

K'UANG HENG AND THE REFORM OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (31 B.C.)

by MICHAEL LOEWE

- I Dynastic and political considerations
- II The Han state cults before 31 B.C.
- III K'uang Heng's reforms
- IV The ancestral cult
- V The worship of Heaven and Earth
- VI Edicts and omens
- VII The Yellow River

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

- Fujikawa Masakazu Fujikawa, *Kan dai ni okeru rei gaku no kenkyū* 藤川正敷漢代における禮學の研究 (Tokyo, 1968).
- HFHD H. H. Dubs, *History of the Former Han Dynasty*.
- HHS *Hou Han-shu* and *Hsi Han-shu* (Wang Hsien-ch'ien edition)
- HS *Han-shu* (Wang Hsien-ch'ien edition).
- MH E. Chavannes, *Mémoires historiques*.
- SC *Shih-chi* (Takigawa edition).
- Swann N. L. Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China*, Princeton 1950.

Panic broke out in Ch'ang-an city in the late summer of 30 B.C.¹ Earlier in the year incessant rain had fallen for over thirty days in the three metropolitan districts bringing floods in its wake. Rainfall had also been reported in nineteen other provinces, and the waters were said to be rushing down the valleys in torrents. More than 4,000 persons had lost their lives and over 83,000 buildings had been destroyed, including government offices and people's dwellings. The alarm spread in the capital city, defying all reason; and in the stampede people were trampling each other down in the streets. The old and infirm were crying out², and the city, which perhaps housed some 80,000 inhabitants, was in a state of utter turmoil. From within the palace the emperor summoned a conference of ministers, and Wang Feng 王鳳, Marshal of State³ and uncle of the emperor, gave his advice.

¹ The principal references for this incident are HS 10.4a (HFHD, 2, 380); HS 27A.22a; HS 27C.1.21a; and HS 82.1b. The second of these passages is incomplete.

² I have included text which is omitted in Wang Hsien-ch'ien's edition but which is included in the *Po-na* edition (82.1b).

³ *I.e.* *Ta-ssu-ma* 大司馬. In cases where the renderings of titles that are adopted here vary from those used by Dubs, the latter will be appended in the notes, in the forms given in R. de Crespigny, *Official Titles of the Former Han Dynasty* (Canberra, 1967). Dubs renders *Ta-ssu-ma* as Commander-in-chief.

He suggested that the empress dowager and the emperor, together with the other female inhabitants of the palace, should take to boats; and that officials and civilians should be told to climb the city walls so as to avoid the floods that must surely be coming.

With one exception all the officials present agreed with Wang Feng. The exception was Wang Shang 王商, a northerner, recently demoted to be General of the Left. He was no relation of Wang Feng, nor of Wang Feng's sister the empress dowager, nor of their nephew Wang Mang, who was soon to figure in dynastic history. Wang Shang pointed out that there was no cause for panic. When floods had struck the notoriously wicked states of the past they had not submerged the city walls; Ch'ang-an at present enjoyed a peaceful administration; there had been no outbreaks of armed conflicts and the upper and lower orders of society lived together in amity. There could be no reason for floods to strike, and it was absurd to order people to clamber up the walls, thereby exciting them to even greater alarms. Wang Shang's calm words convinced the emperor that no evasive action was necessary; and in a short space of time peace and stability were restored in the city.

The incident is perhaps slight and should not be regarded as being typical of the behaviour of Ch'ang-an's inhabitants. But, somewhat exceptionally, the histories provide a vivid and realistic account of what was happening in the city at a particular moment of time; and it is possibly of some interest to pause and take note of the attendant circumstances of the day and their implications, which concerned political change and dynastic complication, the attention paid to omens and the observance of religious rites.

I. Dynastic and political considerations

Ch'eng ti was in his nineteenth year when he acceded to the throne in 33. He was the son of Yüan ti (reigned 49-33) and his empress Wang Cheng-chün 王政君, and in his youth he had shown promise of a generous and prudent disposition.⁴ However, as he grew up his habits of self-indulgence dashed the hopes that his father had reposed in his character. Yüan ti thought quite seriously of replacing him as heir apparent by a son borne by his favourite concubine, Miss Fu 傅; and he was only dissuaded from doing so with difficulty, as will be seen below. At a date which is not known, the future Ch'eng ti had been married to a daughter of Hsü Chia 許嘉, who was a cousin of Yüan ti's mother. It is stated that the match had been arranged by Yüan ti as a means of recompensing the Hsü family for the wrongs that they had suffered in the past;⁵ for Yüan ti's mother, the

empress of Hsüan ti (reigned 74-49), had been poisoned in 71 B.C. by a member of the Huo 霍 family in an attempt to promote their own cause. At the time of his accession Ch'eng ti had not yet begotten an heir; and one of the underlying causes of dynastic disquiet during his reign was the continued failure of his consorts to bear a son, whether his favours were granted to the empress Hsü 許, the concubine Pan 班, to Chao Fei-yen 趙飛燕 (raised to the status of empress in 16) or to her sister the concubine Chao. Only as late as 12 and 11 B.C. were two sons born; and according to the *Han-shu* Ch'eng ti had these two infants put to death in order to assuage the jealousies of his favourite.⁶

Throughout Ch'eng ti's reign the Wang family formed the dominant element at court and in government offices. The empress dowager, who continued to take an active part in dynastic decisions until the reign of P'ing ti (from 1 B.C. to A.D. 5), exercised a strong influence over the young emperor Ch'eng ti. One of the first acts of the reign was to appoint her brother Wang Feng to the title of Marshal of State and to invest him with powers of leadership over the secretariat (*i.e.* *Shang-chu* 尚書).⁷ The combination of this title and those powers served to provide the Wang family with the status and security whereby their political fortunes could be founded. The days had long passed since the post of chancellor (*ch'eng-hsiang* 丞相)⁸ carried with it the highest authority and responsibilities of the realm below those of the emperor, and the use that Wang Feng made of his position to eliminate the chances of rivalry may be illustrated by a number of incidents.⁹ Wang Feng held this distinctive position until 22 and was followed by no less than four members of the Wang family until the change of political balance of 7 B.C.¹⁰

The advice tendered by Wang Feng on the occasion of the panic of 30 B.C. has been mentioned above. Nothing, however, is recorded of the attitude of the chancellor of the day, K'uang Heng 匡衡, and a possible reason for his silence will be suggested below. Indeed, when it finally appeared that the rumours which had given rise to such alarm were groundless, the steadfast attitude and sound advice of Wang Shang was suitably appreciated; and after a few months he was appointed to the vacant post of chancellor from which K'uang Heng had been dismissed.¹¹ But K'uang Heng had been concerned with political measures during the previous two decades, and he was involved in some of the live issues of the early years of Ch'eng ti's reign. His

⁶ For a summary of these events see Dubs in HFHD, 2, 369f.

⁷ Dubs: Office of the Masters of Writing.

⁸ Dubs: Lieutenant Chancellor.

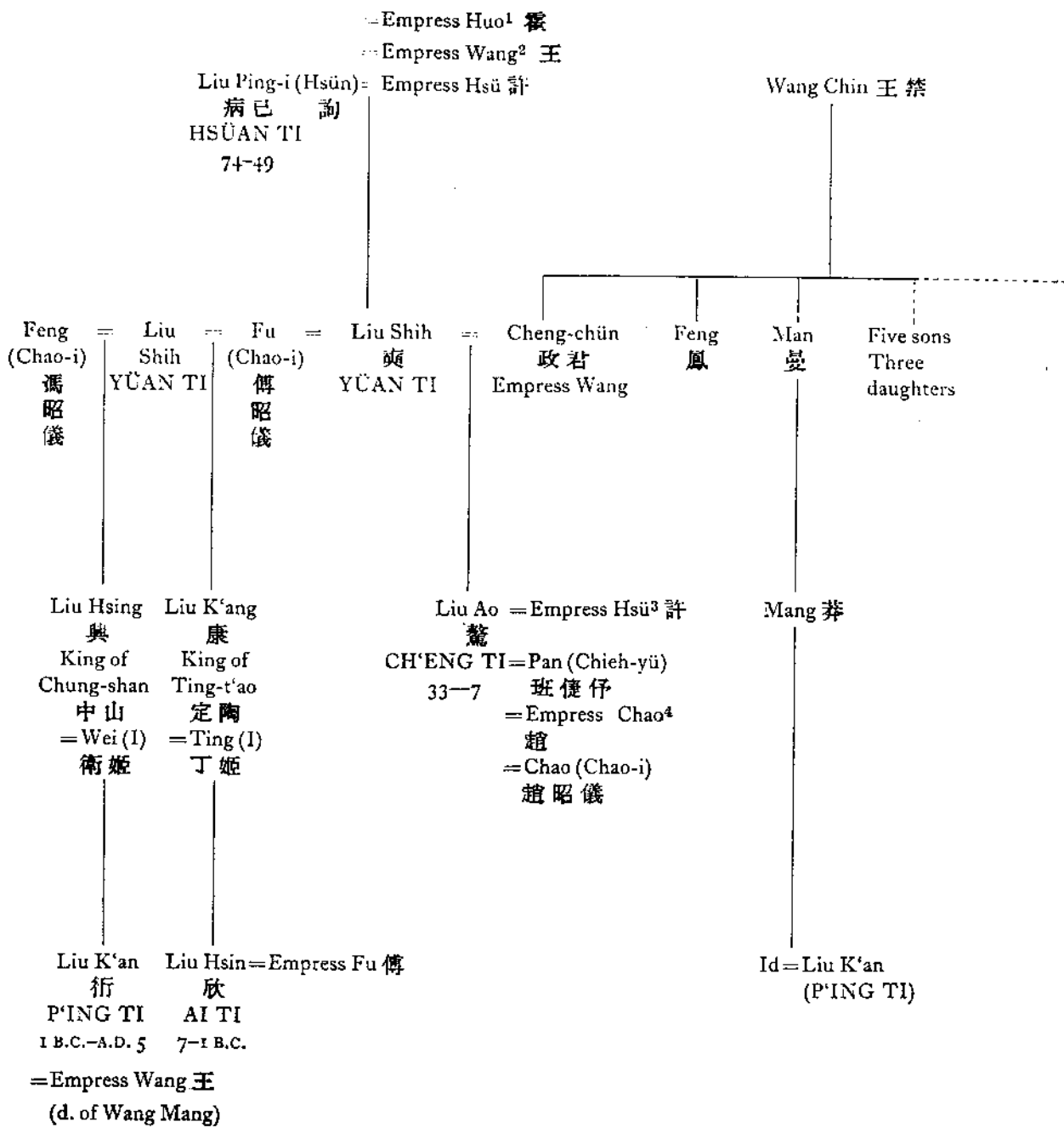
⁹ See Dubs in HFHD, 2, 358 f.

