons. As the rebels approached the city, they proclaimed Kung-tzu Pi king and Hei-kung and Ch'i-chi *ling-yin* and *ssu-ma*, respectively.

Ch'i-chi then entered the city and offered amnesty to all who would recognize the new regime. Meanwhile, king Ling had fled and committed suicide. This left Kung-tzu Pi as the only obstacle between Ch'i-chi and the throne. Pi, although warned of the implications of this, declined to take any steps against his brother. At this point, Ch'i-chi sent a dissembling message to the rebel camp, pretending that he had been killed by the capital populace and that they were in a mood to do the same to Kung-tzu Pi. The latter was taken in, and both he and Kung-tzu Hei-kung thereupon committed suicide. With the throne vacant, Ch'i-chi (king P'ing 平; r. 529–516), the fourth and last son of king Kung, succeeded to the title.

Even though the manner in which P'ing eventually came to power does not speak well of him, there is no evidence that he had previously thirsted for the throne. Perhaps by 529 he had come to feel that the preceding decade of turmoil was the result of not following the succession divination commissioned by his father (which had pointed to himself) and that he

[82] Ling had incorporated Ts'ai (at the time, situated in central Ho-nan) in 531.

[83] Ling had dealt arrogantly with a number of these, the details of which are beyond the scope of this study.

therefore was justified in unseating both Ling and Kung-tzu Pi. If we are to believe entirely the *Tso-chuan* text, once in power he set out to right the wrongs of his predecessor—and a great deal more. In fact, the picture drawn of him makes him a most humane and astute ruler.[84] Even if this characterization is reliable, it is still possible that the acts involved also served as a public relations ploy to divert attention from the fact that he was a usurper. Whatever the case, his record is not particularly impressive; in fact, he never commanded troops in the field.

P'ing's first *ling-yin* was Tou Ch'eng-jan, an understandable, even predictable choice. Having had his properties seized by king Ling, Ch'eng-jan gave up on life at court and offered his services to Ch'i-chi in Ts'ai. He also had been an active participant in the 529 rebellion. Thus, P'ing was both familiar with him and undoubtedly confident of his loyalty. For the Tou lineage, his appointment represented a significant advance over the minimal revival accorded them by king Ling and, of course, marked their first occupancy of the leading post since 605. Unfortunately for them, though, Ch'eng-jan was not a very able administrator and, more seriously, contracted some sort of political alliance with the Yang 楊 independent clan. This angered P'ing, who had him executed in 528, after less than eighteen months in office.[85] Still, in recognition of Ch'eng-jan's loyalty and service (and perhaps to placate his lineage), the king dispatched his son Tou Hsin 辛 to reside in the countryside, presumably to serve as a *kung*.

Emergence of the Late Collateral Lineages (ca. 528–ca. 505)

By 525 the *ling-yin* position was occupied by Yang T'ao 匄, who in 519 was followed in the office by Nang Wa 瓦.[86] These appointments are significant, both because they represent the political emergence of the late collateral lineages and because their rise was at the expense of the early collateral lines. Despite this favoritism toward the newer collaterals, P'ing did not exclude the main lineage from significant offices.[87] Two of their number (quite possibly P'ing's own sons) served in significant posts: Wang-tzu Sheng

[84] *TC* (Chao 13) 23, p. 9.

[85] It is unclear who served under Ch'eng-jan, but it may be presumed that the early collateral lineages (which had been so prominent under Ling and which had participated in his downfall) were heavily represented.

[86] Yang's tenure probably dated back to the death of Tou Ch'eng-jan three years earlier. Nang Wa was a grandson of Tzu-nang, who had served under kings Kung and K'ang.

[87] The following discussion makes no attempt to distinguish those who served under Yang T'ao from those under Nang Wa. The evidence is insufficient to do so, and, moreover, these two *ling-yin* belonged to the same lineage category.

勝 was *tso-yin* and Kung-tzu Fang 魴 was *ssu-ma*.[88] Nor were the early collateral lineages entirely ignored, the latter post eventually passing to Wei Yüeh 越.[89] A number of independent clansmen were active also, although only Wu She and Fei Wu-chi (see below) held even minor posts.

Thus, after the fall of Tou Ch'eng-jan, P'ing's court roster was populated at the top by the late collateral lineages; further down the ladder, primarily by members of the main lineage; and only minimally by the early collateral lineages. On the basis of one of the policies attributed to P'ing, the prominent role accorded to the late collateral lineages could represent an attempt to staff the court by the primary criterion of talent, and less on considerations of lineage rank. However, it is more probable that this was based on an expectation that the emerging lineages would be pliable if given a first opportunity to participate in court affairs.

