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Jia Yi on the Management of the Populace

Western Han political thinker Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BC) confronted an intellectual landscape torn by the forces of ideology and history. The Qin 秦 dynasty (221–207 BC) had bequeathed its successors, the Han, a political philosophy that posited absolute power in the hands of the emperor. Reality, though, is always more equivocal than theory, and the sudden end of the Qin ruling house had proven that imperial power was far from certain. In response to this contradiction Jia Yi developed a concept of power relations that balanced the ideology of empire with the necessities of rule.

Jia Yi considered the role of the common population in the fall of the Qin and offered practical proposals for government in his own time that acknowledged limitations on the emperor's power, while retaining a conceptual focus on his position as sole ruler. Jia Yi recognized that the common people possessed great power in the aggregate and were also the source of talented individuals. The population's capabilities meant it could be directed and administered, but neither compelled nor abused. While Jia Yi's phrasings were often totalitarian and absolute, his proposals treated the populace as a subject to be managed rather than subjugated. This management sought to prevent the emergence of destabilizing factors through the selection of effective officials. Jia Yi's arguments concerning the necessity of preparing for food shortages not as possibilities but as certainties illustrate both the form and the reasoning behind his approach. The weather was beyond the emperor's control, and yet had the greatest influence on the state of the realm. The Han government needed to plan with this contingency, not against it. Jia Yi presents a pragmatic picture of the workings of imperial rulership that balanced theory and praxis. Jia Yi occupies a middle ground between the abstractions of political philosophy and the desiccated tabulations of bureaucracy.

I wish to thank Paul R. Goldin, Esther Klein, Vincent Leung, Allison Miller, Elisa Sabattini, Sarah Schneewind, and the anonymous readers for their helpful comments on previous drafts. I presented an early version as part of the panel "Past Forward: Jia Yi's New Vision of Empire" at the annual conference of the Association for Asian Studies in San Diego on March 23, 2013, and am grateful to the panel members and audience for their comments and questions.

JIA YI'S LIFE

Jia Yi's biographies in *Shi ji* 史記 and *Han shu* 漢書 relate the events of his short life.[1] Born in 200 BC to an otherwise unknown family in Luoyang 洛陽, he was famous already as a young man for his learning and writing abilities. His talents won him official appointment first in his home commandery and eventually at the court of Han emperor Wen 文 (Liu Heng 劉恆, r. 179–157 BC). Jia Yi was just twenty-two when he arrived at the Han capital in 179 BC, which made him one of the youngest courtiers. His talents quickly revealed themselves, and he excelled in policy discussions. Despite his arousing mixed feelings among colleagues and superiors, Jia Yi pleased the emperor, who promoted him out of order to the position of grand palace grandee (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫) that same year.[2] Shortly after this promotion, Jia Yi formulated draft plans for a series of reforms of ritual and related matters.[3] The emperor declined to accept the suggestions, but Jia Yi did not lose imperial favor, and after a series of successful proposals propounded by Jia Yi, the emperor considered appointing him to high office.[4]

Yet emperor Wen set aside those plans to promote Jia Yi and began to ignore his suggestions, eventually dismissing him from the capital. The standard explanation for this reversal is that Jia Yi's enemies – a group of influential elder statesmen – slandered him to the emperor, saying *inter alia*, "The man of Luoyang is young and has just begun his studies. He desires only to monopolize power and disrupt various matters 洛陽之人年少初學, 專欲擅權, 紛亂諸事."[5] As a result of this, the emperor sent Jia off to be grand tutor (*taifu* 太傅) to the king of Changsha 長沙 in 177 BC.

After serving several years in that capacity, Jia Yi was summoned back to the capital by emperor Wen, whom Jia Yi impressed once more.

[1] Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145-ca. 86 BC), *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) 84, pp. 2491–2503; Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Han shu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962) 48, pp. 2221–65. The *Shi ji* biography is translated in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records, Volume 7: The Memoirs of Pre-Han China* (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 1994), pp. 302–7; the *Han shu* biography is translated in Stuart V. Aque, "The *Han shu* Biography of Jia Yi and Other Writings," unpub. M.A. thesis (University of Washington, 1989).

[2] This and other official titles follow Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1980).

[3] *Shiji* 84, p. 2492, lists these as, "Reform the starting day [of the calendar], change the color of [official] garb, regulate the systems, establish official titles, and encourage ritual and music 改正朔, 易服色, 法制度, 定官名, 興禮樂." The color was to change to yellow and the number favored was to be five.

[4] See *Shiji* 4, p. 2492; *Hanshu* 48, p. 2222, n. 3; Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), *Han shu bu zhu* 漢書補注 (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2006) 48, p. 1a.

[5] *Shiji* 84, p. 2493; *Hanshu* 48, p. 2222.

But Jia still did not receive a high appointment. Instead, the emperor made him grand tutor to his favorite son, Liu Yi 劉揖 (d. 169 BC), known posthumously as king Huai 懷 of Liang 梁. Jia Yi held that position for some five years, meanwhile also writing a number of memorials on current affairs. In 169 BC, Liu Yi died after falling from his horse. Jia Yi died over a year later, reportedly depressed by what he saw as his own failure. It was Jia Yi's thirty-third year, 168 BC.[6]

BUILDING UP AND TEARING DOWN CONCEPTS OF ABSOLUTE GOVERNANCE

The First Emperor of Qin 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 BC) articulated his vision of imperial rule in the stele text at Langye 琅邪 in 219 BC without ambiguity: "All within the six directions[7] is the territory of the emperor. ... Wherever human tracks reach, all are his vassals 六合之內, 皇帝之土.... 人迹所至, 無不臣者."[8]

The idea that one monarch should rule over a single imperium comprising the territories of the Warring States evolved over the course of centuries before Qin unification in 221 BC. As Yuri Pines has shown, thinkers such as Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 310–ca. 210 BC) developed these ideas and were particularly instrumental in the process by which they became reality.[9] Pines has also written about the pivotal role of the Qin dynasty in determining conceptions of rulership in early China. He notes the existence of factors that limited the emperor's ability to act in an autocratic fashion, including institutional structures that diffused power among multiple centers – also a limiting factor for the Qin.[10]

Although the Qin dynasty did not invent the idea of empire, under the First Emperor it became the first to achieve that goal. In the years after unification, the Qin turned their attention toward promulgating knowledge throughout the realm of the nature of unification and its attendant governmental shifts. The notion of functional unified rule was something else the Qin dynasty had taken up from an earlier, broad Warring States-era discourse about political states in which writers dealt

6 On Jia Yi's dates, see Lü Botao 呂伯濤, "Jia Yi sheng zu nian kao" 賈誼生卒年考, *Wen shi* 文史 14 (1982), p. 36.

7 I.e., the four cardinal directions plus up (heaven) and down (earth).

8 *Shiji* 6, p. 245; cf. translation in Martin Kern, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2000), pp. 32–33.

9 Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2009).

