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Food Redistribution during China's Qin and Han Periods:
Accordance and discordance among ideologies, policies, and their implementation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

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September 2014

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Accordance and discordance among ideologies, policies, and their implementation

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by

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ABSTRACT

Food Redistribution during China's Qin and Han Periods:
Accordance and discordance among ideologies, policies, and their implementation

by

Moonsil Lee Kim

This dissertation analyzes the food redistribution systems of the Qin and Han periods, finding accordance and discordance among ideologies, policies, and their implementation. During the Qin and Han periods, food was given by the emperor to his subjects through various redistribution systems: salaries, rations, relief, gifts, and feasts. In chapters one to four, I introduce each form of food redistribution that directly or indirectly influenced food consumption and the dietary conditions of people of various statuses: officials, soldiers, elders, widows, victims of natural disaster, and convicts. Using recently excavated documents, received texts, and archaeological remains, I analyze what ancient Chinese people of various statuses experienced under the governmental food system, which pursued moral justification and political, social, and economic benefits both for the rulers and the ruled.

The first chapter investigates the regulations on grain storage in the central and local governments, using the Shuihudi 睡虎地 Qin legal texts. The “Statutes on Granaries” (*Cang lü* 倉律) and the “Statutes on Food rations at Conveyance Stations” (*Zhuan shi lü* 傳食律)

are compared to administrative documents from Liye 里耶 and Xuanquan 懸泉 to prove that there were significant discrepancies between these statutes and the actual distribution of food.

Chapter two examines the reconstructed salary list and the “Statutes on Bestowals” (*Ci li* 賜律) from Zhangjiashan 張家山 to see how the idea of discriminatory distribution was reflected in the salary system of the Han and how the system was maintained in spite of the problem of too little salary for the lower officials. The military salary system, which was combined with the ration system, and imperial gift food are examined in the context of a solution to secure the food supply to military families on the frontier and to the lower salary-grade officials.

Chapter three concerns the food distributed to commoners, especially those in distress or danger. This chapter analyzes the welfare food distributions for the aged, female heads-of-household, and victims of natural disaster. I suggest that comfort-food and relief-food policies were actually geared toward pursuing social stability by saving able-bodied peasants and preventing social mobility, rather than having been designed simply to demonstrate filial piety in an emergency situation.

Chapter four deals with ancient Chinese feasting as a method of food redistribution. This chapter examines the two different styles of feasting, the *yan* 宴 feast and the *pu* 酺 feast, by applying current anthropological theories of feasts to the roles of ancient Chinese feasts. After theoretical examination, the economy of leftover food after ritualistic feasting is analyzed based on recently discovered documents from Liye. I argue that by using the leftovers and byproducts, the rulers fed people of inferior status who suffered from poor dietary conditions.

The food redistribution system in early imperial China was ideally designed to benefit all people under heaven “equally” within the framework of the social hierarchy, meanwhile providing extra resources to those of lower status and to people in distress. However, the ideology of the regulations and their actual implementation were frequently out of sync, as laws were applied flexibly and human greed worked every possible step of food redistribution.

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Introduction

1) The System of Empire of Food

“Just as there is no life without food, so there is no civilization without a food empire.”¹

Early imperial China sustained itself by maintaining the mechanism of a “food empire,” signifying “what urban societies create to feed themselves.”² In order to uphold the “food empire,” the rulers made great efforts to contrive ideal governmental food policies in terms of production, collection, and distribution/circulation.³ In order to increase production, they propagandized the “agriculture-first policy” (重農政策) and developed land systems and irrigation systems. New agricultural techniques and tools were invented and promoted to increase yields. The government often lent farmers tools, cattle, and seeds to help the cultivators produce a greater harvest.

A taxation system was set up to collect a certain percentage of what the farmers produced. In order to transfer the goods from the provinces to the center, effective transportation systems on land and on water were designed. The policies regarding storehouses in local and central facilities were set up in order to keep the collected goods safe.

¹ Evan Fraser and Andrew Rimas, *Empires of Food: Feast, Famine, and the Rise and Fall of Civilizations* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 7.

² *Ibid.*

³ Wu Bin 吴宾 categorizes the ancient food policies into four fields: production, storage, circulation, and other. Wu Bin, 中国古代粮食安全问题研究 *Zhongguo gudai liangshi anquan wenti yanjiu (Research on Food Security in Ancient China)*, Diss. Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University, 2007, 114–122.

The granary system was not only for storing grains, but also for controlling food circulation. During Emperor Wu 武's reign (r.141-87 BCE), Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊, (c.152-80 BCE) established the *pingzhun* 平准 (“price stabilization”) and *junshu* 均輸 (“equal supply”) systems to enforce market prices and supply stabilization by buying goods, including food items, when these were cheap, and selling them when they were expensive.⁴ As a specified *pingzhun* system for grains, a system for “ever-level granaries” (*chang ping cang* 常平倉) was set up mostly in border areas between the years 57 and 54 BCE to store grains for provisions against famine and to control prices.⁵ Even though contemporary Confucian scholars criticized that operating a *pingjun* system was to pursue benefits by abandoning agriculture, the system seems to have contributed to solving the food security problem by controlling supply and demand in the market.⁶ With the received historical texts, the research on the distribution/circulation of food of the ancient Chinese has been generally limited to the analysis of the effectiveness of governmental systems and policies that control the market price and supply and demand.

In addition, there existed another significant policy regarding governmental food distribution and circulation during the Qin and the Han period: the redistribution of food from the rulers to subjects of various statuses. Since the rulers distributed to their subjects certain amounts of food that were originally collected from cultivators as tax or paid as tribute, I will name this system of food distribution “redistribution.” While the food flow

⁴ Originally, the *pingjun* system was supposedly created by Li Kui 李悝 in the state of Wei during the Warring States period, and it was fully established and operated by Sang Hongyang 桑弘羊 during the reign of Wudi (141-87 BCE) of the Han period.

⁵ Han shu (24A:1141); Nancy Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China: The Earliest Economic History of China to A.D. 25: Han Shu 24 with Related Texts, Han Shu 91 and Shih-Chi 129* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 195.

⁶ Wu Bin, *Zhongguo gudai liangshi*, 114–122.

from the cultivators to the rulers has been well examined under the topic of taxation systems, little attention has been paid to the food sent from the rulers to the subjects in terms of food redistribution and circulation. Also, scholars have generally focused on the macroeconomic policies of the state, such as the *pingjun*, *junshu* and *chang ping cang* systems, not on the issue of the food redistribution system, due to lack of evidence supporting the importance of redistribution as a means of solving food security problems. Therefore, in this dissertation, instead of examining each category of the food systems or the flow from the cultivators to the rulers, I will deal with a category of redistribution focusing on the flow from storage to subjects (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Government Food Policies

2) The Concept of Fair Distribution

When the government redistributed food to their subjects, they did not give out food impromptu. The occasion, the amount and kind of food, the recipients, and the distribution process were all regulated in order to effectively achieve the purpose of redistribution, which will be discussed in the chapters that follow. Regardless of the reality of redistribution, the regulations concerning food redistribution were established according to leaders' ideals. Therefore, ancient Chinese regulations on food redistribution are hard to understand apart from the concept of ideal distribution and the contemporary definition of fairness. In order to present the ideological foundation of the redistribution system, I will cover the economic views, specifically the notion of fair distribution, over which the representative ancient Chinese scholars argued.

Three major philosophies of ancient China, Confucianism, Legalism, and Daoism, offered different perspectives on the concept of fair distribution. From ancient Chinese literature, such as the *Shangjun Shu* 商君書 (*Book of Lord Shang*), *Daode jing* 道德經, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Lunyu* 論語 (*Analects*), *Mengzi* 孟子 and *Xunzi* 荀子, we find that ancient Chinese scholars agreed that agriculture is the foundation of society, but they had different opinions on the ideal way to control and distribute agricultural products. The Daoists saw governmental food policies such as irrigation systems, taxation systems, controlling market prices, and redistribution as unnecessary actions straying far from the ideal of *wuwei* 無爲 (literally “non-action”). Based on the concept of *wuwei*, they rejected any attempt to build human institutions that would be used to control. From the Daoist point of view, then, a food redistribution system set up by the government would not be ideal or fair at all.