¹⁰ Wang Yin 音 who held the position from 22 to 15; Wang Shang 商 (15-11); Wang Ken 根 (11-7); and Wang Mang for a short time in 7 B.C.

¹¹ HS 19B.41a, b and HS 82.1b. K'uang Heng was dismissed on a day corresponding with 14 January 29 B.C.; Wang Shang's appointment was dated from 10 April.

⁴ HS 10.1b (HFHD, 2, 374); HS 98.3a.

⁵ HS 97B.1a.



¹ Daughter of Huo Kuang 光.
² Later entitled 班婕妤 to distinguish her from Yüan ti's empress; died 16 B.C.
³ Daughter of Hsü Chia 嘉.
⁴ Called Chao Fei-yen 趙飛燕.

previous career and his recorded pronouncements shed some light on the climate of opinion of the day.

Early in his life K'uang Heng had won a reputation as a scholar;¹² he had been graded in the first class in the somewhat rudimentary tests of the time; but as his answers had not corresponded with the ordinances of state he had only been appointed to a minor position in the central government.¹³ Hsiao Wang-chih 蕭望之, a statesman of note, had done his best to bring K'uang Heng's talent to official notice; but Heng's main call to fame lay in his learning, which left Hsüan ti, the practical minded emperor of the day, somewhat unimpressed. It was only after the accession of Yüan ti, in 49, that K'uang Heng came into prominence. He owed his rise partly to the recommendation of Shih Kao 史高, a somewhat unsuccessful official who was trying to raise a following at court; and the occasion of an eclipse and earthquake¹⁴ gave K'uang Heng an opportunity to impress Yüan ti with his qualities. In presenting his views on the contemporary scene, he pointed out that the frequent amnesties of the previous few years,¹⁵ so far from allowing people to reform their conduct as was hoped, had failed dismally to reduce the extent of their lawlessness. He drew attention to the oppressive government practised by officials and the prevalence of crime; and he declared himself shocked by the extravagant way of life at Ch'ang-an which, as the emperor's capital, should rather have been the scene of plain living and high thinking and a dedication to cultural pursuits. He made a plea for the removal of grasping officials and for a return to the ethical ideals of government. Pleased with the terms of his submission, Yüan ti had K'uang Heng promoted counsellor of the palace¹⁶ and junior tutor of the heir apparent.¹⁷

Some of the measures that were taken during Yüan ti's reign indicate the acceptance of K'uang Heng's conservative views. The reaction that he was voicing against an excessive degree of state interference¹⁸ had already been expressed by Hsiao Wang-chih; and the same views were put forward more forcefully by Kung Yü 貢禹. The measures included the withdrawal of the Han commanderies (*chün* 郡) that had been established on Hainan Island (46 B.C.); the abolition of the state monopolies of salt and iron (44);¹⁹ the abolition of the state's agencies for the control of staple goods; economies

¹² HS 81.1a et seq.

¹³ At the beginning of Ch'eng ti's reign, types of appointment sometimes depended on the grade reached in the official tests; see HS 81.15a, 22a.

¹⁴ Presumably the eclipse reported for 28 March 42; HS 9.8b (HFHD, 2, 321, 354).

¹⁵ I.e., 48, 47 and 46.

¹⁶ *Kuang-lu ta-fu* 光祿大夫 Dubs: Imperial Household Grandee.

¹⁷ *T'ai-tzu shao fu* 太子少傅.

¹⁸ At this time the main protagonist for the "progressive" view that had been accepted as a basis for state policy during Wu ti's reign was Keng Shou-ch'ang 耿壽昌; see Swann 192 f.

¹⁹ These were actually restored in 41; HS 9.9a (HFHD, 2, 324).

in the luxuries and entertainments of the imperial palaces (47 and 44); and the distribution of material relief to the destitute.²⁰

Attention has been drawn above to Yüan ti's desire to replace his heir apparent, a son of the empress Wang, by another son, who had been born by a favourite concubine.²¹ In raising objections to such an idea,²² K'uang Heng appealed to the history of the Chou period and to the authority of the *Book of Songs* and other texts regarding the principles of true kingship. He wrote that order was attained in the world when dynastic arrangements were correctly regulated. It was essential to respect the claim of the legitimate consort and heir and to keep commoner descendants at a lower level; and it was also necessary for a ruler to sacrifice his private partialities in the interests of public morality.

Yüan ti was evidently impressed by K'uang Heng's ability and the further examples of his advice on political matters, which was based on references to classical texts and frequently mentioned the cause of law and morality. In 38 K'uang Heng reached "ministerial rank" by appointment as superintendent of the palace counsellors;²³ in the next year he was promoted imperial counsellor;²⁴ and in 36 he became chancellor, receiving the honour of a nobility at the same time.²⁵

K'uang Heng was not the only official to whom the future emperor Ch'eng ti owed his survival as heir apparent. According to another passage in the *Han-shu*,²⁶ so far from being able to assess the abilities of officials at this time (i.e. 38-34), Yüan ti was too ill to take any part in government. Indulging his love of music to the full, the emperor also engaged in frivolities, such as dropping bronze pellets on to drums from a height, and hoping to score a bull's-eye. The concubine Fu's son was the only other expert in this pastime who could rival his majesty's skill, and this quality excited Yüan ti's admiration of his "talent". Such a view provoked the scorn of Shih Tan 史丹 a favourite courtier of Yüan ti who was distantly related to the imperial family. Shih Tan did not hesitate to rebuke the emperor. "What is usually meant by talent", he said, "is intelligence and love of learning, familiarity with the precedent of the past and an understanding of the new, contemporary world; and the heir apparent is the one who is blessed with these gifts. But if you value people for their performance at stringed instruments or drums, why, then Ch'en Hui 陳惠 and Li Wei²⁷ 李微 rank more

²⁰ HS 24A.20a; Swann 196 f.

²¹ I.e. the concubine Fu 傅 entitled Chao-i 昭儀; her son had been given the title of king of Ting-t'ao 定陶.

²² HS 81.6a.

²³ *Kuang-lu hsün* 光祿勳. Dubs: Superintendent of the imperial household.

²⁴ *Yü-shih ta-fu* 御史大夫, Dubs: Imperial clerk grandee.

²⁵ HS 19B.39a, b; HS 81.7b.

²⁶ HS 82.5a, b.

²⁷ Two well-known contemporary musicians.

highly in the scale than K'uang Heng and should be appointed to the post of chancellor."

During Yüan ti's last illness (33) Shih Tan again had to intervene on behalf of the heir apparent. Both he and his mother the empress had been all but excluded from the emperor's bedside, where Miss Fu and her son were in attendance. Shih Tan insisted on the right of the heir apparent to succeed, as the legitimate descendant of the emperor. He said that the heir commanded the loyal support of the people; officials would refuse, to the point of death, to accept an edict ordering a change in the succession; and he himself would seek permission to die first in such a cause. By these means Yüan ti was made to realize that he was beaten; and before he died he asked Shih Tan to assist and guide the heir apparent in his new task.²⁸

At Ch'eng ti's accession (33) K'uang Heng submitted a long memorial to the throne,²⁹ which, if the record of the *Han-shu* is trustworthy, must surely have struck the new emperor as being both self-satisfied and irritating. K'uang Heng devoted his efforts to warning Ch'eng ti of the dangers of a *mésalliance* and to pointing out the value of classical learning and dignified behaviour. He reminded his emperor that he had no leisure now for amusements or indulgences, and that he should bend his will to implementing the ideals of imperial rule. He cited from the *Book of Songs* to recall the good example of king Ch'eng, of Chou, and touched on the importance of proper matrimony as being the start of procreation and the origin of happiness. Only when these matters were conducted correctly would the material world reach fulfilment and the destiny of heaven be completed. He cited Confucius' treatment of the *Songs* to show the need for rulers and their consorts so to conduct themselves that they conformed with the purposes of heaven and earth, and thus respectfully receive the direction of the blessed spiritual powers; only when private indulgences were discountenanced would a ruler meet the demands of the most highly respected values and act as lord of his ancestral house and shrine. K'uang Heng begged Ch'eng ti to study the examples whereby thrones had been won and lost, how government had prospered and decayed; he should beware of music and sex, surrounding himself with men of stern integrity and keeping away those who simply boasted sharp wits. Complete familiarity with the lessons of the six classical texts would mean that the principles of heaven and man would be harmonized; and that the plants and creatures of the animal world would be safely nurtured; and in particular the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Book of Filial Piety* contained the epitome of the words and actions of a holy man and must be understood thoroughly. In the final part of his submission, K'uang Heng made due reference to the personal behaviour that was

²⁸ For Shih Tan and the heir apparent, see also HS 10.2a (HFHD, 2, 374) and HS 98.3b.