10 Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 2012), pp. 44–75.

with what can be usefully viewed as the creation of common knowledge of a new ruler and a new state, a situation in which individuals possessed knowledge about these and knew that others knew, too. The Qin dynasty invested resources in publicizing their rule, turning matters like the creation of a standardized system of weights and measures into media for communicating the imperial message. Analysis of Qin practices suggests that, despite an often autocratic rhetoric, the First Emperor of Qin, in particular, had a sophisticated approach to governance that incorporated significant noncoercive aspects.[11]

The Qin dynasty ended soon after the First Emperor's death, leaving behind its theory of imperial rule articulated in absolutist terms. Han-era and later writers built upon this rhetoric in their criticism of the Qin. Jia Yi was no exception. Despite criticizing the Qin, however, the conception of rulership that he deployed early in the Han was equally autocratic. Jia Yi expressed more than once the notion that the ruler of the Han dynasty was supposed to be the supreme power in the knowable world, to which all should submit. He wrote, for instance:

> In the ancient, proper sense, only when all those to east and west, north and south – everywhere a boat or cart can attain or human tracks reach – have submitted can one speak of a Son of Heaven. After virtue is thick in him and beneficence deep in him, he may be called *di* 帝; after nobility is also added thereto, he may be called *huang.* 古之正義, 東西南北, 苟舟車之所達, 人迹之所至, 莫不率服, 而後云天子. 德厚焉, 澤湛焉, 而後稱帝; 又加美焉, 而後稱皇.[12]

Here Jia Yi describes the characteristics required to achieve the position of a true emperor, a status that in his argument exceeds that of Son of Heaven. He does this by dissecting the term for emperor (*huangdi* 皇帝) into its two component graphs. At the same time, he defines the scope that the universal empire was to encompass: everywhere.

Jia Yi went on to contrast the asserted implications of the title with the reality of Han rule in an effort to persuade Western Han emperor Wen to take action and bring the two into accord. It is surely not a coincidence that his phrasing – in which the extent of proper rule was defined as "wherever human tracks reach" – matches an expres-

[11] See Charles Sanft, *Communication and Cooperation in Early Imperial China: Publicizing the Qin Dynasty* (Albany: State U. of New York P., 2014).

[12] Yan Zhenyi 閻振益 and Zhong Xia 鐘夏, *Xinshu jiaozhu* 新書校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000) 3, p. 131; 4, p. 135; see also Qi Yuzhang 祁玉章, *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 賈子新書校釋 (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua zazhishe, 1974) 3, p. 417; 4, p. 430. Throughout this paper, I take Yan and Zhong's readily available *Xinshu jiaozhu* as my primary version and refer to Qi Yuzhang's *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* when drawing from it specifically.

sion of the First Emperor. The Qin and the Han shared the idea of the emperor as a ruler with universal power. In the essay just quoted, Jia Yi was writing in reference to steppe peoples who lived north of the empire.[13] Their independence from Han sovereignty, which Jia Yi depicted as recalcitrance, meant that while the Han emperor claimed the title Son of Heaven, his rule did not accord with the "ancient, proper sense" of a term that was supposed to indicate comprehensive authority. Yet the implications of his conception were not limited to the context of the steppes: the ideal of imperial rule that he cited was both catholic and complete.

Jia Yi portrayed the emperor's place in society as exalted above all others. Such was the reverence he advocated for the emperor that it was to form an inviolable aura of dignity extending beyond the emperor's person to protect those around him. This aura was also to shelter high ministers from any infringement upon the respect the population gave them, above all from the public humiliations intrinsic to early-imperial penal practices. This was not because of their own worth; it was because those humiliations would work to weaken the image of the emperor who had selected and protected them, and who stood close to them in the social hierarchy of the time. Thus, as Jia Yi presented it, the famous ritual precept specifying that "punishments do not extend to grandees 刑不上大夫" existed not to preserve the emperor's underlings but rather to buttress the ruler's position and power.[14]

For Jia Yi, the emperor's control over the realm was supposed to be automatic. He used the metaphor of the body to depict the proper situation as he saw it: "Circumstances everywhere within the seas should be like that of the body employing the arm, or the arm employing the finger: there should be none that does not follow command 海內之勢如身之使臂, 臂之使指, 莫不從制."[15] These anatomical terms defined the universal scope of the emperor's ideal rule. Yet even as Jia Yi laid out this ideological conception of imperial rulership, he used similar metaphors to call attention to the disjunction between those ideas and Han reality:

13 See discussion of Jia Yi's ideas in this context in Paul R. Goldin, "Steppe Nomads as a Philosophical Problem in Classical China," in Paula L.W. Sabloff, ed., *Mapping Mongolia: Situating Mongolia in the World from Geologic Time to the Present* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2011), pp. 232–33.

14 See Charles Sanft, "Rituals that Don't Reach, Punishments that Don't Impugn: Jia Yi on the Exclusions from Punishment and Ritual," *JAOS* 125.1 (2005), pp. 31–44.

15 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 2, p. 67; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 2, p. 195.

> Circumstances in the realm are presently suffering a serious edema: one lower leg is nearly as big as the waist, and one toe is nearly as large as a thigh. Ordinarily, they cannot be bent or extended. If there should be a spasm in one or two toes, the body will certainly be unable to bear it. 天下之勢, 方病大尰, 一脛之大幾如要 (:腰), 一指之大幾如股. … 平居不可屈信 (:伸), 一二指搐, 身固無聊也.[16]

Elsewhere Jia Yi wrote that the emperor should be "the head of the realm 天下之首" and at its apex, while non-Chinese groups should form its "feet 足." Jia Yi alleged that the real situation was upside down: "When the feet are reversed and reside above, and the head is turned round to reside below, this is an inverted situation! 足反居上, 首顧居下, 是倒植之勢." Lest there was any ambiguity about his point, Jia Yi immediately recapitulated it with specific reference to the Han sovereign: "The circumstances of the Son of Heaven are upside down 天子之勢倒植矣."[17] As in the case above, when he described the ideal of universal rule, Jia Yi was referring to the steppe peoples north of the Han empire. But also as above, this conception encompassed all members of Han society. The physical metaphors Jia Yi used underscored that he saw the correct situation as one of coherence and natural obedience, the disruption of which was a malady – a malady that already existed. The metaphors simultaneously communicated both the theoretical extent and actual limitation of the emperor's authority: simple command did not ensure successful rule.

The Role of the Populace

Jia Yi's focus on "the people as the root" (*minben* 民本) politics is a well-known part of his thought.[18] The populace was at the core of Jia Yi's understanding of governance. In this respect, his thinking was a continuation of concerns that dated back to the Warring States period.[19] But the fact of unification and the unified empire created a new and concrete context for what had previously been a theoretical possibility.

Jia Yi's writings contain repeated reference to functional constraints on imperial power. He made the most salient limit on this power

16 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 43; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 1, p. 132.

17 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 131; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 3, p. 418.