On the other hand, the Legalist Lord Shang (Shang Yang 商鞅, d.338 BCE) believed that institutional devices, laws, can idealize the system of production and distribution, and the resources should be distributed according to individual merit in order to forge a strong state. Therefore, he established a law that peasants could have land if they reclaimed the land, and they would be rewarded if they produced a bumper crop. If they killed many enemies, they were able to receive a reward regardless of social status. Equal opportunity and equal reward was the ideal concept of distribution, but the reward should differ according to the degree of contribution and merit. From the Legalists' perspective, proper reward according to individual merit is "fair." Therefore, as aristocratic rank in Qin was discriminatively bestowed based on one's military achievement, distribution was different according to the degree of the recipients' contribution to the state, which was reflected in one's rank. Thus, discriminative distribution according to the recipients' contribution to the state is "fair" from the Legalistic viewpoint.

Regarding Confucius' 孔子(551-479 BCE) concept of ideal distribution, the passages from *Lunyu* (chapter 16, Jishi 季氏第十六) have been frequently discussed by commentators and scholars:

(丘也聞有國有家者), 不患寡而患不均, 不患貧而患不安. 蓋均無貧,和無寡,安無傾.

(I have heard that those who have a country and family) do not worry about scarcity, but about inequality; not worry about poverty, but about disquietude. Under equality, there is no poverty; under harmony, no scantiness; under tranquility, no decline.

With these passages, it has been generally understood that Confucius stressed the importance of economic equality in order to control the people and maintain a stable and

strong society. Contemporary Chinese scholars even relate the phrase “*huan bu jun*” 患不均 (worry about the inequality of distribution) to the principal economic concept of socialism, believing that Confucius first introduced the concept of equal distribution of wealth, the foundation of socialism.⁷ In this context, in contemporary scholarship the phrase “*bu huan gua er huan bu jun*” 不患寡而患不均 has been generally interpreted as “not worry about the scantiness of wealth (or land) but the inequality of its distribution.”⁸

However, in ancient Chinese literature *gua* 寡 has been generally used to indicate a lack of something not material, such as words, population, knowledge, and so on, while *pin* 貧 in the next phrase can directly indicate material *wealth*.⁹ Some argue that the placement of *gua* and *pin* should be swapped for logical and grammatical pertinence as pointing out that in the latter sentence of the passage, *pin* is coordinated with *jun* 均無貧 in the context of equal distribution of wealth. They say if *gua* and *pin* switch places, the phrase “*bu huan pin er huan bu jun*” 不患貧而患不均 (“not worry about poverty but about its inequality of distribution”) clearly shows a concern regarding the distribution of wealth, whereas “*bu huan gua er huan bu an*” 不患寡而患不安 (“not worry about scantiness but about disquietude”) perfectly suits concerns regarding the population.¹⁰

⁷ Zhao Longwen 趙龍文, 論語今釋 *Lunyu Jinshi*, vol. 3 (Taipei Shi: Zheng Zhong Shu Ju, 1967), 1604

⁸ Jichuang Hu, *A Concise History of Chinese Economic Thought* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1988), 49; Kim Kyōng-t'ak, *Nonŏ* 논어, 6p'an. ed. (Sŏul T'ŭkpyŏlsi: Han'guk Chayu Kyoyuk Hyŏphoe, 1971), 417.; Kim interprets *gua* as the lack of land and *bujun* as the unequal distribution of land.

⁹ Luo Zhufeng 羅竹風, 汉语大词典 *Hanyu da cidian* (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1991), vols. 11, 1589.

¹⁰ Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, 論語譯注 *Lunyu Yizhu*, 2nd ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 172–174.

In fact, many commentaries propose various meanings of the phrases. In *Lunyu Jizhu* 論語集注 (Collected annotations on the *Analects*), penned in the twelfth century, Zhu Xi 朱熹 explains that *gua* indicates the lack of people, while *pin* indicates the lack of properties (“寡謂民少 貧謂財乏”).¹¹ Liu Bonan 劉寶楠 (1791-1855) and Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕 (1821-80) commented that *gua* indicates that many people wander, or go into exile (“寡者民多流亡也”).¹² Because of the different interpretations on *gua*, there are also a variety of commentaries on the meaning of *jun*. Some scholars see *jun* as indicating equality or equal distribution, as shown above, while some explain that this phrase is about the concern of unevenly distributed population in the territory rather than a matter of equal distribution of wealth. James Legge’s English translation shows the differences clearly:

“I have heard that rulers of States and chiefs of families are not troubled *lest their people should be few*, but are troubled lest they should not keep their several places; that they are not troubled with fears of poverty, but are troubled with fears of a want of contented repose among the people in their several places. For when the people keep their several places, there will be no poverty; when harmony prevails, there will be no scarcity of people; and when there is such a contented repose, there will be no rebellious upsetting.”¹³

This interpretation indicates that the words of Confucius might be not about how the rulers manage the economy, as in distributing wealth equally for people’s material satisfaction, but how they control the population and people’s mental repose.

¹¹ Zhu Xi 朱熹, 四書章句集注 *Si Shu Zhang Ju Ji Zhu* (Taipei Shi: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan, 1968), 121.

¹² Liu Bonan 劉寶楠, 論語正義 *Lunyu Zhengyi* (Taipei Shi: Taiwan shang wu yin shu guan, 1968), 30.

¹³ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Confucian Analects (Lunyu)*, vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), 308.

No matter what Confucius originally meant and how later scholars variously understood his words, it seems that Han Chinese scholars in the second century generally understood the phrase as a matter of wealth and its equal distribution. This can be supported by the fact that Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), the Confucian scholar who facilitated the Han empire's adoption of Confucianism as the ideological foundation of the state, quoted the phrase as “*bu huan pin er huan bu jun*” 不患貧而患不均 in his work *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn (Chunqiu Fanlu 春秋繁露)*:

It is said by Confucius, “We are not troubled with fears of poverty, but are troubled with fears of a lack of equality of wealth.” (不患貧而患不均) Therefore, when there is here a concentration of wealth, there must be an emptiness there. Great riches make the people proud; and great poverty makes them wretched. When they are wretched, they would become robbers; when they are proud, they would become oppressors; it is human nature. From the nature of the average man, the sages discovered the origin of disorder. Therefore, when they established social laws and divided up the social orders, they made the rich able to show their distinction without being proud, and the poor able to make their living without misery; this was the standard for the equalization of society.¹⁴

According to Dong's interpretation, *jun* does not mean the same amount, but “proper” distribution according to righteousness, which actually indicates unequal distribution by maintaining the good nature of the rich and the poor in order to preserve social peace. It is fair that people of the honorable/superior/ruling position have more wealth and opportunity than those of the mean/inferior/ruled position. Confucius is not concerned

¹⁴Translated by Huan-Chang Chen, *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University, 1911), 463–4.

with superior men who are “able to be content with poverty” and “to live a poor yet happy life,” but the inferior men who have an “unrestrained quest for profits” and therefore are discontented and “seldom refrain from making complaints.”¹⁵ Even though the inferior class does not expect to have more than their superiors, they easily complain and may create social disorder when they have less than what they are supposed to be able to get. Therefore, Confucius advises that the rulers should distribute wealth to their subjects “equally,” which does not mean equal amounts, but proper amounts according to their status in order to provide equal opportunity, from which a person will be enabled to make the same amount of income as another person of his status.¹⁶

The meaning of *jun* and the concept of fair distribution were further developed by Mencius 孟子 (372-289 or 385-302 BCE) when he proposed the significance of *hengchan* 恒產, a secured source of income, guaranteed by the government.

民之爲道也，有恒產者有恒心，無恒產者無恒心，苟無恒心，放辟邪侈，無不爲己。及陷乎罪，然後從而刑之，是罔民也。焉有仁人在位罔民而可爲也。¹⁷

The way of the people is this: If they have a certain livelihood, they will have a fixed heart; if they have not a certain livelihood, they have not a fixed heart. And if they have not a fixed heart, there is nothing which they

¹⁵ Hu, A Concise History of Chinese Economic Thought, 48.

¹⁶ Chen, The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School, 2:460.