P'ing experienced no difficulties with his senior staff after the fall of Tou Ch'eng-jan, but this does not hold for lesser figures; and in this respect the picture of him is not very flattering. He was easily maneuvered by an alien from Ts'ai named Fei Wu-chi 費無極, whose official position in Ch'u was no higher than assistant tutor (*shao-shih* 少師) to the heir-apparent. Fei, jealous of the royal confidence enjoyed by a long-standing associate of the king (another Ts'ai native, Ch'ao Wu 朝吳), made things so uncomfortable for the man that he fled into exile. The king was angered by this, but did nothing to chastise the troublemaker. Hence undaunted, four years later Fei launched a campaign against his superior, Wu She 伍舍, principal tutor (*fu* 傅) of the heir. Having put forth insinuations that Wu was lax in his duty of finding a wife for his charge, Fei convinced the king that he himself was the one to take on the task. Upon completing the assignment, though, Fei urged the king to take the woman for himself. The king, not exactly to his credit, did not hesitate to do so.

Fei then proceeded to convince the king that it would be a good idea to place the heir on the northwest frontier. Fei reportedly pointed to military considerations in making this suggestion, but the true motivation was not long in surfacing. His nemesis Wu She, in his role as tutor, would accompany the heir; and because the locale involved was a strategically important spot, Fei could accuse both men of plotting rebellion. Once again, the king

[88] They could not have been sons of Chia Ao or Ling (all of whom, it will be recalled, had been killed); and by this time P'ing could have had sons in young manhood.

[89] The only other possible member of this lineage category to hold an important court position was Shen Chu-liang 沈諸梁 (see below and, on his lineage, n. 22), who was a *kung* on the northern frontier.

was duped. He ordered the seizure of Wu She and the execution of the heir Chien 建, who was forewarned and fled to safety abroad.[90] P'ing eventually realized that he had wronged his son, but Fei Wu-chi avoided any consequence of this change of heart by deflecting the king's attention elsewhere. He convinced P'ing to recall two sons of Wu She from abroad, as the condition for a pardon of their father. When only one son did so,[91] he and his father were executed. In this way, Fei rid himself of Wu She. This, however, did not put an end to his machinations. Having gone thus far unpunished, he began accepting bribes. Yet again, he suffered merely royal displeasure.

Nothing in this long series of events reflects well on king P'ing. Admittedly, there are literary qualities to the account of Fei Wu-chi. Presumably, though, it carries a kernel of truth about P'ing's personality. It suggests that he was easily maneuvered and that he was not a man of sound judgment.

Sometime after the flight of the heir Chien in 522, the king designated another son, Jen 壬, as heir. However, upon P'ing's death in 516, the *ling-yin* Nang Wa advocated enthroning yet another son, Kung-tzu Shen 申.[92] When this candidate vehemently opposed his own nomination (even threatening Nang's life over the matter), the *ling-yin* backed down and Jen ascended the throne as king Chao 昭 (r. 516–489).

Because the new king was under eight years old, Nang Wa was left in charge, although it may be presumed that he had to take into account his strong-willed nephew Kung-tzu Shen. It is difficult to discern at precisely what point the other office-holders who appear in the record served,[93] but the general picture in the first decade of the reign was probably as follows.

An older brother of the king (Kung-tzu Chieh 結) served as *ssu-ma*, and a certain Hsi Wan 郤宛 held a rather high post (*tso-yin*) for someone of independent clan background.[94] In lesser offices were one or two members of the main lineage (for example, Wang-sun Yu-yü 由于 as *ch'in-yin* 寢尹, that is, chamberlain). The collateral lineages were represented also. From the

[90] For the sequel to this story, see the discussion of the rebellion of 479, below.

[91] The one who did not return was the well-known Wu Tzu-hsü 伍子胥, who sought vengeance by aiding Wu in its invasion of Ch'u in 506–505 (discussed below).

[92] Among the arguments Nang reportedly made in this connection was that Jen, as the son of the woman originally intended as the wife of Chien but appropriated by king P'ing, was not (at least morally) a legitimate son.

[93] The lineage affiliations of a number of minor office-holders are ambiguous, and have been set aside in this study. It should be noted, though, that in addition to those given below, there was an assistant master of the horse (*tso ssu-ma*) from the Shen-yin lineage (see n. 22). On a purported *ling-yin* not mentioned in *Tso-chuan*, see Nienhauser, "Reexamination," pp. 228–30.