²⁹ HS 81.7b.

required of a monarch, in the interests of securing his people's awe and love and their imitation of his example.

Despite the support that K'uang Heng had given to the Wang family and his successful efforts to ensure the accession of one of their sons, his career during Ch'eng ti's reign was neither long nor easy. Possibly there is a hint of arrogance or smugness in his character which may have made him unlikable; possibly this was due to his puritanism; but his immediate difficulties lay with the person of Shih Hsien 石顯.³⁰ This eunuch had been one of Yüan ti's favourites. Appointed to the key position of leader of the secretariat he had imposed his will on the court, and officials from the chancellor downwards had stood in fear of his authority. Shortly after Ch'eng ti's accession, K'uang Heng and a few colleagues gathered their strength together and submitted an itemized list of Shih Hsien's misdeeds, extending their charges to cover his faction. But K'uang Heng met bitter opposition; and he found himself facing a counter charge on the grounds that, knowing of Shih Hsien's misdemeanours previously and being himself in a position of authority, he had failed to bring them to notice, preferring to build up his own connexions. Like K'uang Heng, Shih Hsien had done his best to support the cause of Ch'eng ti in the question of the succession; but K'uang Heng's charges had enough validity to bring about the dismissal of Shih Hsien's closest supporters. Shih Hsien himself was ordered to return to his native commandery of Chi-nan 濟南, but died of starvation and grief on the way.

Nevertheless the discomfiture of Shih Hsien did not serve to allay the anxieties that K'uang Heng felt for his own safety. On several occasions he offered his resignation, only to be refused; and even when his son K'uang Ch'ang 昌 had murdered a man in a fit of drunkenness and another son had tried to free him from arrest, Ch'eng ti still refused to allow their father to offer his resignation by way of expiation. Finally (29) he was dismissed from his position as chancellor and reduced to commoner status on the ground that he had misappropriated some territory.³¹

II The Han state cults before 31 B.C.

When, in 30 B.C., the inhabitants of Ch'ang-an believed that their lives were in immediate danger and that their city would soon lie in ruins about them, there may have been some men and women who reflected on the ultimate causes of the disaster they were about to witness. And, if one may speculate for a moment, some officials may well have wondered whether the rush of mighty waters was the just recompense brought about by certain occult powers or by the souls of deceased ancestors. For some would

³⁰ HS 81.9a; HS 93.4b.

³¹ The circumstances of this case provided valuable details regarding nobilities, their tenure of land and their definition in territorial terms.

doubtless be convinced that those powers had been slighted and angered by reforms that had been but recently introduced in the religious observances of state.

The reforms were probably of a more radical nature than has sometimes been supposed,³² and affected the site of worship, the objective of the state cult and the manner of its service. Newly built sites of worship at which the emperor took part were substituted in place of those where his predecessors had sought to make contact with sacred powers for decades, or, in one case, for centuries. In addition there are signs of a distinct change of emphasis in the concept and object of the worship which the emperor led; simultaneously a large number of shrines dedicated to a variety of cults were suppressed; and a simpler form of ritual was introduced for practice at the newly established places of worship. While it must remain a matter of idle speculation whether or not these changes were blamed for the floods of 30 B.C., it is certain that their validity was brought into question during the next thirty years, usually when the future of the dynasty was in question. On no less than four occasions between 30 B.C. and A.D. 5 the reforms were countermanded or reintroduced, in conformity with contemporary persuasion or expediency.

During Yüan ti's reign (49-33) the conduct of state affairs had been influenced by the presence of men such as Kung Yü, Wei Hsüan-ch'eng 韋玄成 and K'uang Heng. Early in their careers they had been set to study some of the "classical" texts; their frame of mind was traditionalist and they were opposed to the excesses of contemporary religious practice; and it may not be altogether misleading to describe them as protestant or puritan. Thus they were ready to break with the immediate past, to dismantle current observances and to introduce change, in the interests of maintaining what they believed to be the essential elements of service to the sacred beings; and they sought support for their reforms in the practices attributed to the remote past or the realm of myth.

The move to reform religious practice was but a single part of the major cause which came into prominence during the last fifty years of Western Han and which is associated with the *Ku-wen* 古文 school. Opponents, of the *Chin-wen* 今文 school, called on textual authority to support and regularize the contemporary practice of government; this was based on the strength of imperial authority and had evolved from the methods (*shu* 術 and *fa* 法) of the Ch'in régime. The *Ku-wen* school wished to purge such contemporary practice of what they regarded as abuses, and to replace these by the immutable rules of *li* 禮; such a code had been ascribed to the Duke of Chou.

³² E.g. the reforms are described in HFHD, 2, 361 simply as the "removal of the great imperial sacrifices to the capital." For the place of the reforms among other changes, see Fujikawa, *op. cit.*, particularly pp. 204 f., 214 f.

Two examples may be cited to illustrate how the attitude of the two schools to matters of religious practice was in close parallel with their attitudes to the operation of government. Statesmen of the *Chin-wen* school such as Chu Po 朱博 wished to retain the devolution of authority through a supreme official (*i.e.* the *ch'eng-hsiang* 丞相, Chancellor) and his subordinates; the *ku-wen* school, however, (*e.g.* Ho Wu 何武) preferred a traditional division of the highest responsibilities among three senior statesmen, whose status and seniority were on a par, and who were traced back to the glorious days of Chou. Secondly, while the *Chin-wen* school hoped to uphold the authority of government by the current system of regional inspectors (*tz'u-shih* 刺史) the *Ku-wen* reformists proposed to substitute for them a system of *chou* 州 and *mu* 牧; and these officials were similarly ascribed to the remote past.

It was under the guidance of the *Ku-wen* men that reforms were introduced in the conduct of services to the imperial ancestors. In addition, in place of the worship carried out by the emperor hitherto to the Five Powers at Yung 雍, the Supreme Unity at Kan-ch'üan 甘泉 and the Earth Queen at Fen-yin 汾陰, the state cult was now to be concentrated in the worship of Heaven and Earth, at sites built to the south and north of Ch'ang-an city. The reforms were represented as restoring old and proper practices from which departures had been made; they were to uphold the position of the emperor and save him for unnecessary indignity and hardship; and they were to bring economies to the state and reduce the exacting contributions of the populace to the maintenance of the ceremonies. It also seems that greater attention would be paid in the new concepts than hitherto to the forces of *Yin* and *Yang*. As yet these had hardly appeared in the context of the cults of state, although they had been cited frequently enough in Han documents such as imperial edicts. By now the concept of *Yin* and *Yang* was sufficiently deeply rooted to form part of the Chinese tradition. It has also been suggested, by Fujikawa, that the reforms of 32 B.C. mark a reaction against the influence that the magicians (*fang-shih* 方士) had exercised in the past, particularly over Wu ti.

Before the reforms were introduced it had been the practice of Han emperors to take part in the seasonal worship of the Five Powers; and, as will be seen, this cult was conducted at Yung and had been inherited from previous dynasties. In addition Wu ti had instituted new state cults in 114-113 which were conducted at Kan-ch'üan and Fen-yin respectively.

Since the eighth century B.C. the dukes of Ch'in and their successors had worshipped various powers at designated sacred sites (*chih* 峙). The powers were principally the *ti*, who included *Shang ti* 上帝 the Supreme Power; the *ti* of fire (*Yen ti* 炎帝); and the *ti* that were associated with the colours white (白), green (青) and yellow (黃). Of all the sites where these powers were worshipped, those of Yung came to assume the greatest

importance. Yung was situated in an area that was much later to be designated as the Han metropolitan division of the *Yu-fu-feng* 右扶風. This area spanned the northern and southern banks of the upper reaches of the Wei river, and included the site of the Ch'in imperial capital of Hsien-yang.³³ Yung lay to the west of the later city of Ch'ang-an; but close as it was to the Han capital, it was not particularly secure, being penetrated by patrols of the Hsiung-nu in 166.³⁴

By the time of the unification (221) the importance of Yung as a religious centre had grown beyond all recognition. In addition to the four sacred sites (*chih* 時) dedicated to the worship of four of the *ti*, there were over a hundred shrines which served powers such as the sun, moon and constellations, or the lords of the winds and the rain. Regular services were held, sometimes with blood sacrifices; and the Ch'in emperor sometimes attended in person. The significance of Yung was enhanced by its proximity to the emperor's seat of government and due account was taken of this situation.³⁵

As part of the process of substituting his own authority for that of Ch'in, in 205 Liu Pang adopted responsibility for worshipping the four *ti* that were associated with the colours white, green, yellow and red;³⁶ in addition he instituted the worship of a fifth *ti*, the power of black. However, the first of the Han emperors did not apparently attend these services in person. The first occasion when this was done occurred in 165, when Wen ti visited Yung and performed the *chiao* 郊, or seasonal worship of the boundaries, in honour of the five *ti*.³⁷ Wen ti also had the worship of the five *ti* performed at new shrines which were built at Wei-yang 渭陽, and attended there personally (164)³⁸. Ching ti carried out the rites at Yung in 144, and from 134 onwards it was intended that the emperor should visit Yung regularly, once every three years.³⁹ However, according to the record, imperial visits were far from regular; they are noted for the years 123, 122, 114, 113, 110, 108, 92, 56, 44, 40 and 38.⁴⁰