¹⁷ Mencius, 孟子注疏 *Mengzi zhu shu* (juan5A.5, 2:2702), 十三經注疏 *Shi san jing zhu shu*, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chu ban she, 1997)

will not do in the way of self-abandonment, of moral deflection, of depravity, and of wild license. When they have thus been involved in crime, to follow them up and punish them: this is to entrap the people. How can such a thing as entrapping the people be done under the rule of a benevolent man?¹⁸

According to this paragraph from the *Book of Mencius*, Mencius believes that the sage rulers should guarantee people's living by providing sources of income in order to keep them moral and prevent crime. The redistribution system can be understood as one of the income sources that the ruler can provide. This idea is comparable to the contemporary concept of social security. Therefore, it can be said that the concept of fair distribution was expanded by Mencius to the scope of considering the livelihood of the people.¹⁹

The concept of fairness in the context of social security is reemphasized by Xunzi 荀子 (312-230 BCE), who addresses the ruler's responsibility to distribute wealth to the people in need. He argues for a distribution that will benefit the people in the lower classes, but at the same time he asserts the significance of strict discrimination based on rewards and according to occupation. Based on the notion of *li* 禮 (propriety), which emphasizes discriminatory treatment according to status, Xunzi disputes the idea of rewarding all people

¹⁸ James Legge, *The Chinese Classics* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), vol. 2, 239-240.

¹⁹ Sŭng-hye Kim, 유교의 뿌리를 찾아서: 논어, 맹자, 순자에 대한 해석학적 접근 *Yugyo ūi ppuri rŭl ch'ajasŏ: Nonŏ, Maengja, Sunja e taehan haesŏkhak chŏk chŏpkŭn*, Kaejŏngp'an. (Seoul: Chisik ūi P'unggyŏng, 2001), 241-248.

equally. Instead, he sees it is fair when people receive different rewards based on the significance of their work:

“The ancient kings accordingly established rites and justice for men in order to distribute wealth. They distinguished the classes between the honorable and the mean, the difference between the old and the young, and the separation between the wise and the ignorant, and the able and the incapable. They made all men take up their work and get their justice respectively. Then, the different amounts of income either great or small, were all made suitable to everyone. This is the principle of harmony and unity of a society..... Therefore, some receive income from the whole empire, [as an emperor], but they do not think that it is too much; and some receive it as a doorkeeper, or a waiter on a traveler, or a guard along the gate, or a watchman, but they do not think that it is too little.”²⁰

At the end of this statement, Xunzi says “although it looks unequal, it is equal; although it looks partial, it is just; although it looks different, it is uniform.” The character of *jun* at first glance seems to mean something equal, just, and uniform, but it actually indicates the unequal, partial, and differentiating nature of the redistribution system.

It seems that major philosophers from the Warring States Period to the Han period proposed various concepts of ideal distribution. However, their ideas were not contrary to each other but rather complementary within the big picture of the commonly held notion of fairness: “unequal but universal.” From the viewpoint of those directing the redistribution system, fair distribution did not indicate distribution of the same thing and the same amount to all people. Instead, it was commonly considered fair to distribute differently, guided to discriminate according to whatever they thought most important: status, ability, merit, or need. At the same time, they believed that all the people in the state should be included in

²⁰ Xunzi; Shuren Liang, 荀子約注 *Xunzi Yue Zhu* (Taipei Shi: Shi jie shu ju, 1962), 98-99; translated by Chen, *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School*, 2:461.

the redistribution system as recipients. In other words, it is fair when everyone, including even the lowest members of the society, have the opportunity to benefit from the system although some are granted much less compared to others. In the following chapters on food redistribution systems, in the forms of salaries, rations, relief/comfort food, and feasting, we find that the concept of fair distribution shared in ancient Chinese society is clearly reflected in the regulations.

3) Research Method

For this dissertation, I will use two kinds of written sources: received texts and excavated documents. Received texts such as historical and philosophical documents and literature will be used to analyze historical facts, ideological debates, and personal experiences. The *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, and *Hou Hanshu* are the main sources, not only for determining what happened in the past, but also for comparing historians' perspectives of political and social events. Such historical documents convey detailed stories about the causes and results of the emperor's gift-giving events.

In addition to these received texts, I will use newly-excavated documents in order to demonstrate the actual regulations and their implementation. Due to the development of the economy, archaeological research, and publication, tremendous amounts of bamboo strips from the Qin and Han period, which are called *Qin jian* 秦簡 or *Han jian* 漢簡, respectively, have been excavated since the 1970s in mainland China. While the bamboo strips previously discovered during the former half of the twentieth century from Dunhuang 敦煌 and Juyan

居延 in Gansu Province largely concern military administration in the frontier garrison, recently found bamboo strips from the sites of Shuihudi 睡虎地, Liye 里耶, Zhangjiashan 張家山, and Yinwan 尹灣 contain a wider variety of documents including personal writing, recipes, literature, administrative records, accounts, legal procedures, and the laws of the central and provincial governments. Among the various genres of the documents, administrative and juridical texts, in particular, are significant for revealing accordance or discordance among ideology, policy, and its implementation.

The 1,155 strips of *Qin jian* discovered in 1975 in the coffin of tomb No. 11 at Shuihudi, Yunmeng County, Hubei Province comprise the first actual Qin laws we have found beyond the received texts, although these are only a selection from a larger body of Qin laws. These select administrative rules and material on penal law were buried in the tomb of a Qin administrator named Xi 喜 (262-217 BCE), who was a government scribe, Prefectural Clerk, and was finally charged with trying criminal suits. These texts comprise several topics, such as *Chronology* (*bian nian ji* 編年記), *Eighteen Qin Statutes* (*qin liu shi ba zhong* 秦律十八種), *Answers to Questions Concerning Qin Statutes* (法律答問), and more. Among them, *Eighteen Qin Statutes* contains eighteen sections of rules, such as those for agriculture, livestock, granaries, coins, artisans, supervisors, treasuries, compulsory labor, and so on. The *Answers to Questions Concerning Qin Statutes* is about legal interpretation. These texts provide abundant information on Qin law for administration and criminal cases. In particular, the directions on agricultural work, granary systems, and food rations from these texts are significant sources for research on food redistribution.

In 2002, more than 36,000 wooden slips and tablets were excavated from the city-site at Liye in Longshan County, Hunan Province. These records contain the Qin administrative documents on household registration, accounts, food rations, and convict laborers of Qianling County in Dongting Prefecture from the 25th year of Qin King Zheng's reign to the first year of the Second Qin Emperor's reign (222-209 BCE).²¹ Since these texts are some of the most recently discovered, the complete report of the philological research on these slips has not been published in full yet. Nevertheless, with the scattered texts available, we are able to see the nature and process of administrative records and accounts written by the county's officials in order to report to superior authorities. These administrative documents can be compared to the legal codes in order to discover the reality of the implementation of regulations. In addition, the Qin manuscripts from Guanju 關沮, Hubei Province, contain very new information on the economy of ritual food, which provided a significant reference concerning sacrifices to *Xiannong* 先農, the agricultural god, at the local level, by Qin officials.

The *Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year* (*Er nian lü ling* 二年律令) text, among the legal texts discovered from Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247, is a major source of early Han legal tradition. This text consists of twenty-seven Han statutes (*lü*) and one ordinance (*ling*) that seemed to be promulgated in 186 BCE, the second year of Empress Dowager Lü 呂 (d.180 BCE). Among them, the “Statutes on Food Rations at Conveyance Stations” (*Zhuanshi lü* 傳食律) and the “Statute on Bestowals” (*Ci lü* 賜律) are especially significant

²¹ Li Xueqin, “A Preliminary Study of the Qin Period Inscribed Slips from Liye,” *Chinese Archaeology* 4 (2004): 158; Robin D.S. Yates, “Jiedu Liye Qin jian- Qin dai difang xingzheng zhidu” 解讀里耶秦簡-秦代地方行政制度, presented at the International Workshop on the Study of Chinese Manuscripts Written on Bamboo Slips and Silk 2012: Studies on Qin Manuscripts Written on Bamboo Slips and Silk 中國簡帛學國際論壇 2012:秦簡牘研究, Wuhan University, November 18, 2012.

in this research, as they provide information on food distribution at local courier stations as well as on food bestowed by the Emperor. The articles from the Zhangjiashan manuscript, with their regulations on distributed food items and amounts according to circumstance and rank can be compared to the Qin legal codes from Shuihudi in order to examine similarities and differences.

The bamboo slips discovered at the site of the Han post station of Xuanquan 懸泉, Dunhuang includes information on the economy, foreign policy, legal system, ethnic relations, and transportation on the Han frontier. In particular, one of the account book discovered contains expenditures for treating officials who were dispatched from the central government or on business trips west and east is a great source for comparing actual food consumption of officials compared to regulations written in Han law. Also, the fragments discovered from Xuanquan provide us with the prices of various food items and the exchange rate in the far west area of Han over a long period of time, from the reign of Emperor Wu (r.141-87 BCE) to the end of the Han.