18 See e.g., Charles Sanft, "Rule: A Study of Jia Yi's *Xin shu*," unpub. Ph.D. diss. (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2005), pp. 28–91; Elisa Sabattini, "'People as Root' (*min ben*) Rhetoric in the *New Writings* by Jia Yi (200–168)," *Extrême-Orient, Extrême-Occident* 34 (2012), pp. 167–93; Wang Xingguo 王興國, *Jia Yi pingzhuan* 賈誼評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1992), pp. 111–41.

19 See Pines, *Everlasting Empire*, pp. 134–61.

visible through his portrayal of rulers who were overthrown by their subjects. In these tales, he calls attention to the fact that the power of a dissatisfied populace is beyond what a sovereign could resist. His quasi-historical narrative of the demise of lord Yi of Wei 衛懿公 is an example of this form. According to the story, lord Yi loved cranes to the extent of decking them in embroideries, even as his people bore an excessive tax burden. Lord Yi also esteemed entertainers over his important ministers and would kill any minister who remonstrated with him. The result was that when invaders later came to his state, the people whom he had alienated by his indulgence and ornithophily refused to defend him. He was driven from his state by the invaders and perished.[20]

Jia Yi depicted the fall of the infamous final Shang-dynasty king Zhouh 紂 in a more sanguinary fashion. This narrative begins by validating Zhouh's position as ruler: "Zhouh was the descendant of a Son of Heaven; he possessed the realm, and rightly so 紂, 天子之後也, 有天下而宜然." These lines excluded the possibility that Zhouh's fate originated from anything other than his own actions as ruler. Jia Yi then postulated a situation in which a ruler would turn his people against himself:

> If [a ruler] but turns his back on the Way and forsakes duty, repudiates reverence and prudence and is arrogant and profligate in his actions, then the people of the realm will leave him as if he has died. Their renunciation of him, although not agreed upon, will be as if by appointment. 苟背道棄義, 釋敬慎而行驕肆, 則天下之人, 其離之若崩, 其背之也不約而若期.[21]

In Jia Yi's presentation of the story, Zhouh began as a legitimate ruler, who later estranged himself from his people through his actions. When he later wished to lead forces into battle, the populace abandoned him en masse and the army, instead of defending him, turned around to attack him. Zhouh ended up dying unaided, his corpse abused by his discontented former subjects: "Those of the people who were watching all advanced and stomped on him – treading his guts, stepping on his kidneys, trampling his lungs, and walking on his liver 民之觀者皆進蹴之, 蹈其腹, 蹶其腎, 踐其肺, 履其肝."[22]

[20] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 6, pp. 246–47.

[21] A reader of this paper suggested that *beng* 崩, literally "to collapse," here refers to the actions of the populace. In that understanding, the line 其離之若崩 would mean something like, "They left [the ruler] as if collapsing." *Beng* is a standard euphemism for the ruler's death and that is how I take it here.

[22] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 5, pp. 197–98.

In these narratives, Jia Yi vividly presents the danger that the common population could pose for its ruler, if he earned their ire. The power of the sovereign, even his ability to defend himself and his position, depended on the obedience and support of the populace, which he would lose if he failed to govern properly. An emperor's power was, in practice, far from absolute, and misrule could lead even to violence against him personally.

The tales of lord Yi and king Zhouh belonged to hazy antiquity by the time when Jia Yi wrote. But Jia Yi's most famous example of a dynastic fall – and one he returned to repeatedly – was part of the recent past in his time: the end of the Qin dynasty. Jia Yi's discussions of the Qin illustrate the basic theme of the inability of a state to govern by command and coercion alone, and the danger that attempting to do so presented. Jia Yi's "Guo Qin lun" 過秦論 ("Essay Blaming the Qin") is an extended discussion of the Qin dynasty's perceived errors. Excessive reliance on compulsion figures prominently among these. There Jia Yi writes that in the last years of the dynasty,

> [The Qin rulers] made penalties many and punishments severe. The officers' handling of cases was harsh to an extreme. Rewards and punishments were not appropriate and taxation lacked proper measure. ... Then the licentious and the false arose together and superior and subordinate deceived each other. Those who bore chastisement were many, and the punished and those going to execution gazed at each other in the streets. And the realm suffered from it. 繁刑嚴誅, 吏治刻深, 賞罰不當, 賦斂無度 ... 然後奸僞并起, 而上下相遁, 蒙罪者眾, 刑僇相望於道, 而天下苦之.[23]

The result – and Jia Yi's ultimate point is here – is that the Qin approach to rule not only brought hardship to the populace but that it also harmed the dynasty itself:

> That which the sovereign received was extremely little, yet the people's agonized suffering was extreme. Thus Chen Sheng 陳勝 (i.e., Chen She 陳涉; d. 208 BC) made one move and the realm could not be rescued. 上之所得者甚少而民毒苦之甚深, 故陳勝一動而天下不振.[24]

What had applied for the Qin could apply also for the Han. Jia Yi did not hesitate to threaten the most important limitation on the power of imperial governance for his audience – the rebellion of the com-

[23] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 15.

[24] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 116; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 3, pp. 369 and 370, n. 3.

mon population – and for him the fall of the Qin dynasty adumbrated the impending fate of the Han. Writing in various contexts, he asked concerning the Han dynasty in his time, "How is [our situation] different from the final generation of Qin? 豈有異秦之季世乎."[25] He warned that unless action were taken, the Han would "repeat the tracks of the Qin 復秦之跡也."[26] He quoted an aphorism that admonished, "When the preceding cart flips over, the following cart should take warning 前車覆而後車戒." And, he wrote,

> The cart tracks of the Qin dynasty's quick demise can be seen. If we nevertheless do not avoid them, then the following cart is also going to flip. The alternation between preservation and destruction, the crux of order or chaos – the essence lies in this! 秦之亟絕者, 其軌跡可見也, 然而不避, 是後車又覆也. 夫存亡之反, 治亂之機, 其要在是矣.[27]

As Jia Yi portrayed it, the most important aspect of the Qin dynasty's negative example lay in its treatment of the population. In Jia Yi's presentation, an inordinate reliance on penalty and exploitation had characterized Qin governance. The method Jia Yi envisioned for Han rule thus focused on things other than compulsion. He proposed instead to monitor and manage the people. In this respect, he appears to have learned much from the rulers of Qin. For despite the calumnies of Jia Yi and others during the Han and after, the Qin dynasty ruled through methods based in large part upon techniques that did not depend on violence or coercion, including specific forms of communication, monitoring, and management.[28]

THE LIMITS AND THE POTENTIAL OF THE POPULACE

Jia Yi insisted that the Han government respect the potency of the populace and its ability to determine the fate of its rulers. This, however, did not mean exalting or ascribing personal virtue to them. Jia Yi in a number of passages portrays the common population of the realm in a negative fashion. One example supports this characterization by means of paronomasia: "'People' (*min*) as a word means 'blind' (*ming*) 夫民之爲言也, 瞑也."[29] Elsewhere, Jia Yi puts his opinion even

25 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 25.

26 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 117.

27 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 5, pp. 185–86.