The worship to the Earth Queen (*Hou t'u* 后土) was inaugurated in December 114. It apparently followed from Wu ti's personal suggestion and the recommendations that senior officials made at his behest to consider the matter. They proposed that five altars should be prepared, on a circular

mound that lay encompassed by a lake.⁴¹ Light brown calves together with the grand offering of one bull, one sheep and one pig were to be sacrificed at each of the altars; and once the ceremony was ended the victims were to be buried underground. Yellow was to be the dominant colour in the robes of the celebrants. Wu ti had heard that a bright effulgence had been seen descending by the Fen river, and this occurrence determined him to establish the altars on the mound at Fen-yin 汾陰, in Ho-tung commandery. Wu ti's personal obeisances were of the same type as those that he offered to the Supreme Power; he and his successors returned to perform these rites at Fen-yin in 107, 105, 104, 103, 100, 61, 55, 45, 39, and 37.⁴²

In the meantime there had been instituted a further regular act of worship on the part of the Han emperors.⁴³ This was the service to T'ai i 泰一 the Supreme Unity, which was carried out for the first time, by Wu ti in person, at the winter solstice of 113. The site for this ceremony was at Kan-ch'üan, in Yün-yang 雲陽 prefecture, within the metropolitan division of the Tso-p'ing-i 左馮翊. Kan-ch'üan lay to the east of Ch'ang-an, and Wu ti had a summer palace situated there. Worship of the sun and the moon was included in the ceremonies, and the Standard Histories preserve the texts of two formal documents that date from this solemn occasion.⁴⁴ At the inaugural ceremony the emperor was robed in yellow. Lights blazed forth in rows upon the altar and vessels were set by at the side for dressing and cooking the sacrificial victims. Officials presented the ceremonial discs of jade, and the oblation of the animals was duly performed. That night a brilliant light was observed; and when day broke a yellow cloud rose to the skies. As with the ceremonies at Yung, so at Kan-ch'üan it was envisaged that the emperor would attend personally every second (?) year.⁴⁵ But again the observance was anything but regular, being conducted by Wu ti in 106, 100 and 88; by Hsüan ti in 61, 57, 53, 51 and 49; and by Yüan ti in 47, 45, 43, 39 and 37.⁴⁶

It will be noticed that a long break in continuity occurred between imperial visits to the three sites during the end of Wu ti's reign, the whole of

⁴¹ HS 25A.26b; see also MH III, 475. For the concept of this divinity as female, being paired with the male divinity of Heaven, see Chavannes, "Le T'ai Chan", *Bibliothèque d'études, Annales du Musée Guimet*, Paris, 1910, pp. 521-5, where the distinct emergence of this concept is dated in Wu ti's reign.

⁴² HS 6.28b, 30b, 31a, 32a, 33a (HFHD, 2, 93, 97, 89, 100, 103); HS 8.15b, 19b (HFHD, 2, 239, 250); HS 9.5b, 10b, 11a (HFHD, 2, 313, 328, 330).

⁴³ HS 6.20b (HFHD, 2, 76); HS 25A.33a; MH, III, 491.

⁴⁴ HS 6.20b (HFHD, 2, 77); HS 25A.33a; MH III, 492.

⁴⁵ See HS 25A.33b and notes. The corresponding text of SC and some editions of HS read 3 rather than 2 years. Whatever the textual evidence, it appears from the record that at certain periods the visits were made every two rather than every three years. See also HS 25B.19b and notes.

⁴⁶ HS 6.30a, 33a, and 38b (HFHD, 2, 96, 103, 118); HS 8.15b, 18b, 20b, 22a and 23b (HFHD, 2, 239, 247, 254, 258 and 261); HS 9.3a, 5b, 7a, 10b, 11a (HFHD, 2, 306, 313, 317, 328 and 330).

³³ HS 28A.1.34a.

³⁴ HS 94A.13a.

³⁵ HS 25A.15a.

³⁶ HS 25A.17b.

³⁷ HS 4.16a; HS 25A.20a.

³⁸ HS 25A.20a.

³⁹ HS 25A.21b.

⁴⁰ HS 6.13a; 14a; 18b; 20a; 26b; 28a and 36b (HFHD, 2, 57, 60, 74, 76, 89, 93 and 113); HS 8.19a (HFHD, 2, 248); HS 9.5b, 9b, and 10b (HFHD, 2, 313, 325, and 329).

Chao ti's reign and the first twelve years of Hsüan ti's reign.⁴⁷ The *Han-shu* observes the break and attributes it to the youth of Chao ti, who actually attained adulthood in 77, and the dictatorship of Huo Kuang during the early part of Hsüan ti's reign.⁴⁸

III. K'uang Heng's reforms

As a result of K'uang Heng's influence, a major change was introduced in the seasonal worship of the bounds (*chiao* 郊), shortly after Ch'eng ti's accession. Under the new arrangement these services were to be held no longer at Yung, Fen-yin or Kan ch'üan, but at Ch'ang-an. In addition, whereas previously the services had been directed to the Five Powers, the Earth Queen and the Supreme Unity, they were now to be held in honour of Heaven (*T'ien* 天) and Earth (*Ti* 地). As will be seen from the text of the memorial attributed to him, K'uang Heng argued his case skilfully, invoking precedent from the past and reminding the palace of the real purpose that lay behind the observance of the rites at Kan-ch'üan. In addition he was shrewd enough to refrain from suggesting outright the substitution of Heaven and Earth in place of the other powers. But his memorial, and the subsequent documents, will only be understood fully if it is assumed that when the services were moved such a change would also be effected. And, as will be shown below, while veneration for Heaven and Earth was not altogether new in Han thought, active participation in sacrifices and worship by a Han emperor was an innovation. So K'uang Heng simply asked that the senior officials of the government should discuss whether it was suitable to remove the services to Ch'ang-an; but it may be noted that the fifty men who supported K'uang Heng during the course of the discussion did not mention the Five Powers, the Earth Queen or the Supreme Unity; they argued in terms of worshipping Heaven and Earth.

The initial memorial was presented under the names of K'uang Heng, the chancellor, and Chang T'an 張譚 the imperial counsellor:⁴⁹

"In the affairs of emperors and kings, nothing is of greater moment than their acceptance of the order of heaven; and in such a task nothing is more important than the seasonal services of worship. It is for this reason that the holy kings bent their minds and thoughts to the utmost to institute regulations for those services. They worshipped Heaven at the southern bounds of their domains, and the meaning of this lay in their attendance at the realm of *Yang*; they sacrificed with burial rites to Earth at the northern

⁴⁷ The rites were not attended by an emperor between 92 and 56 at Yung, between 100 and 61 at Fen-yin, and between 88 and 61 at Kan-ch'üan.

⁴⁸ HS 25B.7a, b. For Huo Kuang's dictatorship, see Loewe, "The case of Witchcraft in 91 B.C., its historical setting and effect on Han Dynastic History (*Asia Major*, Vol. XV/Part 2, pp. 179 f.)

⁴⁹ HS 25B.11a.

bounds; and the symbolism of this lay in their approach to the realm of *Yin*.

"Heaven's relations with its son are such that it attends the place where he has built his city to accept the offerings that are due. In the past when the emperor Hsiao Wu resided in the palace of Kan-ch'üan, a site was dedicated in Yün-yang for the worship of the Supreme Unity, and services were held south of the palace. Nowadays the imperial presence is regularly in Ch'ang-an; to carry out the worship of the boundaries to Heaven, the emperor turns north to go to the realm where *Yin* reigns supreme; and to perform the services to the Earth Queen, he turns east to the realm where *Yang*'s influence is slight. In this way practice is at variance with the institutions of old.

"In addition, in his journey to Yün-yang his way passes through ravines and along a narrow passage that extends for a hundred *li*. To reach Fen-yin he crosses mighty rivers, with the danger that boat and oar may be buffeted by wind or wave; and his train consists of anything but the many carriages that befit a holy ruler. The commanderies and prefectures through which he passes put the roads in order and supply the necessary provisions, so that the officials and the civil population suffer hardship; and the government's offices are put to great trouble and inconvenience. Thus the people whom the emperor protects are made to labour and he himself journeys through lands that are dangerous; these are difficult conditions in which to pay reverence to sacred and spiritual beings or to pray for prosperity; and they can hardly conform with the emperor's role of receiving the order of heaven and treating mankind as his children.

"In the past kings Wen and Wu of Chou performed the seasonal sacrifices of the bounds at Feng 豐 or Hao 鄗, and king Ch'eng did so at the town of Lo 雒. From these examples it may be seen that Heaven accompanies the site of the king's residence to accept his offerings. It is right that the sacred site dedicated to the Supreme Unity at Kan-ch'üan and the worship of the Earth Queen in Ho-tung should be removed and set up at Ch'ang-an, so as to fit with the practice of the emperors and kings of the past. We beg leave to discuss the matter with senior officials so that a decision may be reached."

Ch'eng ti duly gave his consent. Eight officials, including Hsü Chia 許嘉, the emperor's father-in-law, believed that no change should be made in view of the long tradition behind contemporary usage. But fifty others, including Wang Shang,⁵⁰ Shih Tan 師丹⁵¹ and Ti Fang-chin 翟方進⁵² supported K'uang Heng. They cited the authority of the *Li-chi*⁵³ "Burning

⁵⁰ *I.e.* General of the Left who advised the emperor to hold fast during the panic of 30 BC. At this time (32) he still held the more senior post of General of the Right; HS 19B.41a and HS 82.1a.