[94] Several other independent clansmen appear in the record, but all in relatively mean positions.

early category there were two Wei figures (most notably, Wei Chia 賈 as *chen-yin*) and a Ch'ü man (Ta-hsin 大心, as *mo-ao*).[95] The late category was represented by Yang Ling-chung 令終, son of the earlier *ling-yin* Yang T'ao, who served as *chung-chiu-yin* 中廄尹 (chief of the central stable). From this it can be seen that a broad spectrum of lineages was represented in the official roster during the early part of Chao's reign, as in Chuang's later years and in the reign of Ling, albeit this time with the leading position in the hands of a late collateral lineage.

Nang Wa served as *ling-yin* for over a decade but was corrupt, easily swayed by gossip, and taken advantage of by the clever Fei Wu-chi. Fei accused the upright Hsi Wan of a litany of offenses, including a plot to assault Nang Wa. It is not entirely clear what Fei had against Hsi Wan. Perhaps he was jealous that a man of social standing no higher than his own should hold such an exalted position. When Nang acted to thwart the alleged plot, Hsi Wan committed suicide. Despite opposition from some court elements, Nang pursued the issue, exterminating Hsi's family and executing a number of his associates, including members of the Yang collateral lineage.[96] Surviving members of the Yang lineage protested, accusing Fei of a variety of crimes and castigating Nang Wa for being duped by him. When public sentiment against Nang did not subside, he finally gave in and executed Fei Wu-chi. Thus, Fei eventually came to an appropriate end, but only after having wreaked havoc at court for over a decade.

MAIN LINEAGE REVIVAL (CA. 505–464)

The story at this point reaches the time of the invasion of the Ch'u heartland by the state of Wu 吳. As the crisis deepened, Nang Wa now deferred to his subordinates and eventually took to the field against the invading army. But as soon as the going got rough, he fled abroad. In 506, with the capital occupied by Wu forces, the king fled, accompanied by a broad representation of aristocrats—four members of the main lineage, three of the Tou collateral lineage, and several independent clansmen. By the following year, the crisis still in full sway, the king's brother Kung-tzu Shen had taken over as *ling-yin*, and with the assistance of another brother, the *ssu-ma* Kung-tzu Chieh, and others, pushed back the invading army.[97]

[95] This Wei Chia is not the same as the Wei Chia of the late-seventh century.

[96] From this it is clear that the two late-collateral lineages (Nang and Yang) did not constitute a political bloc at this juncture.

[97] She 射, of the Wei lineage, played a role; and a very important contribution was made by Shen Pao-hsü 申包胥, members of whose lineage appear in the record at least from king

During this time of turmoil, then, the main lineage replaced the late collateral lineages at the top of the roster.[98] King Chao almost certainly had no hand in this shift, as he was still a bit too young and, in any event, was in flight at the time. Nothing is recorded of him in an active role until a decade later. Even when he did become involved in court affairs, no change in the official roster is discernible. Either he willingly accepted the existing order or was unable to do anything about it. In fact, his actions as late as 489 strongly hint that he had remained under the shadow of his elder brothers throughout his reign: anticipating his own death, he offered the throne in turn to each. Even if insincere, this reveals for us the power exerted by his brothers. The gesture was made first to Kung-tzu Shen, whose qualifications included the fact that he was the eldest, that he was an experienced administrator, and (not the least) that he had stepped aside in Chao's favor in 516. Shen once again declined the honor. The king then offered the prize to Kung-tzu Chieh, who had served the state well during the Wu invasion. Since he too was reluctant, it became the turn of Kung-tzu Ch'i 啓 (presumably the youngest of the three). After considerable hesitation, Ch'i gave in to the king's wish; but once the king was dead, he stepped aside (with the concurrence of his brothers) in favor of Chao's son.

The new king Hui 惠, who must have been no more than about eighteen at the outset, was to reign for more than half a century (489–432), although we can construct detailed events for only about half that time.[99] The government was headed at first by his uncles, Kung-tzu Shen and Kung-tzu Chieh, carrying on respectively as *ling-yin* and *ssu-ma*. The latter's *yu ssu-ma* assistant was Kung-tzu Shen's son, Kung-sun Ning 公孫寧; his *tso ssu-ma* was perhaps a member of the Shen 申 (independent?) clan.[100] In lesser posts, two other officers were carried forward from the previous reign—another member of the main lineage, the *ch'in-yin* Wang-sun Yu-yü, and Chia of the Wei collateral lineage, serving as *chen-yin*. Thus, the main lineage

Kung's time (either without office or in the shadowy post of *yü-yin* 芋尹). Whether this lineage was the same as, or a sublineage of, that of the Shen-shu (n. 64), or whether it was an independent clan, is far from clear.

[98] Except for the confused circumstances during the 529 uprising, this was the first time the main lineage had been in ascendance since the short reign of Chia Ao, over three decades earlier. The early-collateral lineages (Tou, Wei, and Ch'ü) presumably continued to be active (albeit in the subordinate role to which they had been relegated since the fall of Tou Ch'eng-jan in 528). A number of other, low-ranking figures are mentioned, but their lineage affiliations are for the most part unclear.