28 See Charles Sanft, "Population Records from Liye: Ideology in Practice," in Yuri Pines, Paul R. Goldin, and Martin Kern, eds., *Ideology of Power and Power of Ideology in Early China* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 249–69.

29 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 349.

more bluntly, saying, "The people are an accumulation of stupidity 民者, 積愚也."[30]

It might seem that this sort of unfavorable portrayal could reflect only contempt on the part of Jia Yi. Examining these passages in the context of his writings, however, shows a nuanced perspective about the general population that recognizes in it more than imbecility and blindness.[31] Two specific, concrete exemplars – related at different degrees to the Qin case – embody the contradictory position of the common people in Jia Yi's thought: Chen She, putative instigator of the uprising Jia Yi credits with destroying the Qin dynasty, and Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206/2–197 BC), founder of the Han dynasty that replaced it.[32]

Jia Yi's description of Chen She is particularly extreme in its picture of the rebel leader's impoverished background. This works to contrast his shortcomings to the wider scope of the turmoil that Jia Yi said he started. Jia Yi devoted a passage of "Guo Qin lun" to limning with poetic flair Chen She's ignoble personal circumstances, asserting, for example, "He was the son [of a household that had broken-out] jars for windows and rope for hinges; he was a drudge, a wandering laborer 甕牖繩樞之子, 氓隸之人, 而遷徙之徒也."[33] Jia Yi proceeded to describe at length Chen She's shortcomings as a leader: Chen She was an incapable, someone whose "ability did not reach that of a mediocre man 才能不及中人," to say nothing of the talents of sages like Confucius and Mozi (whom he names). His strategy and tactics were inferior and the military forces he led were ill-equipped, wielding only makeshift weaponry. Despite all that, Jia Yi also wrote that when Chen She and his collaborators rose up against the Qin, "The realm gathered together like clouds and echoed him 天下雲合而嚮應."[34]

Jia Yi's point was that in the right (or wrong) situation even the lowest and least talented of men could topple a dynasty, despite lacking the things usually requisite for military success. In the Qin case, Jia Yi warned, governmental failures created the necessary conditions for that to occur and the same could happen again under Han. Despite

30 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 349.

31 Sabattini, "'People as Root,'" pp. 167–93, discusses Jia Yi's complicated relationship with the idea of the common population.

32 Sabattini, "'People as Root,'" pp. 173–74, discusses Chen She and Liu Bang in the context of what she calls "social mobility," and with reference to the selection of high officials in the early years of the Han dynasty. I myself previously considered these things at length in "Rule: A Study of Jia Yi's *Xin shu*."

33 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 2.

34 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, pp. 2–3.

his negative comments about the ordinary people, for Jia Yi they were potent, and the image of Chen She personified that potency.

At the opposite extreme from Chen She was another man who originated in the lower stratum of society: Liu Bang, the first Han emperor, known posthumously as the emperor Gaozu 高祖. Although never impoverished in the manner of Chen She, Liu Bang too was a man of non-aristocratic background.

One of the phrases Jia Yi used to refer to common people was "those of cloth dress 布衣者." Huan Kuan's 桓寬 (1st c. BC) *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 explains this term: "In antiquity, the common people would wear silk after they were old. The others had hemp or ramie, nothing else, and therefore were referred to as 'of cloth dress' 古者庶人耋老而後衣絲, 其餘則麻枲而已, 故命曰布衣."[35] Jia Yi once scornfully contrasted "those of cloth dress" with the monarch, saying,

> The proper actions of the lord of men differ from those of cloth dress. Those of cloth dress adorn themselves with petty acts and compete in petty probities in order to build up a base in their villages and towns. For the lord of men, what matters is whether or not the realm is at peace and the tutelary altars stable, that is all. 人主之行異布衣. 布衣者飾小行, 競小廉, 以自託於鄉黨邑里. 人主者, 天下安, 社稷固不耳.[36]

Yet Jia Yi also wrote of the Han founder as one "of cloth dress," which softens this apparently absolute condemnation of common people: "Formerly, Emperor Gao[zu], having arisen as one of cloth dress, united the whole realm in his possession 昔高帝起布衣而兼有天下"; Jia Yi also repeated the formulation elsewhere.[37] In this case, he was echoing emperor Gaozu, who described his own background in the same terms, suggesting that the characterization may well have been part of Liu Bang's self-fashioning.[38]

It is not surprising, given the political situation in Jia Yi's time and his position at the Han court, that his expressed attitude toward the first Han emperor was exclusively positive. He related Liu Bang's ascension to supremacy as follows:

> The realm was disordered to the highest degree. For this reason, the Great Worthy [i.e., Liu Bang] lifted it up. His majesty shook

[35] See Wang Liqi 王利器, *Yantie lun jiao zhu* 鹽鐵論校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 6.350.

[36] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 57.

[37] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 10, p. 409; 3, p. 131.

[38] *Hanshu* 1B, p. 79.

> all within the seas, and by his virtue he caused the realm to follow him. What had formerly been Qin now turned around to become Han. 天下亂至矣. 是以大賢起之, 威振海內, 德從天下. 曩之爲秦者今轉而爲漢矣.[39]

Jia Yi's frank acknowledgement of the Great Worthy's humble origins is evidence that he saw also among the same group he elsewhere censured individuals of extraordinary ability – ability that could include even the greatest of all, that needed to become emperor. Both Liu Bang and Chen She came from low origins to effect political change at the highest levels possible. In Jia Yi's presentation, these two men epitomized the power and potency of the common people. That what had been Qin became through this process the Han reflects the affinity between the two in Jia Yi's thought, a point I will return to below.

THE POPULATION AND ITS OFFICIALS

In Jia Yi's analysis, the ordinary population was not solely a storehouse from which remarkable individuals might periodically emerge to fell or found a dynasty. Jia Yi wrote that the people, in the ordinary functioning of things, determined the success of the state, its officials, and even its sovereign:

> The country's security or peril depends upon the people; the lord's majesty or disgrace depends on the people; and officials' esteem or abasement depends on the people. ... The country's preservation or destruction depends on the people; the lord's benightedness or perspicacity depends on the people; and officials' worthiness or incapability depends on the people. 國以民爲安危, 君以民爲威侮, 吏以民爲貴賤.... 國以民爲存亡, 君以民爲盲明, 吏以民爲賢不肖.[40]

Most of the remainder of the chapter from which these lines are taken is an explication of the decisive role the people play in the state. One aspect of this concerns the selection of officials, and shows with particular clarity Jia Yi's equivocal conception of the populace.