⁵¹ Rose to be Superintendent of the Minor Treasury from 14.

⁵² Rose to be chancellor from 15 until his death in 7.

⁵³ *Li-chi* 20, *Chi-fa* 祭法; Couvreur, *Li-chi*, 1913, Vol. II, p. 259.

victims on brushwood at the Grand Circular Altar constitutes the worship of Heaven; the burial of sacrificial victims at the Great Rectangular Altar constitutes the worship of Earth." They argued that the dedication of a site at the southern bounds of the city would be a means of determining the site where Heaven would respond; and the isolation of a sacrificial site at the Great Rectangular Altar, situated at the northern bounds, would meet the requisite site for *Yin*. They went on to observe:⁵⁴

"The sites of the seasonal services of the bounds have in all cases been at the south and north of the Holy kings' cities; as the *Book of Documents* has it:⁵⁵ 'On the third day, *ting-ssu*, he sacrificed victims on the suburban altar, namely two oxen.' The Duke of Chou's sacrifice was a notification of his removal to a new town and his foundation of the rites for the seasonal service of the bounds.

"Kings endowed with spiritual blessings and the holy rulers serve Heaven and Heaven is shown forth; they serve Earth and Earth becomes manifest; and when Heaven and Earth are clearly shown forth, the powers of the spirits are made apparent. Heaven and Earth take the one who is king to be the master; and so, when the holy kings instituted the correct procedure for the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, they invariably arranged for this to be done at the bounds of the rulers' cities. Ch'ang-an is the residence of our holy master and lies under the observation of August Heaven. The sacrifices performed at Kan-ch'üan and in Ho-tung have not been accepted by the sacred spirits and it is right to remove them to places where *Yang* is in its regular position and where *Yin* is in full force. It is right to reject contemporary modes and to restore ancient practice; to follow the institutions of the holy kings and to determine the requisite situation of Heaven; and to follow what the procedure prescribes."

This support encouraged K'uang Heng and Chang T'an to proceed further, and in a second submission⁵⁶ they fastened on the principle of following the views of the majority; and they did not omit to point out that the fifty men who supported them were well versed in their classical writings, while their eight opponents had no text or precedent on which to draw. K'uang Heng concluded his case by citing from the *Book of Songs*⁵⁷ and interpreting the text as favouring the establishment of the *chiao* to the south and north of Ch'ang-an. Ch'eng ti again accepted their advice.

K'uang Heng's next step was directed towards eliminating the elaborate rituals and the symbolism that had characterized the state cults hitherto.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ HS 25B.12a.
⁵⁵ *Shu-ching*, *Shao kao*, 召誥 5; the translation of this citation is taken from Karlgren, *Book of Documents*, p. 48.

⁵⁶ HS 25B.12b.
⁵⁷ *Shih-ching*, No. 288, *Ching chih* 敬之 (Karlgren, *Book of Odes*, p. 249); and No. 241 *Huang i* 皇矣 (*Ibid.*, p. 193).

⁵⁸ HS 25B.13a.

He objected to features such as the brilliantly coloured altar⁵⁹ of the Supreme Unity at Kan-ch'üan, whose eight corners pointed symbolically into eight directions. He protested that he could find nothing in the past which justified the use of a highly embellished and carved altar; the interment of models of the imperial carriage with its chestnut colts; or the figurines of fine hunters. Similarly he took exception to the display of jades and the performance by the women's choir. He believed that the real significance of the burning of the woodpile⁶⁰ and the provision of sacrifices for the *ti* lay in the purification of the site and the act of worship and in the value placed on the essential qualities of such worship.

K'uang Heng named the songs and dances that should properly be performed to await the presence of the spirits of Heaven and Earth. Calves should be used as the sacrificial victims; dried straw for matting; and earthenware or calabashes for vessels. In each case one should follow the natural order of Heaven and Earth, giving first place to sincerity and simplicity, and not daring to elaborate. K'uang Heng believed that "the achievements and character of the spirits are of the highest order, and neither the most delicately refined objects nor a plethora of material goods are adequate to give thanks for their work; only by the utmost sincerity may they be brought nigh; and by respecting the stark essentials so may the blessed character of Heaven be illuminated. Gaily painted altars; meretricious décor; women's choirs; the imperial carriage; chestnut colts or fine hunters; the appurtenances of stone altars; none of these should be maintained."

As the next part of his reforms⁶¹ K'uang Heng pointed out that kings are free to establish their own forms of worship and are not obliged to continue the practices inherited from the past. This principle applied in particular to the services held hitherto at Yung, which had been instituted arbitrarily by the leaders of Ch'in; but they were not prescribed by the *li*. It would be quite improper to respect the practices that had been started indiscriminately by the *chu-hou* 諸侯 of the pre-Han period; and even the service at the northern site of Yung, *i.e.* the one initiated by Han Kao-tsu to the Power of Black, should not be maintained. Ch'eng ti again accepted the advice of his chancellor, and the shrine of Ch'en Pao 陳寶⁶² was included among those that were abolished. In the following year a Han emperor performed the *chiao* sacrifices at a site south of Ch'ang-an for the first time (17 February 31 B.C.).⁶³

⁵⁹ 紫壇. The implications of this term are not clear.

⁶⁰ I follow the reading of the *Po-na* edition (HS 25B.12a; Wang Hsien-ch'ien edition HS 25B.13b).

⁶¹ HS 25B.13b.

⁶² HS 25A.4b. The worship of this deity was established by Duke Wen of Ch'in in the eighth century B.C.; see MH, III, 421; see also HS 25A.15a.

⁶³ HS 10.3a (HFHD, 2, 378).

It will be shown below that previously, in the reign of Yüan ti, a large number of shrines dedicated to the service of the ancestral spirits of the emperors had been suppressed. The final change which K'uang Heng and Chang T'an effected⁶⁴ was a similar suppression of a whole host of services, supported by the central government and performed in the provinces by various types of intermediary.⁶⁵ Of a total of 683 such sites, only 208 were regarded as conforming with the prescribed rites; the other 475 were abolished. Similarly of the 203 sites at Yung,⁶⁶ only 15, which were dedicated to the mountains, rivers and constellations, were saved from destruction. Elsewhere in the provinces there took place a wholesale abolition of sites of worship that had been established under the auspices of Kao tsu, Wen ti, Wu ti and Hsüan ti.⁶⁷

K'uang Heng's reformation did not pass without question at the time; and when he was dismissed from his appointment as chancellor (29) there were those who said that the changes should not have been made. What was worse, to the consternation of the emperor, on the very day that worship was suspended to the Supreme Unity at Kan-ch'üan, a violent storm destroyed the Bamboo Palace there and uprooted over a hundred well-matured stout trees that had been growing in the site dedicated to the sacrifices. Ch'eng ti consulted Liu Hsiang 劉向,⁶⁸ whose answer forms the clearest statement that survives of the case for the practices which had just been abolished.⁶⁹

"Members of a family would not willingly discontinue the services they inherit from their forebears, and it would be even less reasonable for a dynasty to give up the worship of its hallowed and precious beings at the sites of yore. Moreover at the foundation of these services at Kan-ch'üan, Fen-yin and the five dedicated sites of Yung, so far from being set up indiscriminately the shrines were only built after the spirits had made themselves felt. The rites were respected meticulously during the reigns of Wu ti and Hsüan ti and the glory of the spirits was particularly conspicuous; so the sites of worship set up by our ancestors may certainly not be removed lightly. In the case of the worship to Ch'en Pao,⁷⁰ 700 and more years have passed from the time of Wen kung of Ch'in until now. Since the foundation

⁶⁴ HS 25B.14b.

⁶⁵ These are described as *hou shen* 候神, *fang shih* 方士 and *shih-che* 使者.

⁶⁶ There is some doubt whether this figure should be 203 or 303; see HS 25B.14b. notes *ad loc.* In view of the multiplicity of sites of worship at Yung, 303 is perhaps the more likely.

⁶⁷ For details of the places involved and the deities worshipped see HS 25B.14b *et seq.*

⁶⁸ Liu Hsiang was a descendant in the fourth generation of Kao tsu's half-brother Chiao 交, king of Ch'u. For Liu Hsiang's career and his part in the intellectual movements of the day see HS 36.6a *et seq.*

⁶⁹ HS 25B.15a.

⁷⁰ See note 62 above.

of the Han dynasty the spirit has paid a regular visit from one generation to the next. Its brilliant light of scarlet or yellow extends for forty or fifty feet and has come to rest by the shrine. Voices have reverberated and the fowls of the air have given tongue. Each time the spirit has appeared at Yung, the directorate of prayer⁷¹ has offered a grand sacrifice and sent a watchman to ride post-haste to the palace, in the belief that the occurrence has been a most felicitous event. The spirit came to the shrine five times in the reign of Kao tsu, 26 times in that of Wen ti, 75 times in that of Wu ti, 25 times in that of Hsüan ti and 20 times since the first year of Ch'u-yüan [48 B.C.]. This is the traditional worship of the pulsating force of Yang.

"The rites devoted to the ancestral shrines of the Han dynasty may not be discussed without due authority;⁷² for in each case they have been jointly founded by the sovereigns of the ancestral house together with their wise counsellors. There is no written authority covering the varying institutions of past and present; in the most highly respected and most important matters, heterodox usage can hardly be used as a criterion for explaining standard practice.