In addition, the Han documents from the *Yinwan* site contain detailed records of administrative work and regulations at the commandery level from 16 to 11 BCE, during the reign of Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33-7 BCE). This included a statement of financial accounts, numbers of the registered population, figures for the land that was under cultivation and for that which had been reclaimed, and the total number of all types of subordinate units of Donghai Commandery among the regular eighty-three commanderies of the empire. This is a great source for understanding early Han China's economic policy as well as its provincial land and tax system, which were closely connected to the central government through the Han bureaucratic system. In particular, the census records with the

age ranges of each county and the commandery can be utilized to find the number of food recipients during the Han period if the number can be relied upon.

These newly discovered legal codes and administrative documents provide abundant supporting evidence for what we had known earlier from the literature as well as new perspectives about ancient society. However, some of this new evidence conflicts with previous knowledge built on the historical literature. For example, according to Lord Shang and Han Fei, a state should be ruled according to strict regulations that are equally applied to the people, with no exception, in order to strengthen the state. However, penalties in the Qin laws were not only different between administrative wrongs and criminal acts, but also the same violation received different penalties according to the situation. Even though the theory of the Legalists was recognized by the rulers of Qin as the dominant ideology of the state, the formation of Qin law was a rather complicated process with some ideas and norms contrary to Lord Shang and Han Fei.²² Hulsewé also argues that there were light punishments for superiors, unlike in Lord Shang's theory. He shows that they had different rules and penalties according to the crime, situation, and rank.²³

For the study of agriculture and food distribution, I also can find some conflict between the situation described in literary texts and the formulated rules. For example, while the image of “cruel law of the cruel state” has continued to be supported by historical literature until recently, Shuihudi 睡虎地 Qin code shows that the state actively supported agricultural production practices such as lending tools and animals. Also, even though the regulation of the food rations distributed to Han convicts laborers guaranteed enough food to

²² Liu Yongping, *Origins of Chinese Law* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press: 1998).

²³ A.F.P. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law : An Annotated Translation of the Ch'in Legal and Administrative Rules of the 3rd Century B.C., Discovered in Yün-Meng Prefecture, Hu-Pei Province, in 1975* (Leiden: E. J. Brill: 1985).

survive, it seems that convict laborers suffered from lack of food, according to the situation described in the literature. Why the differences between these two? Can I fully rely on the discovered law in order to reconstruct the agricultural and food redistribution systems? How do I use these sources correctly and effectively? This is another topic that I must deal with in this dissertation and the future research.

4) Dissertation Object / Chapter Overview

This dissertation deals with the accordance and discordance among ideologies, policies, and their implementations by analyzing the food redistribution system during the Qin and Han periods, when China began to create an imperial state. As for examining the redistribution system, this dissertation attempts to answer several questions: How were food resources redistributed to officials, armies, peasants, and convicts after being collected as tax or tribute? What kinds of ideology or purposes were reflected in the food redistribution system and regulations? How were the regulations actually implemented in the administrative process? What caused discordance among the ideology, the regulations, and implementation?

In order to answer these questions, each chapter is designed to introduce the purpose, process and features of a form of redistribution, focusing on its impact on a certain group or groups of people in society. The ideology that was the foundation of the system, the legal code and imperial edicts that defined the specific occasions, recipients, food amount and kind, and process, and the administrative documents and records that show the reality of its implementation will be utilized.

The first chapter starts with an investigation of the regulations on grain storage in the central and local governments, using the Shuihudi Qin legal texts. An analysis of the “Statutes on Granaries” (*Cang li* 倉律) and the “Statutes on Food rations at Conveyance Stations” (*Zhuan shi li* 傳食律) is compared to administrative documents from Liye and Xuanquan to see whether the established regulations regarding the granary systems were actually observed. Since a large part of the “Statutes on Granaries” concerns food rations to convict laborers, and the “Statutes on Food Rations at Conveyance Stations” are about the food given to officials, this chapter deals with the reality of food rations given to convict laborers and officials on business trips, who were supposed to be given food from local granaries.

Chapter Two focuses on salaries, which constitute the largest portion of redistributed items from the government. The redistributed amount of grain given to officials according to salary grade is analyzed with the recorded evidence in the historical literature. This chapter examines the reconstructed salary list and the “Statutes on Bestowals” from Zhangjiashan to see how the idea of discriminatory distribution is reflected in the redistribution system of the Han and how the system was maintained in spite of the problem of too little salary for the lower officials. The military salary system, which was combined with the ration system, will be examined in the context of the solution to secure the food supply to military families on the frontier.

Chapter Three concerns the food distributed to commoners, especially those who were in distress and danger. During the Han period, Confucian beliefs were widely employed to design welfare policies as a means of effectively displaying the virtue of the ruler. However, ideal policies made with lofty ideology, such as tax exemptions and

bestowal of ranks, goods, and food to the aged and the distressed, were sometimes distorted or made invalid when the policies were actually implemented. This chapter analyzes the welfare food distributions for the aged, female heads-of-household, and victims of natural disasters and suggests that the comfort and relief food policies were actually aimed at pursuing social stability by preventing social mobility, rather than simply designed to highlight the Confucian virtue of rulers. Comparing recently excavated legal and administrative documents from Shuihudi, Zhangjiashan, and Liye to the historical literature, this chapter shows that the Han rulers were more interested in saving able-bodied peasants than in demonstrating filial piety when confronted with an emergency situation.

Chapter Four deals with ancient Chinese feasting as a method of food redistribution. This chapter starts with an explanation of the two different kinds of court feast during the Han period: the *yan* 宴 feast, the exclusive feast among the elite, and the *pu* 酺 feast, the inclusive statewide drinking party. The nature of these two different styles of feasting has been examined in the context of the food redistribution system and by applying current anthropological theories on feasts to understand the role of ancient Chinese feasts, in a universal context. After theoretical examination, the economy of leftover food after ritualistic feasting will be analyzed based on recently discovered documents from Liye. This shows that not only the feast itself, but also the disposal of food after feasting was systemically regulated in the laws and recorded in the accounts. Administrative documents show that the leftover food after feasting and rituals was sold to convict laborers. In this chapter, I argue that by using the leftovers and byproducts, the rulers fed people of inferior status who were in a poor dietary condition.

Under the one theme of the food redistribution system during the Qin and the Han periods, these four chapters cover the details of what ancient Chinese people of various statuses experienced under the governmental food system, which pursued moral justification and political, social, and economic benefits both for the rulers and the ruled. Each chapter covers topics regarding the ideologies involved in food redistribution practices, the problems inherent in the systems, and the possible reasons of disconnection between the ideal and the real. Utilizing newly-discovered ancient documents, the discordance between the laws and the administrative records is analyzed, revealing the nature of the legal system and the possibility of corruption therein.

Table 1. Han Measurements²⁴

Capacity	1 ge 合		19.968 cc
	1 sheng 升	= 10 ge 合	199.687 cc
	1 dou 斗	= 10 sheng 升	1.996 liters
	1 shi 石 (= 1 hu 斛)	= 10 dou 斗	19.968 liters
Weight	1 zhu 銖		0.64 g
	1 liang 两	= 24 zhu 銖	15.24 g
	1 jin 斤	= 16 liang 两	244 g
	1 jun 鈞	= 30 jin 斤	7.32 kg
	1 dan 石	= 4 jun 鈞	29.3kg (= 64lbs, 8 oz.)
Area	1 qing 頃	= 100 mu 畝 ²⁵	11.39 English acres (= 4.6 hectare)

²⁴ Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration*. Vol. 1. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 161.

²⁵ The enlarged *mu* 畝 of 6x 240 *bu* 步, which was officially recognized under Wudi.

I. Granaries, Statutes, and Rations

The granary system is significant in food distribution research because taxes collected in the form of grain were stored in granaries, and the redistribution of grain to the people started from the action of “opening the granary (*kaicang* 開倉).” Therefore, this chapter will begin with an investigation into the nature of grain storage in the central and local governments during the Qin and Han periods using historical literature, laws, and excavated administrative documents.