Jia Yi writes, "As for the people: Even though they are stupid, the enlightened sovereign selects his officers from them, and he invariably causes the people to join with them 夫民者, 雖愚也, 明上選吏焉, 必使民與焉."[41] Like exceptional persons, ordinary officials also come from among the people. The ruler's task is to "cause the people to join"

[39] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 96.
[40] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 338.
[41] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 349.

those officials, to follow them. The means to accomplish that is, for Jia Yi, above all a question of selection: He specifies various levels at which a man's ability to inspire fealty defines his suitability for official employment:

> The population is utterly base. But given that one chooses officers from among them, one must select those that they cherish. It follows that one whom ten people cherish and give allegiance to is an officer for [governing] ten people; one whom a hundred people cherish and give allegiance to is an officer for a hundred people; one whom a thousand people cherish and give allegiance to is an officer for a thousand people; and one whom myriad people cherish and give allegiance to is an officer for myriad people. It follows that one selects high ministers from among the officers for myriad people. 夫民至卑也, 使之取吏焉, 必取而[42] 愛焉, 故十人愛之有歸, 則十人之吏也; 百人愛之有歸, 則百人之吏也; 千人愛之有歸, 則千人之吏也; 萬人愛之有歸, 則萬人之吏也; 故萬人之吏, 選卿相焉.[43]

Jia Yi does not describe how those who became officials demonstrated their suitability for employment by causing others to "cherish and give allegiance" to them. His idea seems to be that some individuals simply possess the ability to draw others to them, to be leaders, and that once identified, those persons make the best government officials. Liu Bang is perhaps the ultimate example of this line of thought: Having originated among the common population like the officials Jia Yi speaks of, Liu Bang went on to attract the allegiance of All under Heaven.

The Han founder was by definition extraordinary, and he was some twenty years removed from the milieu in which Jia Yi wrote. But there is a conceptual similarity between that occurrence and the process by which, according to Jia Yi, ordinary officials should be selected from among the "utterly base." The criterion was their ability to cause others to "cherish and give allegiance" to them, and the Han founder proved himself superior to all in this regard.

[42] The received text has *er* 而 here, although it is understood in the sense of *qi* 其, "their, they," or as an error for that character; see *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 354, n. 32; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 9, p. 1015, n. 6.

[43] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 349; cf. discussion and translation in Sabattini, "'People as Root,'" pp. 182–83.

CONNECTIONS: MOZI AND MENGZI

Jia Yi's ideas concerning selecting officials have connections to and differences from propositions made by earlier and better-known thinkers. For instance, Elisa Sabattini has linked Jia Yi's ideas about the selection of effective officials and their role in successful governance to *Mozi* 墨子.[44] Identifying and employing capable – "worthy" (*xian* 賢) – officials is a major theme of the *Mozi* text, which stresses the ability of talented officials to contribute to the success of the ruler.[45]

As I noted already, Jia Yi mentions the name of the person Mozi in the context of discussing Chen She's lack of talent, confirming the connection. Hui-chieh Loy has shown how arguments in the text *Mozi* that propound meritocratic employment do so by concentrating on the benefits that it offers the monarch.[46] This is obviously parallel to Jia Yi's argumentation, which similarly concentrates on pragmatic concern rather than idealism.

Jia Yi's specific structure, with its graduated approach to determining employment suitability, also bears a distinct conceptual similarity to a structure for selecting officials that *Mozi* outlines. There the phrasing takes the form of a putative description of antiquity, a form common to the text.[47] *Mozi* describes "a governing hierarchy [that] was created from the top down."[48] In this conception, "the head of each village was the most humane man of the village," a pattern that repeated at the level of the "district" and again for the entire "state."[49] Jia Yi's proposal reverses this: he speaks not of the candidate's own humaneness but rather of the populace's allegiance. Jia Yi certainly shares the idea that a person's ability has a proportional relationship to the appropriate level of official employment. But he goes further in presenting ability in terms of proven capability, not as a moral characteristic.

Qi Yuzhang 祁玉章, commenting on Jia Yi's *Xin shu*, calls his proposal for selecting officials the same as one presented in a passage in *Mengzi* 孟子.[50] But a comparison of Jia Yi's approach with the method

[44] Ibid., p. 178.

[45] John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2013), pp. 79–82.

[46] Hui-chieh Loy, "From 'Elevate the Worthy' to 'Intimacy with Officers' in the *Mozi*," in Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, eds., *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 209–10, 218.

[47] Miranda Brown, "Mozi's Remaking of Ancient Authority," in ibid., pp. 143–74.

[48] Knoblock and Riegel, *Mozi*, p. 110.

[49] Knoblock and Riegel, *Mozi*, p. 115.

[50] *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 9, p. 1014, n. 3.

described in *Mengzi* in fact highlights his distinctiveness. The following is Mencius' advice for king Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 on how to identify fit candidates for office:

> If all in your entourage say someone is worthy, that is not sufficient. If all among the grandees say someone is worthy, that is not sufficient. Only if all the people of the state say someone is worthy should you then examine him. And if you perceive worthiness in him, only then should you employ him. 左右皆曰賢, 未可也. 諸大夫皆曰賢, 未可也. 國人皆曰賢, 然後察之; 見賢焉, 然後用之.[51]

Mengzi goes on to outline similar processes for arriving at decisions about those whom the entourage and others reject or even deem worthy of execution.

There is a superficial similarity between this proposal and Jia Yi's suggestion: both concern the evaluation of officials; both involve the inclinations of others, including the common people; and both present a process of evaluation that proceeds in intervals. Nevertheless, the differences in process and focus create a fundamental distinction between the two.

Mencius' primary concern is taking a cautious attitude toward the opinions offered by small groups already in positions of power. He advises the king to avoid exclusive reliance on the reports of such people when making decisions about employing officials. For Mencius, only when someone has an exceptional reputation across society, and not just in a small group, should the king to take that reputation seriously enough to examine the person and determine whether or not he is "worthy" (*xian*) and suitable for employment. Good reputation among high-level officials is not a sufficient basis for granting an office.

Mencius' conception is furthermore exclusively top-down. A good reputation among the highest officials, provided it is widely shared, begins a process that ends with the evaluation of a potential official by the ruler. Depending on the king's decision, the process would result in either investment with authority over members of the common population or the end of candidacy.[52]

Jia Yi conceives of something quite different. Instead of concerning himself with reputation, Jia Yi is interested in actual leadership

[51] Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Mengzi yi zhu* 孟子譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), p. 41.

[52] Note that my translation follows the interpretation of Yang Bojun, ibid., p. 41. As Sarah Schneewind (personal communication) pointed out to me, the subject is not explicitly named in the original text, which leaves open the possibility that the population remains the agent making the decision.

effectiveness, as evinced by the size of the group the official in question could attract and influence. Jia Yi took the positive reaction of the population as the determinant of a person's fitness.

Furthermore, while both Jia Yi and Mencius place the responsibility for selecting officials on the ruler, Mencius' king was to decide about worthiness. Worthiness is an abstract quality indirectly related to success as an official, which a person can manifest in any number of ways. Jia Yi advised his sovereign to take a managerial approach, to evaluate effectiveness as indicated by the actual scope of influence among the commoners. Jia Yi did not explicitly equate this effectiveness with the duties of an official, yet it is closer to the concrete reality of leadership than the worthiness that Mencius' ruler was to assess.