"A number of counsellors have succeeded one another since Kung Yü's advice was first accepted, and there are many features that have been subject to change and upheaval. The *I ta chuan*⁷³ 易大傳 says that the calamities which attend the abuse of the spirits will be visited until the third generation, and I fear that the dire effects will not stop short with Kung Yü."

Ch'eng ti was impressed by Liu Hsiang's arguments and regretted having made the changes. In addition he still had no heir. In 14 B.C. he had the empress dowager issue an edict ordering the restoration of worship⁷⁴ to the Supreme Unity and the Lord of the Soil, at Kan-ch'üan and Fen-yin respectively; and it is noteworthy that in the two subsequent changes it was again an edict of the empress dowager whereby practice was altered. After 14 Ch'eng ti made a habit of visiting the three sites regularly until his death, Yung in one year and the two sites of Fen-yin and Kan-ch'üan in the next.⁷⁵ The services were restored at Ch'ang-an after Ch'eng ti's death in 7;⁷⁶ and on that occasion the edict admitted frankly that the return to Yung had failed to procure an imperial heir.⁷⁷ Clearly the motive for these

⁷¹ *T'ai-chu* 太祝; Dubs renders *T'ai-chu ch'eng* 丞 as Assistant Grand Supplicator. See note 97 below.

⁷² For the suppression of ancestral shrines at the advice of Kung Yü see p. 18 below.

⁷³ For this concept, see *Ta Tai li-chi* 80 *Pen ming* 本命 SPTK edition 13.6b.

⁷⁴ HS 10.12a, b; and HS 25B.15b; the edict followed Ch'eng ti's performance of the rites at Yung. Fujikawa (pp. 219 and 235, note 7) dates the change in 16 B.C.

⁷⁵ Imperial visits were paid to Yung in 14, 12, 10 and 8; and to Kan-ch'üan and Fen-yin in 13, 11, 9 and 7 (HS 10.12a-16a; HFHD, 2, 404-17).

⁷⁶ HS 25B.18b.

⁷⁷ See also HS 25B.17b for the advice given to Wang Shang by Tu Yeh 杜鄴 sometime between 14 and 11.

changes was one of expediency. In 4 B.C.⁷⁸ the state cults were moved once more to Kan-ch'üan and Fen-yin; but the emperor (Ai ti) was not able to attend in person, and sent officials to act on his behalf. The final change that took place in Western Han, which brought the ceremonies back to Ch'ang-an again, resulted from a memorial which Wang Mang submitted in A.D. 5; his text summarizes the history of religious change and stresses some of the points that have been considered above.⁷⁹

At the same time Wang Mang proposed⁸⁰ certain changes in the ritual of the services, so that the symbolism would correspond more closely with the concepts of Heaven and Earth. His proposals concerned musical performances, sacrificial animals and the mode of venerating the sun and the moon. In a further memorial he suggested the establishment of ancillary shrines at the new sites of Ch'ang-an, to serve a whole variety of deities and spirits; and by the end of his period of usurpation there was a total of 1,700 sites of worship at which blood sacrifices were offered. By now the attempt to restrict the state cults solely to the worship of Heaven and Earth seems to have lost much of its original purity of purpose. However, from now on a final break had been made in the services instituted under Wu ti to *T'ai-i* and *Hou-t'u* and those that had been maintained at Kan-ch'üan. During Eastern Han, the state cults were based on the reforms of 31 B.C.; and the *chiao* sacrifices were instituted to the south and north of Lo-yang in A.D. 26 and 57 respectively.⁸¹

IV. The ancestral cult

It has been noted above that under Yüan ti, and before the religious changes that were introduced at the suggestion of K'uang Heng, a few measures had been taken with the avowed intention of restoring ancient practice and altering recent policies. But perhaps the most striking example of the conservative or puritan movement is seen in respect of services held to honour the imperial ancestors. Here again the reforms had been introduced in Yüan ti's reign and they had been sponsored by men whose names have already been mentioned, *i.e.* Kung Yü and K'uang Heng. Wei Hsüan-ch'eng 韋玄成 was another official who was concerned with this aspect of the reforms. He had taken part in the famous discussions about the classical texts in 51 and held the posts of Superintendent of the Minor Treasury⁸² (from 48 to 43) and imperial counsellor (43). He rose to be Yüan ti's chancellor in 42 and held that appointment until his death in 36.⁸³

⁷⁸ HS 11.6b (HFHD, 3, 33); and HS 25B.18b.

⁷⁹ HS 25B.19a.

⁸⁰ HS 25B.20a.

⁸¹ HHS (tr.) 7.3a and 8.1a.

⁸² *Shao-fu* 少府, Dubs: Privy Treasurer.

⁸³ HS 19B.36b, 38a, b, 39b; and HS 73.8a

By Yüan ti's reign there had occurred an enormous proliferation of expense and effort in the cult of the imperial ancestors.⁸⁴ There were 167 shrines established for the purpose in 68 provincial divisions of the empire; and at the capital city 176 sites of worship were kept to the souls of the departed ancestors. At each one, four daily offerings of food were made in funerary chambers; 25 sacrifices were performed annually in the main temples, including the oblation of animals; and services were held in the side chapels at each of the four seasons. In addition there were a further thirty sites where reverence was paid in similar fashion to the empresses. According to the *Han-shu*⁸⁵ the total number of meals offered annually was 24,455; the sites were guarded by 45,129 men; and the priests, cooks and musicians totalled 12,147, not counting the servicemen engaged in looking after the sacrificial animals. Kung Yü protested⁸⁶ at the number of these establishments and at the failure to follow ancient practice at the provincial shrines. His strictures were but the start of a series of submissions made by senior statesmen in response to Yüan ti's orders for a full discussion of the subject; and in each case they recommended drastic reductions. By c. 40 B.C. these had been put into effect; services at almost 200 of the separate shrines were abolished. Special treatment was reserved only for the three most noteworthy of the Han emperors *i.e.* Kao tsu, Wen ti and Wu ti; and services dedicated to the souls of the empresses were discontinued.

However, as in the case of the services to the Five Powers and the Supreme Unity the change was not accepted as permanent. When Wei Hsüan-ch'eng died in 36, K'uang Heng took his place as chief spokesman for the traditionalist point of view. He needed considerable strength of mind to maintain his attitude. Yüan ti lay ill; he had dreamt of spiritual beings who had warned him of dire consequences that would follow the abolition of so many shrines; and his fears were confirmed when his younger brother had a dream of a similar content.⁸⁷ Yüan ti now came to believe that he should restore the shrines; for some time K'uang Heng was able to maintain his deep-seated opposition to such a return to former ways, but he was not unnaturally alarmed by the emperor's continued illness. He offered prayers to the three select emperors, asking that the consequences of abolishing so many shrines should be visited on his own person. Moreover, acting against his own principles, he felt obliged to make propitiatory statements to the shrines where services had been discontinued.⁸⁸ But there was still no improvement in the emperor's condition, and after some time the shrines in the capital were restored, with their full quota of services as before (34).

⁸⁴ See Dubs in HFHD, 2, 289 f.

⁸⁵ HS 73.10a.

⁸⁶ HS 73.10a.

⁸⁷ HS 73.14b.

⁸⁸ HS 73.14b, 15a.

Nevertheless Yüan ti died within the year. K'uang Heng tartly pointed out that the restoration of the shrines had had little effect and had failed to procure a state of bliss; and once more he was able to have the services discontinued.⁸⁹

In 28 the services were restored, at a time when the next emperor, Ch'eng ti, was very conscious that he had no heir; but at the accession of Ai ti (7 B.C.) a move was made by 53 officials for their abolition. In a long memorial⁹⁰ Wang Shun 王舜 and Liu Hsin 劉歆 argued that the contributions made to the dynasty by Wu ti and Hsüan ti were outstanding; and they were able to plead successfully for the retention of their worship. During P'ing ti's reign (A.D. 1-5) Wang Mang submitted that certain changes should be made to ensure that honours were being paid only where they were due. Each question must be judged in the full light of dynastic history, and he cited the case of the shrine to Hsüan ti's father which could not be justified, as he had never been emperor.⁹¹

Once he was emperor, Wang Mang took a number of steps in regard to the worship of ancestral spirits.⁹² In A.D. 9 he bestowed nobilities on favoured individuals together with responsibility for making offerings to some of their ancestors. These included a number of heroic sovereigns known to Chinese myth, such as Yao and Shun; for Wang Mang purported to believe that the Wang family was descended from Shun. Wang Mang also established⁹³ a number of shrines which were dedicated to the service of the closer ancestors of his house, *i.e.* five to the founders of the line and four to his immediate ancestors together with their womenfolk. In the following year the Han ancestral shrines situated in the capital city were abolished.⁹⁴ But it was not until A.D. 20 that the order was given to build shrines to the ancestral house of Hsin 新, in honour of Wang Mang's own dynasty,⁹⁵ and two years later Wang Mang attended the inaugural ceremony.⁹⁶

V. The worship of Heaven and Earth

Heaven and Earth feature in a number of memorials or other Han documents before 31 B.C. The references show an acknowledgement of their powers and of the need to venerate them; and there is some slight evidence of arrangements made for their sacrifice; but with the possible exception of one ceremony that was conducted at T'ai shan in 110, there is no evidence that an emperor took a personal part in worshipping Heaven and Earth.

⁸⁹ HS 9.12b (HFHD, 2, 334); HS 73.16b.

⁹⁰ HS 73.17a.

⁹¹ HS 73.20a. For this question see Fujikawa, pp. 91 f.

⁹² HS 99B.4b (HFHD, 3, 274 f.)

⁹³ HS 99B.5b (HFHD, 3, 276).