Since research on storehouses based on available archaeological evidence such as images from tomb reliefs and models in pottery, wood, and bronze has been already fully discussed by many scholars,²⁶ I will focus on the features of government granaries mostly based on textual evidence. I will examine the “Statutes on Granaries” from the Shuihudi 睡虎地 Qin legal texts in order to reveal the process of entering and issuing grain, the form of reporting to the central government, and the regulation on distribution in terms of amount and recipients. Then, the policies on the granary system and food distribution at the conveyance stations as written in the legal text will be compared to the actual administrative record. Also, this chapter will examine the administrative records of rations and the accounts of food expenditures of the local granaries from Liye and Xuanquan to see whether the established regulations were actually implemented. This research on the granary system based on the laws and administrative documents will reveal how the Qin and Han governments managed collected taxes, who was in charge of grain distribution, how the

²⁶ See Hayashi Minao, *Kandai No Bunbutsu* 漢代の文物 (Kyoto: Kyoto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyujo, 1973); Wang Zhongshu, *Han Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Francesca Bray, *Science and Civilisation in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), vol.6, pt.2.

process of redistribution occurred, how much grain was distributed and to whom, and finally what was the ultimate goal of establishing laws governing the granary system.

1) Granaries in Received Texts and Excavated Documents

“China has a shaped system of grain storage education and research. The state has invested in building advanced storage facilities, and most elevators have been equipped with power ventilation appliances, computer controlled temperature measuring systems and recycling fumigation devices...The Chinese government always places great importance on the grain storage of peasant households. It has appropriated earmarked capital for developing tools and preservatives adapting to specific stock requirements of farmers, and has sent professionals to rural areas to help farmers improve their storage capability and reduce losses.”²⁷

This statement appears on the main page of the current website of the State Administration of Grain of the People’s Republic of China. It proclaims that the mission of the government is to maintain storage facilities and to improve storage capability in order to reduce the loss of property. Concerns about how to preserve collected grains safely so as to prevent losses may have existed since humans began to store surplus food garnered from cultivation and hunting/gathering. Increasingly compiling success derived ways of saving

²⁷ “State Administration of Grain” <http://www.chinagrain.gov.cn/english/Grain%20Storage.html> (4/8/2014)

food, managing a granary system, and distributing stored food. As state-level societies began to develop legal systems, these concerns gradually morphed into rules for a storage system and its management.

In China, as early as the Zhou period, there have existed guidelines for managing grains. The *Liji* emphasizes the significance of storing a surplus, arguing that a state cannot continue unless it keeps an accumulation of grain that would sustain the people for a minimum of three years. If there is not a surplus sufficient for six years, the state is in danger; in order to reach self-sufficiency, a state must accumulate sufficient food for nine years.²⁸ Moreover, in order to enhance states' economic power, ancient scholars proposed efficient ways of managing food resources that required the direct involvement of states controlling the price of grain. For example, it is known that the statesman Guan Zhong 管仲 (c. 720-645 BCE) of the polity of Qi 齊 proposed that the government purchase large quantities of grain and store them in the state granaries when it was abundant and cheap, and sell it back to the people in times of shortage and high price. It is not clear if this proposal was actually practiced in the state of Qi, but, later, a similar policy, suggested by Li Kui 李悝 (455-395 BCE), a minister at the court of Marquis Wen 文侯 of Wei 魏, seems to have been practiced in the state of Wei.²⁹ These ideas and policies on storage eventually influenced unique granary systems, such as Ever-level Granary (*changping cang* 常平倉), which was established during the Han period and lasted until the end of the Qing period.

Studies on ancient Chinese granaries have generally been conducted with the limited information from received texts and archaeological remains. While received texts provide

²⁸ 禮記正義 *Liji zheng yi* (juan 12.6, 1:1334) *Shi san jing zhu shu*; James Legge, trans., *Li Chi: Book of Rites* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1967).vol. 1, 222.

²⁹ Swann, *Food and Money*, 136-140; Bray, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 417.

some details about the administrative structure and political function of granaries, archaeological remains, such as storehouse models in wood, pottery, and bronze, and images of grain storage units on Han tomb reliefs and mural paintings give us visual information on the architectural structure of the storage buildings. According to archaeological studies, the preferred style of storage buildings differed according to region during the Qin and Han periods. A rectangular building called *jing* 京, with a gate, windows, and a roof, sometimes placed on stilts, was a common style of small granary in Northern China, while *qun* 囷, a round, roofed wickerwork bin was widely used in Southern China.³⁰ *Cang* 倉 indicates a larger rectangular storage facing generally managed by the government.³¹ In addition to the granary “buildings,” a large group of Han underground grain storage facilities have been discovered in the west suburb of Luoyang 洛陽, in Henan Province, where one square bin is 3.44 meters long, 3.1 meters wide, and 1.4 meters deep, and a round bin is 1.2 meters high with a diameter of 3.6 meters.³² Considering that the largest underground storage constructed during the reign of Emperor Yang of Sui 隋煬帝 (569-618) was capable of storing about 125,000 tons of grain in the 450,000 square meters of space measuring 612 meter across from east to west and 750 meters across from north to south,³³ we can assume that underground storage was not rare during the Han period.

The nature of the central granaries in or near the capital can easily be found in historical documents. The *Han Shu* states that a Great Granary (*tai cang* 太倉) was built

³⁰ Hyashi, *Kandai no Bunbutsu*, 162f, plate 4.10-15.

³¹ Bray, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 402-414.

³² Lin Zaiyu and Wu Lina, “Underground Grain Storage Engineering,” Proceedings of the 7th International Working Conference on Stored-product Protection, 14-19 October 1998, Beijing, China (Chengdu, China: Sichuan Publishing House of Science and Technology, 1999) vol. 2, 1576.

³³ *Ibid*, 1577-1580.

with the Weiyang palace 未央宮 in Chang'an 長安 in 200 BCE.³⁴ According to the Han histories, the Great Granary was a department belonging to the Ministry of Finance (*neishi* 內史). Among the nine ministers, the Superintendent of Agriculture (*da nong ling* 大農令, later named Grand Minister of Agriculture, *da si nong* 大司農) was responsible for both storing collected taxes in kind and cash and providing funds from the storehouse to maintain the civil service and the army.³⁵ During the Eastern Han period, under the supervision of the Grand Minister of Agriculture, the Director of the Great Granary (*tai cang ling* 太倉令) took charge of the administration of the Great Granary in Luoyang, which served the needs of the court and the bureaucracy.

In addition to the Great Granary, the Han government established experimental storehouses called “ever-level granaries” (*changping cang* 常平倉) in the frontier commanderies in 54 BCE, so that when grain was cheap it might be bought at an increased price for storage by the government, and when grain was expensive it might be sold at a decreased price. Even though the *Han Shu* describes ever-level granaries as having benefitted the public as well as the government by stabilizing grain prices and making a profit for the government, the effectiveness of this system has been controversial.³⁶ Whether it was effective or not, it seems that these ever-level granaries did not work as a food redistribution system throughout the Han period: only ten years after it had been set up, the system was abolished in 44 BCE, along with economies requested by Confucian officials.

³⁴ *Han shu* (1B.64)

³⁵ *Han shu* (19A.731); Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 43.

³⁶ *Han shu* (24A.1141); Swann, *Food and Money*, 195–6; Cho-yun Hsu, *Han Agriculture: the Formation of Early Chinese Agrarian Economy, 206 B.C.-A.D.220* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980) 79–80.

Later, in 62 CE, an “ever-full granary” (*changman cang* 常滿倉) was established in the eastern suburbs of Luoyang, and the Director of Price Stabilization (*ping zhun ling* 平準令) under the supervision of the Grand Minister of Agriculture controlled it for price stabilization by buying goods when these were cheap and selling them when they were dear.³⁷

In addition to these large granaries run by the central administration, each provincial government managed their own storehouses of various sizes in order to keep collected taxes. Poll and land taxes in kind were paid by peasants at the village level, collected by sub-prefectural officials, forwarded to provincial governments, and finally transported to the capital and stored in the Great Granary (*tai cang* 太倉). In the process of transfer from the peasants up to the emperor, a certain portion of collected taxes were retained by each level of local administration, such as county (*xian* 縣) and commandery (*jun* 郡), in order to be used for local bureaucratic expenses. The rest of them were sent to the next level of administration. Historical records sometimes describe the occasions of sending grain from the central granary to the provinces, from the provinces to the counties, and from one province to another province. Therefore, we can assume that there existed various sizes of governmental granaries in various styles all over the empire.