Finally, Jia Yi's suggestion is to measure based exclusively on the reactions among the common population. He does not refer to high officials or others of elevated rank, and in fact mentions no standard for judgment except the size of the group that "cherishes and gives allegiance" to a potential official. Nor would the crucial role of the ordinary people end when an official had been granted a post. The common population is also the determiner of officials' success in their positions. Jia Yi expresses this point in simple terms: "The common populace is the gauge of the officers 夫民者, 吏之程也."[53] Jia Yi's exclusive focus on the ability to lead members of the populace is all the more evident when compared to the variety of skills other texts required before judging someone suitable for employment.[54] If we furthermore consider the role Jia Yi assigns to the populace in these respects in conjunction with the danger a dissatisfied population could pose for its ruler, it ends up seeming as though Jia Yi sees the common people as deciding everything for officials at every level and, ultimately, for the ruler. The same group he castigates as "blind," "an accumulation of stupidity," and "supremely base" was, for Jia Yi, also the greatest power in the realm.

MANAGING THE REALM

Despite the power of the population, for Jia Yi there is no question that the emperor had both the right to rule and the responsibility to govern. That did not guarantee success or even continuation of rule, as the example of Zhouh shows. Above all, Jia Yi insists that rule cannot

[53] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 349.

[54] See Matthias Richter, *Guan ren: Texte der altchinesischen Literatur zur Charakterkunde und Beamtenrekrutierung* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005).

be achieved or maintained through an approach that causes the people's enmity: "From ancient times to the present, those who are the enemies of the people, be it slowly or quickly, are inevitably defeated by the people 自古至於今, 與民仇者, 有遲有速, 而民必勝之."[55] The Qin case, in Jia Yi's presentation, is a concrete example of this broader rule.

The emperor's imperative thus exists in governing the population without earning its anger or dissatisfaction. A primary means Jia Yi offers for doing that combines monitoring and managing. The first aspect of this approach – monitoring – is part of Jia Yi's proposed method for the selection of officials, which would require the sovereign to know the feelings of the population about specific individuals. Jia Yi does not describe how the ruler was to acquire this knowledge but it seems that keeping tabs on the common people would be the only way to do that.

The early imperium in fact gathered many types of information about the people. The existence of extensive data about the populace is attested in both received history and recovered, paleographic materials. This information was more than incidentally significant: it constituted an important means by which the political abstraction of the early imperial state took form.[56] Jia Yi's discussion of ceremonies carried out by the emperor reflects that he wrote in an intellectual context that valued particular kinds of data:

> Among the rituals for receiving statistics, those things for which the sovereign personally does obeisance number two: When he hears the numbers of the population, he does obeisance, and when he hears about the harvest, he does obeisance. 受計之禮, 主所親拜者二: 聞生民之數則拜之, 聞登穀則拜之.[57]

The rituals Jia Yi wrote of here indicate the respect accorded to the processes of data submission in his time. It is not a coincidence that statistics concerning the population and the harvest feature together here, as the two were closely related.

Managing the Needs of the People: Food

Surely one of the most concrete problems faced by any population is that of food, and assuring proper preparations for supporting the populace in case of food supply interruption was a major task of Han government. As Jia Yi presents it, this is not something the emperor

[55] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 9, p. 339.
[56] Cf. discussion in Sanft, "Population Records from Liye."
[57] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 6, p. 215; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 6, p. 690.

should do just because of moral duty or responsibility. It is also in his self-interest: "A case in which the people lack sufficient [food] and yet can be ruled has, from antiquity to the present, never been known 民非足也而可治之者, 自古及今, 未之嘗聞."[58] Ensuring the people had enough to eat is, for Jia Yi, as crucial a requirement for the ruler as selecting the officials through which he would govern them.

Jia Yi's arguments about food for the population are an excellent example of his managerial approach to government. Jia Yi's writings on the topic of provisions reflect a method of reasoning that treats natural disasters as stochastic events that can be predicted to occur at more or less regular intervals, and which in turn affect the population in predictable ways. To deal with these matters, Jia Yi calls for a type of government that would function by means of analyzing and interpreting information to derive generalizations. These generalizations would in turn serve to guide planning, permitting the ruler to obviate problems before they come into existence.

In his writings, Jia Yi discusses drought and famine and the necessity of preparing for these. This in itself is obviously no innovation. However, Jia Yi's arguments and reasoning demonstrate insights that went beyond those of his predecessors – and, for that matter, those of his Western Han contemporaries. For Jia Yi tells his reader to view drought and the resulting stress on the food system not as something merely to be prepared for because they *might* come to pass. Rather, he argues that droughts are events to be expected and their effects likewise anticipated and planned for in advance. This in turn would prevent political unrest among the common population, which would otherwise ensue.

Jia Yi writes, "In five years there will be a minor shortage; in ten years, one famine; and in thirty years, there will be one major shortage. This is the general rule 五歲小康, 十歲一凶, 三十歲而一大康, 蓋其大數也."[59] Jia Yi thus asserts that famines of different intensities occur periodically; he concentrated on preparing for them as irregular events that were nonetheless predictable in terms of general frequency. As I will discuss later, other thinkers propose responding to famine with improved morality, or with a sacrifice by the ruler to atone for his sins. Such proposals are absent from Jia Yi's presentation. Jia Yi presents a food shortage as a misfortune and nothing more. His concern is with analyzing the pattern and making plans on that basis.

58 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 4, p. 163.

59 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 124; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi*, 3, p. 397.

Cyclical thinking characterized many Chinese conceptions of the world in early times and continued to influence it in later periods.[60] Jia Yi himself refers to the 500-year cycle by which sage rulers were supposed to emerge, an idea also found in *Mengzi*.[61] While different in focus, Jia Yi's understanding of famines as occurring regularly, according to a general cycle of years, seems likely to have been the extension of cyclical thinking to the analysis of meteorological phenomena and their consequences. It is distinct from trying to augur a specific instance of drought and far removed from any attempt to alleviate a given dry spell by means of supernatural processes.[62]

Jia Yi rejects the attitude that would blame a famine on Heaven's punishment: "For a generation to have famine is a constant of the realm – even [sage rulers] Yu and Tang bore it 世之有饑荒, 天下之常也, 禹湯被之矣."[63] In "You min" 憂民, he mocks those who would respond with "This is Heaven – what can be done? 此天也, 可奈何" to disasters that were, in his view, predictable.[64] For Jia Yi, crop failure need not engender famine or instability among the population; the imperial government could, with proper preparations, prevent those consequences from arising.

Jia Yi painted his own time as one when society was in danger of collapse and the peasants were regularly compelled to take loans of grain or starve. Worse still, everyone knew there was a problem but did nothing. In this context Jia Yi referred to a brief, rainless period that had recently resulted in great worry and corresponding relief when the rains came. This was for him evidence that many people recognized the danger, even though no action was being taken.[65]

As a means of persuasion, Jia Yi also imagined a localized drought affecting "two or three thousand *li* square," which would leave the realm unable to provide for its needs. Importantly, he called the drought nothing more than "unfortunate" (*buxing* 不幸), implicitly rejecting the arguments of those who would blame humans for causing the disas-

60 See Michael Loewe, "The Cycle of Cathay: Concepts of Time in Han China and Their Problems," in Chün-chieh Huang and Erik Zürcher, eds., *Time and Space in Chinese Culture* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), pp. 311–12 and passim.