⁹⁴ HS 99B.13b (HFHD, 3, 303).

⁹⁵ HS 99C.8b (HFHD, 3, 395).

⁹⁶ HS 99C.16a (HFHD, 3, 422).

In about 130 B.C. Wu ti agreed to order the directorate of prayer⁹⁷ to found services to the Supreme Unity at the south-eastern bounds of Ch'ang-an city. Shortly afterwards an unattributed memorial referred to the ancient practice whereby the Son of Heaven sacrificed to Heaven and Earth and the Supreme Unity; and again Wu ti ordered the directorate of prayer to have services conducted. In neither of these instances is there reason to believe that the emperor took a personal part in the ceremonies. Somewhat later (from 121) Shao Weng 少翁 won Wu ti's favour by his claims to be able to attract the blessings of spiritual powers.⁹⁸ On his advice a terrace was constructed at Kan-ch'üan palace. Part of the structure was decorated with paintings of Heaven, Earth, the Supreme Unity and other spirits; and furnishings used to make sacrifice were placed nearby so as to attract the spirits of Heaven.

Heaven and Earth are also mentioned on the occasions when services were inaugurated to other deities at Fen-yin and Kan-ch'üan. In the first instance⁹⁹ the officials who were advising about the proposed services to the Earth Queen observed that in the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth small bullocks were used as the victims. From this reference it would seem that sacrifices were already being made to those powers, but there is nothing to show that the emperor took part, or that they ranked highly in the observances of state. On the second occasion the celebrant who formally announced the emperor's personal participation in the service to the Supreme Unity began his prayer by saying¹⁰⁰ "Heaven has just bestowed the holy pledge of precious tripods on his majesty the emperor." In the edict whereby the services at Kan-ch'üan were inaugurated, Wu ti referred to these and similar blessings, adding "fearing as We do that We cannot fulfil Our duties, Our thoughts are bent on glorifying Heaven and Earth".¹⁰¹

In 111 officials again alluded to the practices of the past, somewhat loosely.¹⁰² Wu ti had noticed that while the popular services were accompanied by both dancing and music, there were no musical performances at the *chiao*. In reply officials said that in the past sacrifices to Heaven and Earth had always been accompanied by music. Much later (A.D. 5) Wang Mang cited the *Li-chi* to the effect that the Son of Heaven sacrificed to Heaven and Earth;¹⁰³ but in neither of these cases is there anything to show to what period the text was alluding.

Neither Heaven nor Earth are mentioned in the *Han-shu* in the list of

⁹⁷ A subordinate agency of the department of the *T'ai-ch'ang* 太常; see note 71 above; HS 25A.23b.

⁹⁸ HS 25A.24b.

⁹⁹ HS 25A.26b *et seq.*; MH III, 475.

¹⁰⁰ HS 25A.33a; for the discovery of the tripod in 116, see HS 6.17b (HFHD, 2, 71).

¹⁰¹ HS 6.20b

¹⁰² HS 25A.34b.

¹⁰³ HS 25B.19a.

deities worshipped since time everlasting at Yung. According to a fragment of the lost *Han chiu i* 漢舊儀, which is ascribed to Wei Hung 衛宏 (*fl. c.* A.D. 25), the services held there were changed each year by rotation, in honour of Heaven, Earth and the Five Ti respectively.¹⁰⁴ There is no suggestion that the emperor took part in the sacrifices to Heaven and Earth, either in this context or the two references for 111 B.C. and A.D. 5 just quoted.

Perhaps the greatest set of religious ceremonies in which Wu ti participated were those centring around the ascent of Mount T'ai and the performance of the *Feng* and *Shan* rites in 110.¹⁰⁵ The underlying motives behind these ceremonies lay in Wu ti's search for immortality, coupled with his reverence for the Power of Yellow (*Huang ti* 黃帝), and in his service to the Supreme Unity. The Power of Yellow was now personified, and Wu ti sacrificed at his tomb. And herein lay an anomaly, as Huang ti was conceived as an agent for attaining immortality who had done so himself and could thus make contact with the beings of the other, immortal world. Wu ti expressed surprise that, if Huang ti had indeed attained immortality by ascending to Heaven, a tomb should be preserved for his mortal remains. One of his attendants answered that at the time of his ascent his servants had buried his robes and hat. Earth was associated with these ceremonies in so far as, having completed his ascent of the mountain, Wu ti reached Liang-fu 梁父 and made the requisite sacrifices to the master of the land (*ti chu* 地主).¹⁰⁶

Before considering other references to Heaven and Earth in the Western Han period it may be as well to compare these features of Wu ti's ascent of Mount T'ai with those of the ceremonies conducted there by Kuang Wu ti in A.D. 56. In neither case can a direct statement be made on the nature of the actual *Feng* and *Shan* services; for these were conducted in strictest secrecy and no account has been included in the Standard Histories or elsewhere.

Chavannes¹⁰⁷ traces the development of the concept of T'ai shan from a local power with limited influence to an intermediary being, who was subordinated to Heaven and through whom an emperor worshipped to Heaven. It seems that between the two ceremonies of 110 B.C. and A.D. 56 the role of T'ai shan may have developed somewhat significantly. While in 110 immortality had been the dominant motive,¹⁰⁸ at Kuang Wu ti's performance the emphasis was placed very distinctly on dynastic success. This may

¹⁰⁴ HS 25A.12b. The fragment is cited from the *So-yin* note to SC 28.46 (MH, III, 462).

¹⁰⁵ HS 25A.35a.

¹⁰⁶ HS 25A.36b.

¹⁰⁷ *Le T'ai chan*, pp. 434 f.

¹⁰⁸ This point is also stressed in HHS (tr.) 7.6b; see Chavannes, *ibid.*, 160 f.

be seen from the text of a stone inscription which is preserved in the *Hou Han-shu*;¹⁰⁹ and the climax of the ceremonies seems to have been the declaration of achievement made by the emperor at the summit of the mountain. The power to whom this declaration was addressed is not specified, but it seems very likely that the power of Heaven was intended. There is a distinct reference to Kuang Wu ti's acceptance of his mandate from Heaven; the notification was made by inscribing and depositing tablets made of jade. Before ascending the mountain and performing the *Feng* ceremony, the emperor lit a pyre of brushwood, whose smoke was presumably intended to communicate with Heaven;¹¹⁰ after the ceremony he conducted a service that was specifically dedicated to Heaven and which included rites with fire.¹¹¹ Later, at the *Shan* ceremony, he made sacrifice to Earth.¹¹² It would seem justifiable to conclude that, while there is nothing to show how far Kuang Wu ti paid reverence to Heaven or Earth at the *Feng* and *Shan* rites themselves, those powers received markedly greater attention at the ancillary ceremonies than had been the case in 110 B.C.

VI. Edicts and Omens

It has been suggested above that the changes that were introduced in the state cults of 31 B.C. marked the official adoption of the worship of Heaven and Earth in place of other deities; and that at the same time opportunity was taken to give greater emphasis to the powers of *Yin* and *Yang*. The general evidence of the edicts of the day tends to confirm the suggestion.

Tung Chung-shu (?179-?104) is usually credited with formalizing the doctrine that the untoward phenomena that disturbed human life on earth or that appeared so dramatically in the skies were the warnings issued by Heaven of catastrophes that would follow poor government.¹¹³ In fact the belief is mentioned some time before Tung Chung-chu's essays were completed. An edict of Wen ti which followed an eclipse that was reported for 178 B.C. specifically recognized the powers of Heaven in this connexion; "If the ruler of mankind lacks the requisite qualities and if his administration lacks impartiality, Heaven exposes this by means of calamities, in order to give due warning of a state of misgovernment."¹¹⁴ Later edicts which similarly reflect a belief in the powers of Heaven and Earth were again issued after the occurrence of untoward events, *i.e.* the earthquakes of 70 and 48 B.C.¹¹⁵ But both here and in other edicts there is a marked absence of any compulsion to worship Heaven and Earth; and the same omission

¹⁰⁹ HHS (tr.) 7.9a; Chavannes, *ibid.*, 308 f.

¹¹⁰ HHS (tr.) 7.10b.

¹¹¹ HHS (tr.) 7.11a.

¹¹² HHS (tr.) 7.12a.

¹¹³ For a clear statement of this doctrine, see HS 56.3a.

¹¹⁴ HS 4.9a (HFHD, 1, 240).

¹¹⁵ HS 8.6b, HS 9.2a (HFHD, 2, 213 and 303).

may be noted on two occasions when the emperor wished to give thanks for incidents of a felicitous nature. In 109 the mushrooms of immortality sprouted in the inner part of the palace at Kan-ch'üan; and the edict of the day renders thanks to the Supreme *Ti*, but not to Heaven or Earth.¹¹⁶ Similarly the appearance and behaviour of phoenixes and the fall of sweet dew were commemorated in an edict of 58;¹¹⁷ and in response to these happy signs, worship had been renewed to the Supreme Unity, the Five *Ti* and the Earth Queen; Heaven and Earth are only mentioned in the edict as the quarters whence the phenomena appeared. Similarly in the great edict issued after Wu ti's performance of the *Feng* and *Shan* sacrifices on Mount T'ai,¹¹⁸ although reference is made to the gifts bestowed by Heaven and Earth there is no question of offering them worship; and in 107 B.C. an edict¹¹⁹ refers to the imperial sacrifice made to the Earth Queen and to the appearance, but not the worship, of the spirit of the land (地祇).