From the legal statements we can imagine the physical feature of granaries, as well. Qin legal documents discovered from Shuihudi imply that no matter what the style and size of the storehouses, the government was required to install wood and straw matting on the inside. The “Statutes on Agriculture” (*Tian li* 田律), from the “Eighteen Kinds of Qin

³⁷ Michael Loewe, “The Former Han Dynasty,” in *The Cambridge History of China, The Ch'in and Han Empires 221 B.C.-A.D. 220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 161–2; Hans Bielenstein, “The Institutions of Later Han,” in Loewe, *The Cambridge History of China*, 498.

Statutes (*Qin lü shi ba zhong* 秦律十八種)” discovered in Shuihudi, Yunmeng County, Hubei Province prescribes that wood and matting should be completely removed when the storage unit becomes empty.³⁸ This demonstrates that wood and matting were used for preventing the decay of grain and hay, as these were placed on the bottom or used for making a certain wooden structure inside the storehouse for ventilation and controlling the humidity.

In addition, the unit of grain stocks appears in the “Statutes on Granaries” (*Cang lü* 倉律) and the names of storage houses are found in the Liye document. Liye documents say that grain was withdrawn from units called *kuai* 廩, such as *jing* 徑 *kuai* (slip no.1239,1257,1321,1739), *bing* 丙 *kuai* (slip no.1545,1590,1690) and *yi* 乙 *kuai* (slip no.1647). Considering Qin rules on withdrawal of grains from the granary, it is possible to say that *kuai* indicates the unit of one *ji* 積, which usually means ten thousand *shi* of grain (about 199,680 liters). According to “The Statutes on Granaries,” when grain is placed in a granary, one *ji* of grain should be grouped as one section, and each section should be separated by fences and gates made of straw. Officials were supposed to seal the individual door of each section, called a “house” (*hu* 戶), together, and one responsible official was assigned to one section to issue grains. After the grains stored in the “house” were completely withdrawn, another “house” was allowed to open.³⁹ The statutes regulate that after the distribution is done, the “house” should be replenished with one *ji* of grain, which usually means 10,000 *shi*. According to the Liye documents, officials withdrew a certain

³⁸ “Tian lü” slip no.10, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, 睡虎地秦墓竹簡 *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 1990), 21–22; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 24.

³⁹ “Cang lü” slip no.27, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 25; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 34–35.

amount of grain from a certain *kuai*, and the process of issuing grain from the *kuai* was just like the regulation on handling grain from the “house” of one *ji* of stored grain. Therefore, it is possibly to say that each *kuai* from the Liye document meant one “house” filled with one *ji* of grain, as is described in the Qin statutes.

The proper management of a granary facility was also enforced by the regulations on granaries. The “Statutes on Granaries” from the Shuihudi Qin legal manuscripts prescribes that chickens should be reared away from the granary.⁴⁰ The “Statutes Concerning Checking” (*Xiao lü* 效律) indicate that if the stored grain decays due to rain drops leaking into the storehouse, the responsible official should pay for the loss of the grain in addition to paying a fine according to the amount of loss.⁴¹ A compilation of “Questions and Answers” (*Fali dawen* 法律答問) from the same legal texts also contains details on how the granary facility should be maintained: the wings of the door of the storehouse should be tight so that the grain cannot escape, and the lock of the granary should not be loosened for fingers or tools to squeeze into; otherwise, the officials will be fined. Also, for three or more rat holes the responsible official should be fined, and for two or less he should be berated. Three mouse holes were counted as being equivalent to one rat hole.⁴² These fragments of Qin legal codes indicate that granary facilities were supposed to be well-maintained by law in order to prevent loss of property.

⁴⁰ “Cang lü” slip no.63, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 38.

⁴¹ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 73; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 79.

⁴² Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 128–129; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 162–163.

2) The Nature of Statutes on Granaries

Local granaries, from large to small, in each county, commandery, and province were placed under the management of each local administration, but this does not indicate a lack of central power controlling local grain storage. The legal statutes discovered at Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan indicate that the Qin had already established a detailed legal system to control governmental granaries across the state, and this legal tradition continued in to the Han dynasty.

By enforcing the law, the central government managed the local storehouses as well as the central granaries in order to maintain the required minimum stock of grain. Even though the discovered legal documents do not directly mention the issue of a required stock in a granary, the legal statute on filling each granary by the unit of one *ji* enforced the maintenance of minimum stock. As I mentioned above, the *Cang lü* stipulates that each section of the granary should contain one *ji* of grain, and it should be refilled after any distribution. If this regulation was well observed, it might have eventually resulted in keeping a certain amount of grain stable in the granary all the time. The statutes indicate that the unit amount of one *ji* is usually ten thousand *shi* of grain, but one *ji* was calculated differently in Yueyang 櫟陽 and Xianyang 咸陽, as twenty thousand *shi* and one hundred thousand *shi*, respectively.⁴³ These amounts symbolized the wealth of Yueyang, capital of the state of Qin between 383 and 350 BCE, and Xianyang, the later capital of the Qin kingdom and empire, a boast indicating that these cities could maintain a larger amount of grain in their granaries. The unit amount of one *ji* in those two capitals seems to have been

⁴³ “Cang lü” slip no.27, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 25–27.

planned based on population and the significance of the central granary to secure enough grain in these metropolitan areas.

Also, the central government supervised the local granaries by establishing an account reporting system. According to “The Statutes on Granaries,” county granaries were to report their store-register to the Minister of Finance (*neishi* 内史) when grain and hay entered the storage.⁴⁴ Also, each county was to send their accounts to the Great Granary annually with a register of persons who had received rations as well as records of other expenses.⁴⁵ Moreover, it is clearly indicated that when grain and hay of one *ji* were completely issued, and a surplus or shortage occurred, a report should be sent to the county court. Then the court would order the leading officials, who together had sealed the storehouse, to take part in examining so that they can report the figures to the court immediately.⁴⁶ All of these records were directly presented to the central government, annually.

As each local administration was supposed to report the accounts of their granaries to the central administration, or the Minister of Finance, it was important for local administrators to record the flow of grains correctly, indicating the amount entered and expended as well as the remainders and the officials responsible in the process. During the Qin period, they already had a standardized reporting form. “The Statutes Concerning Checking” from Shuihudi indicates that the person who was involved in taking grain out as well as storing it in the granary should be recorded following the form of “So and so many

⁴⁴ “Cang lü” slip no.28, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 27; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 38.

⁴⁵ “Cang lü” slip no.37, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 28; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 41.

⁴⁶ “Cang lü” slip no.30, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 27; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 38–39.

shi of grain to/from granary X; the Granaries Overseer (*cang se fu* 倉嗇夫) X, the Assistant (*zuo* 佐) X, the clerk (*shi* 史) X, the Storekeeper (*bingren* 稟人) X.”⁴⁷ In particular, it was regulated to record annually the withdrawn amount of grain and the amount remaining in a storehouse following the regulated form, “So and so many *shi* of grain was issued from granary X, and so and so many *shi* of grain remained (某廩出禾若干石, 其餘禾若干石).”⁴⁸

The identical form used for recording the amount of grain input, output, and remaining is observed in the Qin local administrative documents discovered in Liye in Hunan Province. Many fragments of bamboo slips contains information on the amount of grain issued from a certain storehouse (*kuai* 廩), the recipients, the officials who were involved in the process of issuing, and the person who checked if the amount was equal to the record. For example, the record written on slip number 800 from the sixth layer of Liye clearly followed the standardized form, indicating “One *shi* and two and a half *dou* of unhusked grain was issued from the storehouse of *Jing* on the day of *xinmao* of the second month in the thirty-first year. Granary Keeper (*changshou* 倉守) Wu, Clerk Jian, Storekeeper Tang withdrew... Prefectural Clerk (*lingshi* 令史) An checked that the amount is equal to the record.” (“徑廩粟 一石二斗半斗 卅一年二月辛卯倉守武史感稟人堂出... 令史狂視平...”⁴⁹) The accounts regarding grain distribution to convict laborers commonly used the same format as the regulation shown above.

⁴⁷ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 73; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 17:79.

⁴⁸ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 73; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 17:80–81.

⁴⁹ Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖南省文物考古研究所, ed., 里耶秦簡 釋文 *Liye Qin Jian Shiwen* (Beijing: Wenwu, 2011), 51.