61 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 30; Yang, *Mengzi yi zhu*, p. 109.

62 Cf. Joseph Needham, with Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume 3: Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1959), p. 467, on the wide interest in these things in premodern China.

63 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 4, p. 164.

64 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 125.

65 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 124.

ter through sin or ritual failure, or who would point to heaven as the cause and stop there.

Jia Yi pointed out that if a drought like the one he hypothesized were to occur, the Han government would be unable to feed the affected population because of its lack of stores. He then envisioned an incident on the periphery of the empire, which would result in hundreds of thousands of troops being gathered along the border and in need of provisions that the imperium would be unable to provide. Finally he supposed what would follow if the drought and the border incident were to coincide:

> The [bodies of] common people would fill the ditches, robbery and attack would arise, beginning and following [each other]. The central territories would be beyond rescue and external enemies would be sure to act. 民填溝壑, 剽盜攻擊者, 興繼而起, 中國失救, 外敵必駭.[66]

For Jia Yi, the solution to this sort of exigency was to anticipate and plan for droughts and food shortages not as possibilities or even likelihoods, but as certainties.

Jia Yi framed his proposed solution in terms drawn from ritual texts, citing what he called "The Rules of Kings" 王者之法: "When the people have cultivated for three years, they should have a surplus of one year's food; after nine years, three years' food; and after thirty years, ten years' provisions 民三年耕而餘一年之食, 九年而餘三年之食, 三十歲而民有十年之蓄."[67] Similar content comes in "Wang zhi" 王制 ("Kingly System"), now incorporated into *Li ji* 禮記, reflecting that these guidelines probably had their origin in ritual; indeed Jia Yi in another passage quotes these lines and attributes them to "Wang zhi."[68] Still elsewhere, in a piece called just "Li" 禮 ("Ritual"), Jia Yi related the preceding content with slight variation (and no attribution), then paraphrased "Wang zhi" and added that if proper stores are in place, "Even if there is famine, drought, or flood, the people would not starve 雖有凶旱水溢, 民無饑饉."[69]

It is best to see Jia Yi's proposals not in terms of concrete numbers – not as a specific amount of grain that would be stored. Rather, his proposals focused on a realistic attitude about the necessity of tak-

[66] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, pp. 124–25.

[67] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 3, p. 124.

[68] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 4, p. 164; cf. the parallel in Sun Xidan 孫希旦, *Li ji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), p. 340.

[69] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 6, pp. 215–16; Sun, *Li ji jijie*, p. 340.

ing major action in advance of specific need. He bases them on a frank acknowledgement of the limits of the emperor's power: the weather was simply beyond any human's control, including that of the emperor. The way to deal with this limitation was to plan.

Contrasting Perspectives on Drought and Famine

In his approach to drought and famine, Jia Yi seems to build upon the ideas of Xunzi. Xunzi rejected interpreting unusual phenomena as warnings to rulers. Like Jia Yi, what mattered for Xunzi is the ruler's effective response to problems resulting from those events. Furthermore, as Paul R. Goldin argues, "Xunzi makes a crucial distinction between knowing Heaven and knowing its Way. The former is impossible ... but the latter is open to all."[70] Jia Yi's interest in observing and generalizing upon patterns to derive specific policy proposals was one form that understanding the Way of Heaven could take in practice.

Conceiving of famine in terms of the patterns and misfortune, as Jia Yi did, contrasts with moralizing approaches that occur in preimperial and Western Han texts. The third century BC *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 (*Annals of Mr. Lü*), for instance, relates the tale of Tang 湯, a reputed ancient sage king. When the realm suffered an extended drought under his rule, Tang claimed responsibility for the "crimes" that had caused the drought and offered himself as an expiatory sacrifice. Rain followed, showing, *Lüshi chunqiu* tells us, that Tang understood spirits.[71] Elsewhere, *Lüshi chunqiu* predicted that carrying out incorrect seasonal rituals would cause drought and other weather disruptions.[72]

Writing slightly later than Jia Yi, Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (2d c. BC) exhorted his emperor to "Make your heart correct in order to make the court correct 正心以正朝廷," which correctness would extend everywhere. "By this, *yin* and *yang* would be balanced and the winds and rains would come at the proper time; the many living things would be in harmony and the myriad people would flourish 是以陰陽調而風雨時, 羣生和而萬民殖."[73] As Goldin explains, "Good government, in Dong's view, properly attunes the *yin* and *yang* aspects of the *qi* that makes up

70 Paul R. Goldin, *Confucianism* (Berkeley: U. California P., 2011), pp. 82–83, 86–87; quotation from p. 83; see also Paul R. Goldin, "Xunzi and Early Han Philosophy," *HJAS* 67.1 (2007), pp. 135–66.

71 Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Lüshi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002) 9, p. 485.

72 *Lüshi chunqiu* makes the point at a number of places that carrying out an incorrect season's rituals would disrupt weather patterns and bring flooding, drought, etc.; see e.g. ibid. 2, p. 65.

73 *Hanshu* 56, p. 2503.

the world, with magnificent results," including an absence of natural disasters.[74]

Huainanzi 淮南子, a late-second century BC text, related successful and unsuccessful grain harvests to astronomical/astrological correspondences and oppositions. According to it, these things determine the proper tasks and attitude of governance. *Huainanzi* mentioned famine in this context, describing a pattern of "One hunger in three years, one epidemic in six years, and one shortage in twelve years 三歲而一饑, 六歲而一衰, 十二歲一康."[75] Other Western Han texts also considered famine in terms of astrology. Thus the *Shi ji* 史記 treatise titled "Shi huo zhi" 食貨殖 quotes Ji Ran 計然:[76]

> When Jupiter is in Metal, there will be a good harvest; when it is in Water, there will be destruction; when it is in Wood, there will be a shortage; when it is Fire, there will be drought ... There are six years of good harvests and six years of drought; in twelve years there is one great famine. 歲在金, 穰; 水, 毀; 木, 饑; 火, 旱 ... 六歲穰，六歲旱，十二歲一大饑.[77]

While these sources proposed that famine occurs at roughly regular intervals, as did Jia Yi, he differs from them in suggesting that those patterns should be the basis for concrete planning. This was part of his broader interest in preventing serious problems by means of management: arranging matters for maximal efficacy, before a specific need arose. He was, however, not the only person to recommend a planning approach.

Political debate from 81 BC recorded in *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 indicates that tension continued between those who would concentrate on the effects of Yin-Yang energies in creating good or bad harvests and others who concentrated on planning to alleviate the negative results of drought. One of two interlocutors arguing these points cited the fact that "In six years there is one shortage, in twelve years a famine 六歲一饑, 十二歲一荒." He went on to call this the "way of Heaven 天道," and as such, says that the suffering these events caused was "Not only the crime of the responsible officials 非獨有司之罪也." The other allowed that sage rulers in the past enjoyed a time without famine but retorted

[74] Goldin, "Xunzi and Early Han Philosophy," pp.155–56; quotation from p. 155.