[99] *Tso-chuan*, the only detailed source, ends in 464.

[100] The reference to one Shen Ming 申明 appears only in a late source. If reliable, the post he held was the highest recorded for the Shen lineage (on which see n. 97).

clearly was dominant, a situation that had hardly existed in well over half a century.[101]

A decade into the reign, one of Fei Wu-chi's earlier machinations resulted belatedly in rebellion. King P'ing's original heir, Chien, had died in exile, but his son Sheng 勝 now resided in Wu. The *ling-yin* Kung-tzu Shen wished to recall this nephew to Ch'u, probably in order to make amends for the previous unjust treatment of Sheng's father. Other considerations, however, may have been Sheng's claim to the throne and his being domiciled in a dangerous enemy state.[102] Although the idea was opposed strenuously by another official, Kung-tzu Shen nevertheless proceeded to set up Sheng as *kung* at Pai 白.[103]

Pai-*kung* Sheng (as he was now styled) was determined to prove himself on the battlefield; and when denied the opportunity by circumstances, he evidently blamed his uncle, the *ssu-ma* Kung-tzu Chieh. The *ling-yin* Kung-tzu Shen, although informed of this, took no action. Sheng, soon had a chance to show his mettle by achieving a victory in an encounter with a Wu force. For this he requested permission to display his arms at court, ostensibly to be used in a victory celebration. His real concern, though, was to have these at hand when he returned to the capital. His request having been granted (presumably by the naive Kung-tzu Shen), upon arrival the Pai-*kung* killed both of his powerful uncles (Shen and Chieh) and took the king captive. He then tried to place Kung-tzu Ch'i, his sole surviving uncle, on the throne. When Ch'i again refused, Sheng had him killed. While all of this was transpiring at the capital, Shen Chu-liang, an official on the northern frontier, was at first hesitant to take any action; but upon hearing of the murders he marched on the capital. Once inside, he recruited the assistance of courtiers, in the face of which Pai-*kung* Sheng committed suicide.

This left the two leading offices *ling-yin* and *ssu-ma* vacant, and Shen Chu-liang temporarily assumed the responsibilities of both. But as soon as things had settled down, the posts devolved to Kung-sun Ning and Kung-sun K'uan 寬—sons (respectively) of the murdered Shen and Chieh and hence cousins of the king. Neither king Hui's involvement in these appoint-

[101] This group was ascendant under Chia Ao; but except for those few years, this had not been the case since the phase covering Kung's reign and the early years of K'ang. Several other main lineage figures were active under king Hui without any recorded office.

[102] In suggesting the recall of Sheng, Kung-tzu Shen is reported to have noted that he deserved a high office in Ch'u, but actually he had a claim to the throne. Thus, the fear may have been that he would recruit Wu assistance in making good on this.

[103] The opponent of the plan was Shen Chu-liang (see n. 89). Since Pai was situated on the eastern border (facing Wu), the *ling-yin* may have sought to kill two birds with one stone, making use of Sheng's knowledge of the enemy while keeping him well away from court.

ments nor his objective is readily apparent. In one source passage he is pictured as taking part, in another he is not.[104] In the former scenario his preference for *ling-yin* is his younger brother Tzu-liang 子良. If this is to be trusted, one implication is that Hui had hoped to keep the leading post out of the hands of the families of his powerful uncles. If so, he did not, however, achieve his goal. In fact, his behavior soon afterwards suggests either that he did not oppose the appointments of his cousins to the most prominent offices, or else that he was too weak to do so successfully.[105] He conferred important local posts not only on the *ling-yin* Kung-sun Ning and the *ssu-ma* Kung-sun K'uan, but upon also Ning's brother Kung-sun Ch'ao 朝.

Three aspects of these appointments make it probable that they were in fact extracted from a malleable king. First, taken together they covered much of the critical northwestern frontier.[106] Second, these are the first known cases in which high central government officials concurrently held local posts. Finally, and most important, is the fact that Kung-sun Ning was enfoeffed 封, the first clear-cut reference in the texts to such a grant to a Ch'u native.[107]

In sum, when all evidence is considered, the mature king Hui either did not seriously oppose the court circumstances which had prevailed during his youth or was unsuccessful in doing so. And whatever the case may have been with respect to court offices, the local posts conferred on members of the main lineage demonstrate their influence and the king's weakness in the face of it.[108]