Slip numbers 21 to 27 of the “Statutes on Granaries” from Shuihudi clearly shows that the process of entering and issuing was conducted by several persons together. It prescribes that when one *ji* of grain enters the granary, the granary gate should be sealed by the Prefectural Overseer (*sefu* 嗇夫) or the Assistant (*cheng* 丞), and the Chief of Granaries (*cang* 倉) with the Chief of storehouses in the town (*xiang* 鄉) all together. Then, each granary unit was assigned to one official who was in charge of issuing. When the Overseer was dismissed, the granary should be opened by the controller, but it should be sealed again by several persons together after the remaining amount was checked against the record. In general, each granary unit was maintained by one assigned official, and he took charge of issuing grain until the grain was exhausted. If the official responsible for the unit was replaced by a new one, the remaining grain was to be recounted and compared to the record before the new official took charge of the unit.⁵⁰ This accuracy, confirming the official responsible, was necessary for the rulers so they could pinpoint the person responsible for any loss and have them pay the penalty.

The regulation was well observed in the local granaries, as we can see from the administrative documents discovered at Liye. From the Liye documents, we can assume that the people at that time did not have a Granaries Overseer (*cang se fu* 倉嗇夫) since it is observed that *cangshou*, *xiangshou* 鄉守, or *guanshou* 官守 substituted for the position of *cang se fu* in the process of issuing grain, and a *lingshi* (Prefectural Clerk) took charge of checking the amount of grain and the accounts. This practice also seems to have been followed in “Statutes for the Installation of Officials (*zhili lü* 置吏律),” saying that if the

⁵⁰ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 25-26; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 34-37.

Granary Overseer is absent, an aristocrat with no fault or a *lingshi* could substitute in the office.⁵¹

In addition to following this standardized format of reporting, recording specific items sorted by kind and quality was also required of local officials who prepared the account to present it to the central administration. For example, the statutes from slip numbers 33 to 36 of “The Statutes on Granaries” state that when the stock is counted and recorded in the books, legumes and millet should be counted separately; yellow, white, and green grains should be kept separate; and non-glutinous rice and glutinous rice should be distinguished.⁵² These regulations helped the central government recognize the condition of grain stocks specifically in terms of the kind and quality of grain stored in each county.

Moreover, the central government could observe whether the appropriate kind and amount of grain was given to the right person, as the Qin laws specifically regulated the amount and kind of grain officials were supposed to receive, which varied according to social status. For example, the surviving articles of the “Statutes on Food Rations at Conveyance Stations” (*Zhuan shi lü* 傳食律) discovered at Shuihudi clearly mention that messengers and officials who visit the county are served with different kinds of grain according to their ranks. According to the aristocratic ranks, different amounts of *beimi* 粳米 and *limi* 糲米, which mean finely polished grain and roughly polished grain, respectively, were distributed.⁵³ For this reason, it was significant for the local granaries to sort the grain according to kind and quality. The central government was also able to supervise the flow of

⁵¹ “Zhili lü” slip no.161, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 56–57.

⁵² Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 27-28; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 40-41.

⁵³ See footnote 66 for details on the terms regarding the degree of polishing.

grain more precisely when the local officials reported the accounts with specific information following the rules of sorting. The existence of a reporting system with a standardized format demonstrates that the central government attempted to control the local granaries. This practice, seen in the Qin statutes, seems to have mostly succeeded, and was further developed by the Han administration. The accounts discovered on the site of Xuanquan zhi 懸泉置 (Xuanquan Conveyance station) in Xiaogu 效穀 county of Dunhuang commandery, which will be discussed later in this chapter, confirm that different grains were sorted and counted separately during the Han period, as well.

The government regulated standardized measurements and converting formulas not only in order to obtain correct reports, but also to achieve accurate distribution. As I mentioned above, officials and messengers who visited the county conveyance station were served with different grain according to aristocratic rank. However, the terms of *beimi* and *limi* were very obscure since these indicate certain degrees of polishing. Therefore, the Qin statutes clearly define these terms using numerical measurements. For example, a fragment of a statute that when one *shi* and 6 and 2/3 *dou* is polished, it becomes one *shi* of *limi* 糲米 (roughly polished rice); when one *shi* of *limi* is polished, it becomes nine *dou* of *zanmi* 𪗇米 (partly polished rice); when nine *dou* of *zanmi* is polished, it becomes eight *dou* of *huimi* 毀米 (polished rice).⁵⁴

Not only the polishing ratio, but also the conversion ratio of weight to volume was standardized in the Qin laws. Slip number 43 of the “Statutes on Granaries” defines one *shi* (in weight, nearly 30 kg) of untreated rice (*dao* 稻) as constituting twenty *dou* (about forty

⁵⁴ “Cang lü” slip no.42, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 29-30; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 42.

liters)⁵⁵ in volume; when pounded, this becomes ten *dou* of treated grain (*mi* 米); ten *dou* of refined grain (*can* 粲) becomes six and two-thirds *dou* of polished rice (*huimi* 毀米). Also, it defines fifteen *dou* of beans, peas, or hemp as equal to one *shi* in weight.⁵⁶

All these regulations, such as establishing multiple layers of a checking system for the entering, storing, and issuing process, holding officials, and the standardized conversion ratio actually aimed to achieve one goal: to safeguard government property from embezzlement and misuse. For example, as I mentioned above, the “Statutes on Agriculture” (*Tian li* 田律) prescribes that wood and matting should be completely removed from storage when the storage unit becomes empty.⁵⁷ This regulation was aimed at preventing potential speculation as to whether there might be more grain left in the storage facility or hidden under the mat. The statute clarifying the official responsible and the penalty for abuse eventually worked to prevent potential corruption. The “Compilation of Questions and Answers” (*Fa lü da wen* 法律答問) from Shuihudi explains the penalty that would befall the official responsible, *lingshi* (Scribe Director), for a case in which more than one *shi* of grain were discovered underneath the mat in the empty storehouse.⁵⁸ The amount of grains that can be issued as seeds for sowing was also regulated. Per one *mu* 畝,⁵⁹ for rice and hemp use two and two-thirds *dou*; for wheat and barley one *dou*; for millet and red beans two-

⁵⁵ One *dou* is about 1.98 liter. See table 1.

⁵⁶ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 30; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 42.

⁵⁷ “Tian lü” slip no.10, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 21–22; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 24

⁵⁸ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 128; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 162.

⁵⁹ It is not clear whether the unit of dimension, one *mu*, means the old *mu* of about 190 m² or the new *mu* of 460 m².

thirds *dou*; for beans half a *dou*.⁶⁰ We can say that this regulated amount of seeds, which can be interpreted as a kind of instruction or agricultural guideline, was actually aimed to prevent corruption and safeguard government property from abuse.

In the same context, in order to protect property from abuse, the Qin and the Han laws strictly and specifically regulate the amount and kind of grain distribution. Almost half of the laws on granaries discovered at Shuihudi describe regulations on the amount of rations given to convicts, officials, and messengers who could receive grain from the local granary during an official trip. The laborers varied according to their workload, gender, and age.⁶¹ We can see that the regulations on the rations are focused mostly on cases of giving food from the granary and the contingent punishment that the responsible officials should get if they were to give food to ineligible persons or distribute a larger amount to recipients. For example, slip number 45 of the “Statutes on Granaries” clarifies that a messenger who is on a trip to a military camp should bring food with him: he is not allowed to be given any from the county granary.⁶² The statutes also ensure that the official responsible should be punished according to the law when he gives convict laborers, who were involved in light workloads, more grain than the law prescribes.⁶³ No regulation concerning distributing less than the prescribed amount to the recipients is seen. This feature of Qin law supports the assumption that the regulations were not for guaranteeing food rations to the laborers and officials, but for maintaining government property by preventing corruption.

⁶⁰ “Cang lü” slip no.38, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 29; Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 41.

⁶¹ “Cang lü” slip no.48-62, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 32-35.

⁶² Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 31.

⁶³ “Cang lü” slip no.58, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 34.

3) Food Rations to Officials at Conveyance Stations

According to the “Statutes on Granary” from Shuihudi, there were regulations governing food rations given to the officials who were traveled on government business. The Han statutes from Zhangjiashan also contain regulations on food for officials who stay in the county’s conveyance station on an official trip. This section will deal with the statutes and administrative records concerning food served to officials who temporarily stayed in the local court in order to see the implementation of the legal statutes.