In the case of *Yin* and *Yang*, the evidence of imperial edicts is even more striking. Between 178 and 30 a total of 46 edicts referred to the appearance of phenomena or the conduct of worship. In nine of these the imbalance of *Yin* and *Yang* is mentioned as a feature or cause of disaster, and the dating of these nine indicates the development of the faith in *Yin* and *Yang* in the twenty years preceding 32 B.C. Apart from the earliest of the nine edicts, which was dated in 65, the others were all issued between 48 and 35.¹²⁰ *Yin* and *Yang* are not mentioned in the documents which inaugurated the worship of the Earth Queen and the Supreme Unity in 114-3; but *Yin-yang* imagery and symbolism is seen in the arguments for the reforms of 32 and later.¹²¹

The religious reforms and political developments of Ch'eng ti's reign are also mentioned in the *Han-shu* in connexion with strange phenomena and their interpretation. The references occur mainly in the *Wu-hsing chih* 五行志 (*Han-shu*, chapter 27) which sets out to reproduce the explanations offered by Tung Chung-shu, Liu Hsiang and others for phenomena which occurred during the twelve reigns of the Han period up to Wang Mang; the chapter also notes the precedents that were recorded in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.¹²² Very often the treatment of incidents in this chapter is one of simple comparison: an occurrence is described, be it natural, freakish or catastrophic; there follows a narrative account of an historical event and

¹¹⁶ HS 6.27a (HFHD, 2, 91).

¹¹⁷ HS 8.18a (HFHD, 2, 244).

¹¹⁸ HS 6.25b (HFHD, 2, 88).

¹¹⁹ HS 6.28b (HFHD, 2, 93).

¹²⁰ *I.e.*, 48, 47, 47, 46, 44, 42, 42 and 35; HS 8.12a; HS 9.3a, 3b, 4a, 5a, 5b, 8a, 8b and 11b (HFHD, 2, 230, 305, 306, 309, 311, 312, 320, 321 and 332).

¹²¹ For a vague reference to the sacrifice of animals to the spirits of *Yin* and *Yang* in the past, see HS 25A.24a.

¹²² HS 27A.2a.

the reader is left to draw his own conclusions regarding cause and effect. In five instances a deliberate association is implied in this way with the conduct of worship.

The incessant rains and landslide at Lan-t'ien 藍田 of 161 B.C. were followed by the destruction of a large number of homes and the death of over 300 persons. The *Han-shu* observes¹²³ that, prior to this event, Wen ti had taken the advice of his favourite Hsin-yüan P'ing 新垣平 and set up shrines to the Five *ti* at Wei-yang; and had also sacrificed there in person. The *Han-shu* goes on to record Hsin-yüan P'ing's fall from favour and the punishment of himself and his family.

In two other cases the *Han-shu* again implies that floods were a natural consequence of religious change, *i.e.* the floods of 39, which had been preceded by the abolition of ancestral shrines in the provinces and the floods of 30, following the move from Kan-ch'üan and Ho-tung and the suspension of services at Yung.¹²⁴ The remaining two cases were not concerned with the state cults.¹²⁵

Of more immediate interest is a strange occurrence which was associated not only with the floods of 30 but also with the rise of the Wang family to political power. In all three events the power of *Yin* was conspicuously strong. A nine-year-old girl named Ch'en Ch'ih-kung 陳持弓 was said to have made her way right into the Wei-yang 未央 palace of Ch'ang-an without being detected by the guards. The *Han-shu* comments:¹²⁶ "The panic which overcame the population owing to the fear of floods marked the zenith of the power of *Yin*. The young girl's penetration into the halls of the palace was a symbol that, by exploiting the favours granted to a woman, the lower orders would be taking up residence in the buildings of the palace."¹²⁷ The text then draws the attention of the reader to the rise to prominence of the Wang family which had been beginning at just this time. This again was a sign or result of the dominance of *Yin*.¹²⁸

¹²³ HS 27A.21b, 22a.

¹²⁴ HS 27A.22a.

¹²⁵ HS 27B.26b. In 34 a regional inspector imposed a ban on the general erection of private sanctuaries 私社; officials had hewn down a large pagoda tree (*huai* 槐) at a site within his area, but the same night it raised itself on its former position. The second instance (HS 27C.1.22a) concerned the frightened and peculiar behaviour of the populace at a time of worship to the Queen Mother of the West. (3 B.C.).

¹²⁶ HS 27C.1.21a.

¹²⁷ This phenomenon is recorded more briefly in HS 10.4a (HFHD, 2, 381).

¹²⁸ See also: (i) HS 27A.15a. In 32 a fire broke out in the shrine dedicated to Hsüan ti's father (this shrine had been restored in 34, after the interruption of services six years earlier). (ii) HS 27B.1.26a. A popular boys' song of the Yüan ti period which referred to the overflow of spring waters was followed by the uncontrolled rise of a spring in the palace in 31. These occurrences were associated with similar events of the *Ch'un-ch'iu* period and taken as presaging the rise of *Yin* to the exclusion of *Yang*, as brought about by the Wang family. (iii) HS 27B.1.6a. In 32 brilliant lights were observed in the north-west, whence a typhoon arose; other climatic disturbances followed.

VII. The Yellow River

It begins to be comprehensible why K'uang Heng, chancellor of the Han government, apparently voiced no opinions during the panic of 30 B.C. and why it was left to Wang Shang to steady the emperor's nerves and allay the fears of the public. For K'uang Heng did not dare to speak. Recently he had been tampering with the religious practices of state; and it may be conjectured that, had he expressed a view about the floods, political detractors might have fastened upon him responsibility for exciting the wrath of the spirits and thus endangering the life of Ch'ang-an. It may be surmised that for K'uang Heng discretion lay in silence.

The end of the panic was marked by an imperial edict, issued in the ninth month (October to November) of 30 B.C.¹²⁹ "The provinces of the empire have recently suffered disastrous floods and the flowing waters have brought death to persons in their thousands. Groundless rumours were rife in the capital city and men were saying that floods were drawing near. Officials and members of the public took fright, fleeing away or climbing the walls of the city." The edict closed by ordering senior officials to conduct a commission of enquiry throughout the empire. But more than human gestures were needed for the welfare of government; and the hand of nature was soon to lend some credence to the fears expressed so forcibly.

The main problem presented by the Yellow River was that of directing the heavy press of water to the sea. If inundation of the surrounding country was to be avoided in the lower reaches, two principal channels were necessary. A major breach which occurred in one of these in 132 was not repaired until 109, when Wu ti attended personally at the work of erecting dykes.¹³⁰ It seems that the situation was improved considerably at some time between 95 and 69 by the formation of a secondary outlet as the Tun-shih ho 屯氏河;¹³¹ this was of equal width and depth as the main course of the river and followed the natural lie of the land. However, there were no dykes to constrain the waters, and the situation was still dangerous; some time between 69 and 66 artificial channels were dug to divert the stream.

In 39 B.C. the river burst its banks and the Tun-shih ho was disrupted. Early in Ch'eng ti's reign Feng Ch'un 馮遂, commandant of Ch'ing-ho 清河 commandery, pointed out that while one channel was being forced to do duty for two disaster could not be avoided. However, his plea to have the channels dredged before it was too late was rejected on the grounds of economy; and following the heavy rains of 30, the Yellow River duly burst its banks at Kuan-t'ao 館陶 and Chin-t'i 金堤. Four prefectures were affected and 150,000 *ch'ing* 頃 of land were inundated, sometimes up to a

¹²⁹ HS 10.4a (HFHD, 2, 381).

¹³⁰ HS 29.6a *et seq.*

¹³¹ HS 29.13a

depth of 30 feet.¹³² This disaster occurred in the autumn of 29 B.C.; Ying Chung 尹忠 the imperial counsellor was blamed for taking ineffective action and was forced to commit suicide.

This article started with an account of a panic that took place in Ch'ang-an; it will close with an account of the successful action taken by Chinese officials in an emergency.¹³³ The situation of 29 was saved by the prompt action of Fei T'iao 非調¹³⁴ in distributing relief in the affected areas. A fleet of 500 boats was assembled to evacuate the inhabitants and a total of 97,000 persons were moved. In addition Wang Yen-shih 王延世 was appointed commissioner of the river dykes, with orders to have the breaches sealed. Bamboo canisters measuring 40 feet long and nine girths¹³⁵ were filled with small stones; a boat was lashed to each side of the canister which was towed and lowered into position; and after 36 days the dykes were completed. To mark this successful achievement an edict ordered the regnal title to be changed for the following year to Ho-p'ing 河平, "Pacification of the River". The work of the conscript labourers who had been engaged was recorded as being equivalent to six months' service away from home;¹³⁶ and Wang Yen-shih was rewarded with an official appointment, a minor nobility (*i.e.* that of *Kuan nei hou* 關內侯) and a gift of gold. A practical measure of his achievement was shown two years later, when the damage inflicted by a further breach of the Yellow River was estimated at half the extent of that suffered in the early days of Ch'eng ti's reign.¹³⁷

¹³² HS 29.14b; HS 10.5a (HFHD, 2, 383).

¹³³ HS 29.14b.

¹³⁴ Fei T'iao was appointed *Ta-ssu-nung* in 42 B.C. (HS 19B.38a) and held the post until 27. He is very probably to be identified with the provisional (*shou* 守) *Ta-ssu-nung* T'iao who features in an undated strip found at Chü-yen (214.33A; TP 357; Chia, 1175a).

¹³⁵ *Wei* 圍; it is not clear how this unit of measurement was defined at this period.

¹³⁶ I follow the interpretation of Yen Shih-ku.

¹³⁷ HS 29.15a.