[104] *Tso-chuan* seems to preserve two separate redactions of the story. At Ai 哀 18 (30, p. 41), the new appointments appear to be entirely Shen Chu-liang's doing; at Ai 17 (30, pp. 36–37) the king plays a role.
[105] There were, after all, strong factors in favor of the cousins: their fathers had served well at court, had been murdered while in office, and had declined the throne in Hui's favor.
[106] All three appointments were to the environs of the Nan-yang 南陽 basin (of southwest Ho-nan), which was of major strategic importance to Ch'u, both offensively and defensively.
[107] The other two were given *kung* posts. *SC* 126, p. 10 [1295], uses the term *feng* in connection with an earlier grant to a son of Wei Ao (early in the sixth century), but there are problems with this. *Tso-chuan* first mentions Ch'u enfoeffments in the years just before the Wu invasion crisis of 506–505 ([Chao 30] 26.37; see also *SC* 40, p. 44 [640], and 66, p. 9 [850]), but these had gone to alien princes (exiles from Wu).
[108] Recently excavated materials (especially from Pao-shan 包山 tomb no. 2, Ching-men 荆門, Hupei) show that enfoeffment became a wide-spread phenomenon in Warring States times. The ultimate case was that of the mid-third-century prime minister Huang Hsieh 黃歇, better known as Ch'un-shen *chün* 春申君, who was granted a good portion of what little territory by then remained in Ch'u hands. In Ch'u, then, decentralization increased (the opposite of what occurred in Ch'in). Where such centrifugal circumstances prevailed (as in Chin and Lu), there was a centripetal corollary—local power was translated into power at court. It is probable, therefore, that the Ch'u kings of Warring States times were even less powerful than their ancestors had been.

CONCLUSION

It will be useful to summarize the major developments in Ch'u court politics between 675 and 464.

From 675 to 664 a scion of the main lineage dominated the court and its two young rulers Chuang Ao and king Ch'eng. Several men from the Tou lineage served under this main-lineage *ling-yin*.

During the six decades from 664 to 605, the Jo Ao lineages were in the ascendant, alternating as the leading force. In the years 664–637 the Tous dominated the court roster, under a presumably docile king Ch'eng. The Tous then stepped aside in favor of the Ch'eng lineage from 637 to 632. In the latter year, king Ch'eng belatedly involved himself in the composition of the court roster, reluctantly turning to the Tous. During the reign of the usurper king Mu (626–614), the Ch'engs were brought back to the fore, and they remained in charge for awhile thereafter (614–611?), under the young king Chuang (albeit, with the Tous in opposition). A strong Tou resurgence followed (611? to 605), leading to a confrontation with the maturing king. Victorious over them, Chuang brought the era of the Jo Ao lineages (664–605) to an end.

King Chuang (and/or his prime minister) then established a balance among the lineages, one in which, however, the main lineage held a prominent position. This pattern continued through the remainder of his reign (605–591).

After Chuang's death, the main lineage built upon their existing advantage and became the leading force during the four decades between 591 and 551 (under the seemingly malleable king Kung and during the tender years of king K'ang).

In 551 K'ang engineered a revival of the collateral lineages that persisted (with the partial exception of Chia Ao's few years) until about 505—thus covering the balance of K'ang's reign (551–545), the entirety of those of Ling (541–529) and P'ing (529–516), and into the early years of Chao. Under P'ing, however, the spotlight shifted from the early to the late collateral lineages.

Finally, the main lineage reemerged decisively during the Wu invasion (ca. 505) and dominated the pliable kings Chao and Hui (to at least 464).

In attempting to assess the roles played in all of this by the rulers and the lineages, two questions may be posed. First, on a general plane, for what proportion of the time did each control state affairs? Second, more specifi-

cally, which had the greater impact on the lineage composition of the court staff?

In answering the first question, court circumstances may be divided into three categories:

1. periods in which the throne was occupied by young and/or otherwise docile kings, in whose reigns the lineages were often in control of state affairs;
2. eras in which activist kings ruled;
3. post-regency years in which circumstances are to varying degrees unclear.

Comparison of the first two unambiguous categories shows that the lineages and the throne controlled state affairs in virtually equal proportions (about 30 percent of the time; see table 1). Less clear-cut circumstances prevailed for nearly 40 percent of the time. If the kings were active in state affairs throughout those years, their total involvement in the period would rise to a substantial majority of about 70 percent.[109] However, this figure is undoubtedly too generous and should be reduced to between one-half and one-third of the time.[110] In a general sense, then, at best the kings controlled state affairs about on a par with the lineages and, at worst, considerably less.