[75] He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998) 3, pp. 274–76, quotation from p. 275; Liu Kangde 劉康德, *Huainanzii zhijie* 淮南子直解 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 2001), pp. 145–46.

[76] Jiran is variously identified; see commentary by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) and others in *Hanshu* 91, p. 3683.

[77] *Shiji* 129, pp. 3256–57.

that those who look to place the blame for crop failures on cosmology miss the point. He argued from a perspective akin to Jia Yi's that the task of government was to make long-term planning decisions and prepare provisions in a way that would strengthen the populace and mitigate the effects of a crop failure upon them.[78]

MANAGEMENT IN JIA YI'S THOUGHT

The interest in anticipating problems and alleviating or preventing them by means of management and planning is a theme found in a number of Jia Yi's essays. In "Shu ning" 數寧 ("Calculating Peace"), he rails against the complacency of the emperor's other advisors:

> Those who present advice to the throne all say the realm is already at peace; I alone say it is not yet at peace. Some say the realm is already ordered; I alone say it is not yet ordered… Those who say the realm is peaceful and ordered are – if not supremely stupid and without understanding and so just flatterers – in all cases not those who truly understand the fundamentals of bringing order to chaos. 進言者皆曰 天下已安矣, 臣獨曰未安. 或者曰天下已治矣, 臣獨曰未治… 夫曰天下安且治者, 非至愚無知因諛者耳, 皆非事實知治亂之體者也.[79]

After condemning his competition in this way, Jia Yi continued, "If you gather fire and put it beneath piled firewood then sleep on top of it, and because the fire has not yet kindled you call it peace, that is stealing peace 夫抱火措之積薪之下而寢其上, 火未及燃, 因謂之安, 偷安者也."[80] For him, the Han dynasty and its assumptions of stability were founded on ignorance or worse: stealing their peace, the Han rulers were asleep on a pile of firewood with a flame beneath it.

Jia Yi praised as superior the interest in dealing with the problems of government before they actually emerge. He quoted Laozi 老子 (as Lao Dan 老聃) and Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 BC) to this effect within the space of a single, short passage:

> There are matters that promote depravity and there are circumstances that summon disaster. Lao Dan said, "Handle it before it exists; regulate it before there is disorder." Guan Zhong said, "Prevent affliction before it takes shape." This is superior. 夫事

[78] Wang Liqi 王利器, *Yantie lun jiaozhu* 鹽鐵論校注, rev. edn. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), pp. 428–29.

[79] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 29; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi*, 1, p. 87.

[80] *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1, p. 29; *Jiazi Xinshu jiaoshi* 1, p. 87.

有逐姦, 勢有召禍. 老聃曰, 爲之於未有, 治之於未亂. 管仲曰, 備患於未形. 上也.[81]

Jia Yi judged as inferior an approach to government that would deal with problems while they were incipient; worse still would be trying to resolve a problem that has already matured into disorder.[82] Jia Yi concentrated on predictability and planning that was carried out on the basis of reasonable expectations about the future. He expanded upon ideas like those he attributed to Laozi and Guan Zhong by articulating his analysis and responses for the specific context of the Han dynasty and requirements of imperial rule.

Jia Yi's interest in managing potentially destabilizing factors to prevent the emergence of governmental problems manifested itself in other contexts, as well. This approach informed, for example, his proposals for systematized and enforced sumptuary privileges. In "Fu ni" 服疑 (: 擬/儗) ("Clothing Is Imitated"), Jia Yi advocated enforcing a system of privileges in clothing and all other aspects of material life. He did not, however, assert that high status persons warrant these privileges because they deserve them personally. Rather Jia Yi proposed that such a system would safeguard social order by inculcating its hierarchy in every sort of interaction – down to simply seeing others in public.[83] This recalls his arguments about penal practice, which I mentioned above, in favor of exempting high officials from specific types of punishment. There too the impetus was not to reward those officials but instead to create and perpetuate a hierarchy that would protect the position of the emperor and the stability of the realm.[84] Allison Miller has examined these sumptuary systems and argues specifically that a special connection emerged between rulership and jade as its sign, and that Jia Yi's proposals in this respect in fact influenced Han practice as seen in the material record.[85]

81 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 2, pp. 73–74. The line quoted here from *Laozi* 64 is slightly different in the received version of that text; see Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之, *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), p. 259. For the Guan Zhong quote, see Li Xiangfeng 李翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004) 1, p. 17.

82 *Xinshu jiaozhu* 2, p. 74.

83 See discussion in Sanft, *Communication and Cooperation.*

84 See Sanft, "Rituals That Don't Reach."

85 Miller, "Imperial Patronage and Jade Splendor: Sumptuary Reform in Jia Yi's *Xin Shu*," *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 15.1 (2016), pp. 103-21.

CONCLUSION

Jia Yi's notion of monitoring and managing the common people sought to achieve two specific goals by means of government systems. First, he wanted to prevent the emergence of factors that could destabilize governance. The case of the common population is especially important for Jia Yi, who called attention to the power it wielded, as demonstrated by the fall of the Qin dynasty. Balancing imperial interests with the power wielded by the populace was the second of Jia Yi's goals. He recognized that exclusively or even predominantly coercive methods would not be able to control the population. The population, after all, contains persons of every level of ability, and had the potential to overthrow its ruler. Force would not suffice, as the Qin had demonstrated. Jia Yi proposes instead identifying factors that could lead to dissatisfaction and instability and preventing them from coming into existence. He makes planning proposals based on recognition of limitations on imperial power and the fact that while events like drought could not be forecast with perfect specificity, they were nonetheless regular. Good planning at the state level required acknowledgement that they would happen, and treating drought in idealized or moralistic terms would not help. Jia Yi's insights allowed him to build upon the work of his philosophical predecessors to formulate planning recommendations that would preserve imperial power from fundamental threats before they had taken shape.

It is this approach that I call managerial. Jia Yi would have his ruler evaluate long-term patterns and make informed decisions on that basis. Doing so would enable planning for matters like food. This mindset sought to manage the effects of inevitable occurrences like drought through planning, rather than concentrating on idealistic notions of sage rulership that would ostensibly prevent them. In making personnel decisions, he advocates concentrating on effectiveness, as demonstrated by a given official's ability to garner the allegiance of those he was supposed to administer as the ruler's representative.

Although he often wrote about the border regions, Jia Yi does not in this context make concrete suggestions about them specifically. His premise seems to have been that these areas should be as much a part of the emperor's realm as anywhere else. Jia Yi did not try to resolve the evident contradiction between a rhetoric of absolute imperial power and a methodology that acknowledges limitations of various sorts. Perhaps if he had lived longer he would have brought his realism and his idealism into balance.