The impact on the lineage composition of the court staff, the more specific indicator, is more telling (table 2). The kings and the lineages were responsible for a nearly equal number of shifts in orientation (six and seven, respectively).[111] In effecting these, the kings were more successful in overturning long-entrenched patterns,[112] but the better indicator is chronological impact on subsequent staffing patterns. In this respect the lineages outdid the kings by a considerable factor — 136 years (64 percent of the period

[109] In table 1, adding "Ambiguous" year-total to that of "Kings" gives 147 (69.3%).

[110] It can be argued that hardly any of the 84 ambiguous years belong in the royal column. At a minimum, the post-regency phases (31 years) of the reigns of kings Chao (504–489) and Hui (478–464) should be in the lineage column, which decreases royal involvement to 116 years (54.7%). Arguably, the same holds for the following: 3 years (610–608) of Chuang's reign, 32 years (663–632) of Ch'eng's reign, and 16 years of Kung's (574–560). This reduces royal involvement to 66 years (about 31%); see revised subtotals and revised totals. A middle-of-the road stance might accord the throne the years 663–632 (32) and 574–560 (15), for a total of 113 (53.3%)

[111] The possible "micro" shift by Kung — from the senior to the junior generation of the main lineage — is excluded here. It is notable that all but one of the lineage-sponsored shifts (that of 637) occurred under regencies or barely mature kings.

[112] Two of the royal-sponsored shifts (those of 605 and 551) brought enduring patterns that had accumulated over a century to an end; only the lineage-sponsored shift of 505 had such an effect, and it ended a configuration which had prevailed for less than half a century.

surveyed) to 76 years (36 percent). The record of the lineages is further enhanced when considering only those actions that had a fairly long-term effect. Each of the two changes brought about by the main lineage set the stage for the ensuing four decades, and the Tou coup of 664 similarly for six decades. By contrast, the most enduring shift instituted by the throne, that of king P'ing, lasted less than a quarter of a century. The shifts in the configuration of the court carried out by the lineages, then, had much greater long-term effects than did those maneuvered by the kings.[113]

How is the less than impressive record of the kings to be explained? Surely, a major factor was that except for the three usurpers (four, if Kung-tzu Pi is counted), all came to the throne at a tender age. This provided repeated openings for the lineages (mostly the main lineage) to dominate the court and determine the composition of its staff (see table 3). The resulting regencies accounted for thirty percent (sixty-five years) of the period under consideration, but their effects were more profound than this. Only three rulers whose reigns commenced with regencies (Ch'eng, Chuang, and K'ang) were strong enough personalities eventually to overturn the staff patterns they inherited, and Ch'eng did so only belatedly and superficially. The accession of young rulers clearly stacked the cards against the throne and in favor of the lineages.[114]

In sum, with the exception of their greater success in ending long-standing lineage configurations of office-holding, the kings were less of a factor in court politics than were the lineages. In fairness to the throne, however, some consideration should be given to whether the single most dramatic royal success in reversing inherited conditions — Chuang's suppression of the Jo Ao lineages — had effects more subtle than the above allows. This obviously requires comparison of conditions before and after 605.

Two fairly clear-cut changes after 605 can be discerned. The kings' impact on future staffing configurations rose a bit (table 2). This, however, was not related to the policies or actions of Chuang; it was largely the function of the ages and personalities of subsequent kings. Another change after 605 — the main lineage replaced collateral lineages as the leading group (table 4) — could with greater logic be attributed to Chuang's suppression of the Jo

[113] Interestingly, with the single exception of Chuang, all of the kings who had the greatest forward impact (Mu, Ling, and P'ing) were usurpers.

[114] In assessing the effects of regencies, postregency phases during which the kings did not govern should also be taken into account. All of the ambiguous phases (table 1), with the exception of that relating to Chuang's reign, come into play here. Depending on how these are assessed (n. 110), when added to the 69 regency years, they result in between 63.6% (135 years) and 78.3% (185 years) of the period being affected either directly or indirectly by regencies.

Ao (collateral) lineages and the role he accorded the main lineage in the ensuing balanced court configuration. This, however, is offset by two factors. First, a major explanation for the enhanced role of the main lineage after 605 lies in the increase in regency years (from fifteen to fifty, twenty-one to thirty-five percent of the respective eras; table 3). This, of course, was totally unrelated to Chuang's policies. Second, the collateral lineages managed to replace the main lineage on a number of occasions after 605, and this was due less to the balanced formulation of Chuang's staff than to the policies of later kings.[115]

King Chuang's impact seems less also when we consider that in other respects circumstances did not change after 605. First, there probably was no significant increase in royal involvement in political affairs (table 1).[116] Second, despite the shift of the leading role to the main lineage (table 4), their over-all record after 605 (60 percent) was not as good as that of the collateral lineages in earlier times (83 percent). Moreover, the proportion of regency years dominated by the main lineage remained substantially unchanged (see table 3). Finally, there was no basic change in royal tactics in dealing with the lineages. Kings who successfully challenged the composition of the court roster rather consistently favored the collateral lineages.[117]

Thus, while Chuang destroyed one specific court configuration, what was to follow can in no substantial way be attributed to him. Future kings were hardly more successful in handling the lineages than they had ever been, and the tactics they employed did not change.

In sum, this discussion has shown that although a few Ch'u kings (mostly usurpers) had an impact on Ch'u court politics between 675 and 464, the lineages, contrary to the prevailing view, were more of a factor than the throne. This was to a considerable degree due to incidental factors — young kings, ineffective kings, and short reigns. At a more fundamental level, however, the rather unimpressive record of the throne was a function of the social context. The royal clan, with its right to participate, stood as an ever-present threat to the throne, stepping in whenever the age or personal qualities of the king offered an opening. This characterization is contrary to the received one. It is clear, too, that the lineage divisions within the royal clan

[115] The political emergence of the late-collateral lineages, another post-605 departure, may have been indirectly influenced by Chuang's decimation of the Jo Ao lineages. As suggested above, however, there probably were more immediate factors involved.

[116] If the minimum figures are used, there was a slight increase, from 25% (18 years) to 32% (45 years); but if the maximum figures are employed, there was actually a noticeable decline: from 79% (56 years) to 68% (96 years).

[117] Mu and Chuang were partial exceptions to this, since their favoring the collateral

were critical to the dynamics of Ch'u court politics and cannot be ignored: the lineages were inveterate competitors in the quest for control over the throne. There were kings who attempted to exploit the tensions among the lineages, but none ever permanently impinged on their right to participate and their potential to dominate the throne. In other words, the "clan state" remained intact.[118]

lineages was tempered by some main-lineage involvement. Kung also may have been an exception (if the shift from the elder to the younger generation of the main lineage was his doing).

[118] According to Han-era works, the leading lineages in Warring States times were all collaterals — the Ch'ü, Chao 昭, and Ching 景. A number of members of the hoary Ch'ü lineage appear in the sources in various guises; but except for scattered references to them as *mo-ao* and another poorly understood office (*san-lü tai-fu* 三閭大夫), their roles are not very clear. (Of course, the famous third-century BC poet and patriot Ch'ü Yüan 原 was of this line.) Information on the Chaos, descended from the king of that name, has been provided by materials from the Pao-shan tomb no. 2 (see Ho Hao, "Wen P'ing-yeh chün ti shen-fen yü Chao-shih ti shih-hsi" 文坪夜君的身份與昭氏的世系, *Chiang-Han k'ao-ku* 江漢考古 [1992.3], pp. 68–70, 78). The history of the Ching lineage remains shadowy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHLT	*Chiang-Han lun-t'an* 江漢論壇
KY	*Kuo-yü* 國語
SC	*Shih-chi* 史記
TC	*Tso-chuan* 左傳

Table 1. Years of State-Affair Control by Kings and Lineages

Period of Control	No. of Years	Controlling Element: Kings	Lineages	Ambiguous
675–664	12		Main	
663–632	32			X
631–626	6	Ch'eng		
625–614	12	Mu		
613–611	3		Cheng	
610–605	6			X
Yr. subtotals	71 (100%)	18 (25.3%)	15 (21.1%)	38 (53.5%)
(Revised[A] yr. subtotals)	71 (100%)	21 (29.6%)	50 (70.4%)	0 (0%)
Period After 605 BC Coup Attempt				
604–591	14	Chuang		
590–575	16		Main	
574–560	15			X
559–551	9		Main	
550–545	6	K'ang		
544–541	4		Main	
540–529	12	Ling		
528–516	13	P'ing		
515–505	11		Nang	
504–489	16			X
488–479	10		Main	
478–464	15			X
Yr. subtotals	141 (100%)	45 (31.9%)	50 (35.4%)	46 (32.6%)
(Revised[A] yr. subtotals)	141 (100%)	45 (31.9%)	96 (68.1%)	0 (0%)
Totals	212 (100%)	63 (29.7%)	65 (30.7%)	84 (39.6%)
(Revised Totals)	212 (100%)	66 (31.1%)	146 (68.9%)	0 (0%)

[A]See n. 110.

Table 2. Shifts in Composition of Court Roster: Initiators and Durations

Duration of Roster Shift	No. of Years	Initiator of Shift: Kings	Lineages
675–664	12		Main
663–638	26		Tou
637–632	6		Tou
631–626	6	Ch'eng	
625–611	15	Mu	
610–605	6		Tou
Yr. subtotals	71 (100%)	21 (29.6%)	50 (70.4%)
Period After 605 BC Coup Attempt			
604–591	14	Chuang	
590–551	40		Main
550–545	6	K'ang	
544–541	4		Main
540–529	12	Ling	
528–506	23	P'ing	
505–464	42		Main
Yr. subtotals	141 (100%)	55 (39%)	86 (61%)
Totals	212 (100%)	76 (35.8%)	136 (64.2%)

Table 3. Control of Regencies According to Lineage Categories

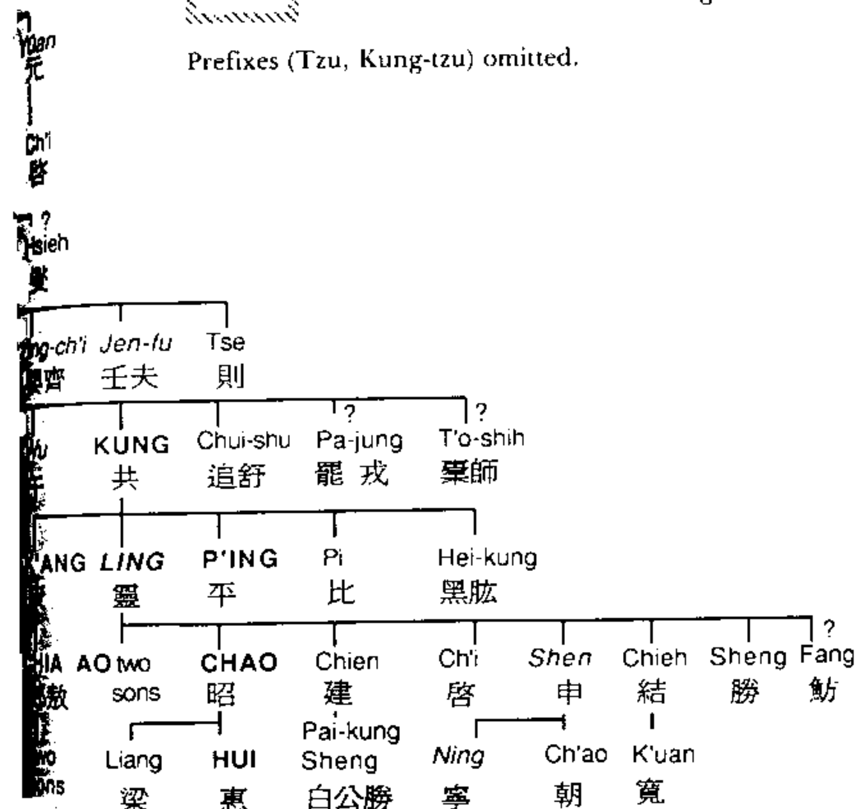
Periods of Regency	No. of Years	Controlling Lineage: Main	Collaterals
675–664	12	X	
613–611	3		Ch'eng
Regency yrs. subtotals	15 (100%)	12 (80%)	3 (20%)
All yrs. subtotals	71 (100%)	12 (16.9%)	3 (4.2%)
Period After 605 BC Coup Attempt			
590–575	16	X	
559–551	9	X	
544–541	4	X	
515–505	11		Nang
488–479	10	X	
Regency yrs. subtotals	50 (100%)	39 (78%)	11 (22%)
All yrs. subtotals	141 (100%)	39 (27.7%)	11 (7.8%)
Totals			
Regency yrs.	65 (100%)	51 (78.5%)	14 (21.5%)
All yrs.	212 (100%)	51 (24%)	14 (6%)

Table 4. Domination of Court Roster According to Lineage Categories

Period of Domination	No. of Years	Dominant Lineage: Main	Collaterals
675–664	12	X	
663–605	59		Jo Ao Group
Yr. subtotals	71 (100%)	12 (17%)	59 (83%)
Period After 605 BC Coup Attempt			
590–575	16	X	
574–560	15	X	
559–551	9	X	
550–545	6		Early
544–541	4	X	
540–528	13		Early
527–516	12		Late
515–505	11		Late
504–489	16	X	
488–479	10	X	
478–464	15	X	
Yr. subtotals	141 (100%)	85 (60.3%)	42 (29.7%)
Totals	212 (100%)	97 (45.7%)	101 (47.6%)

NOTE: Domination of court roster is only one of several criteria for assessing control of state affairs (see table 1).

Simplified Genealogy of the Ch'u Royal Clan



KEY:

(?)	= Unknown
?	= Geneal. relationship uncertain
[ ]	= Not treated in this study
UPPER CASE	= Ruler
Italic	= Ling-yin official
(hatched box)	= Early collateral lineages
(hatched box)	= Late collateral lineages

Prefixes (Tzu, Kung-tzu) omitted.