Since the Warring States period, each state established *zhuan* 傳 (or *zhuanshe* 傳舍, conveyance stations) where they provided board and lodging to the envoys from other states. During the Han period, *zhuanshe* or *zhi* 置 were established at the court of each county, not only to furnish room and board for officials and messengers, but also to feed the horses brought by these persons. Sometimes, the conveyance stations housed and cared for officials who were dispatched from the central government or other counties on extended matters.

The surviving articles of the the “Statutes on Food Rations at Conveyance Stations” (傳食律 *Zhuan shi lü*) discovered at Shuihudi as well as Zhangjiashan describe regulations concerning food rations for those who stayed in the *zhuan* of the Qin and the early Han period, respectively. The legal texts from Shuihudi describe the amount and kind of food rations given to messengers and officials, such as the subordinates (*zuren* 卒人) of the Secretary to the Imperial Counselor (*yushi* 御史), messengers whose aristocratic ranks were *bugeng* (不更, 4th rank) and below, messengers whose rank was *dafu* (大夫, 5th rank) and above, the retinue of messengers, grooms, and those eunuchs who worked for the government, but did not hold official ranks. The statutes describe the food rations for the

officials and messengers who held lower statuses in detail, whereas they only mention that messengers whose rank were *dafu* and above are “fed according to their aristocratic ranks” (爵食之). According to the Qin statutes, Qin officials and messengers were fed with different types and amounts of food based on their ranks and the jobs in the conveyance stations.⁶⁴

御史卒人使者, 食粳米半斗, 醬駟分升一, 采羹, 給之韭葱. 其有爵者, 自官士大夫以上, 爵食之. 使者之從者, 食糲米半斗, 僕, 少半斗. (傳食律 180)⁶⁵

When a subordinates of the Secretary to the Imperial Counselor (*yushi* 御史) goes on an official trip, [the conveyance station] provides him with half *dou* of *beimi* 粳米, finely polished grain, one quarter a *sheng* of fermented sauce, soup (made of meat, salt and vegetables), leeks and green onion per meal. Those who possess higher ranks than *dafu* (5th rank) and *guan dafu* (官大夫, 6th rank), are fed according to their ranks. The retinues of the messenger are fed with half a *dou* of roughly polished grain, *limi* 糲米, and a groom with one third of a *dou* of roughly husked grain.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 60–61.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁶ According to the *Cang lü* “Statutes on Granaries,” if polishing one *shi* and six and 2/3 *dou*, it becomes one *shi* of *limi* (糲米, roughly polished rice), polishing one *shi* of *limi* is nine *dou* of *zanmi* (鑿米, partly polished rice), polishing nine *dou* of *zanmi* becomes eight *dou* of *huimi* (毀米 polished rice). This statement is same to that from *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字. *Ibid.*, 29–30. *Beimi* 粳米, which appeared in *Zhuanshi lü* implies “highly polished rice”. Jae-Seug Yun, tran., *Suhoji Jinmyojukgan Yeokju* 수호지진묘죽간 역주 (Seoul: Somyong chulpan, 2010), 111–3, 204–5. Editors and commentators interpret *su* 粟 as “not polished rice” and *limim*, *zanmi*, *huimi* and *beimi* as “rice” of different degrees of polishing, but it seems more reasonable to see that the word *su* indicates unpolished grain, in general, and *limi*, *zanmi*, *huimi* and *beimi* describe the polished grains in different degrees as Hulsewé seems *mi* as “treated grain”, Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 43,

不更以下到謀人, 粳米一斗, 醬半升, 采羹, 芻稟各半石, 宦奄如不更.⁶⁷

From *bugeng* (4th rank) to *mouren* (某人, or *zanniao* 簪裊, 3rd rank), one *dou* of finely polished grain, *beimi*, a half *sheng* of fermented sauce, soup (made with meat, salt and vegetable), and a half *sheng* of hay and straw each (for horses). For eunuchs, same as that for Bugeng.

上造以下到官佐·史毋爵者, 及卜·史·司御·寺·府, 粳米一斗, 有菜羹, 鹽廿二分升二.⁶⁸

From *shangzao* (上造, 2nd rank) and below till *guan-zuo* 官佐 and *shi* 史 who do not have ranks, and *bu* 卜, *shi* 史, *siyu* 司御, *si* 寺, *fu* 府, give them one *dou* of roughly husked grain, *limi*, soup (of meat, salt and vegetable) and two twenty-second *sheng* of salt.

However, the amount and kind of food rations seen in the Zhangjiashan statutes differ somewhat from those seen in the texts from Shuihudi. Unlike the Qin statutes which show the four different categories of food rations according to ranks, the statutes on food rations in the *Zhuanshi lü* from Zhangjiashan are related to the recipient's job and situation,

A29n11. Indeed, it seems that *su* did not mean millet as these days, for *he* 禾 was used for describing millet in the statutes from Shuihudi. During the Han period, the main staple was various kinds of millet, especially in northern China, the rice was cultivated in limited region in south on a very limited scale, so it is not reasonable to restrict the meaning of *mi* 米 in statutes to rice. For the main staples and the rice cultivation during the Han period, see Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 72; Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, 1:560.

⁶⁷ “Zhuanshi lü” slip no.181, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 60.

⁶⁸ “Zhuanshi lü” slip no.182, *Ibid.*

not according to his rank. The Zhangjiashan statutes state that Han officials on official trips, or “*chedafu* 車大夫”, such as subordinates of Chancellor, Secretary to the Imperial Counselor and 2,000 *shi* officials, the dispatched officials from the central government, the newly appointed officials, those who are forced to move with the rank above the *suowei* and *zuo*, and the messengers who have urgent affairs from the military and the provincial government, received the same amount of food three times a day regardless of their rank or salary grade: 1/2 *dou* of highly polished grain, *beimi* 粳米, 1/4 *sheng* fermented sauce, and 1/22 *sheng* of salt.⁶⁹ Only the retainues (*congzhe* 從者) were supposed to get less food: 1/2 *dou* of roughly husked grain, *limi* 糲米, and 1/22 *sheng* of salt. Compared to the Qin statutes from Shuihudi, the Han statutes from Zhangjiashan show less discrimination according to ranks, when the officials were on trips conducting government matters.

丞相，御史及諸二千石官使人，若遣吏，新爲官及屬尉，佐以上微若遷徒者，及軍吏，縣道有尤急言變事，皆得爲傳食。車大夫粳米半斗，參食，從者糲米，皆給草具。車大夫醬四分升一，鹽及從者人各廿二分升一……食從者，二千石毋過十人，千石至六百石毋過五人，五百石以下至二百石毋過二人，二百石以下一人…⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The food ration is for *chedafu* 車大夫, which seems to indicate all the officials listed above (Zhangjiashan, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian*, 40.). However, Tomiya Itaru argues that *chedafu* means the retainues of the officials who are traveling because the food ration is too little for the ration for officials (富谷至 Tomiya Itaru, 江陵張家山二四七號墓出土漢律令の研究 *Koryo Chokasan nihyakuyonjunana-go bo shutsudo Kan ritsuryo no kenkyu* (Kyoto-shi: Hoyo Shoten, 2006), 153.). Oh Junsuk agrees to Tomiya saying that the amount of distribute grain to *chedafu* is same to that for the retainues of *yushi* from the Shuihudi *Chuanshi lü* (Junsoek Oh, “Janggasan Han Gan <Yi Nyeon Lyul Lyeong> Jeon Sik Lyul 張家山漢簡 <二年律令> 傳食律(228簡-238簡),” *Mokgan Gwa Munja* 5 (June 2010): 239.).

⁷⁰ “Zhuan shi lü” slip no.235-6, Zhangjiashan, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian*, 40.

Subordinates of the Chancellor, Secretary to the Imperial Counselor and 2,000 *shi* officials, the dispatched officials from the central government, the newly appointed officials, those who are forced to move with the rank above the *suowei* and *zuo*, and the messengers who have urgent affairs from the military and the provincial government all can get food from the conveyance stations. *Chedafu* (those people mentioned above) can get a half of highly polished grain, three times a day, the retainers get 1/2 *dou* of roughly husked grain, and all the horses of them are fed. *Chedafu* are given one fourth of fermented sauce, and each person down to retainers get 1/22 sheng of salt. For feeding their retainers, 2000 *shi* officials cannot feed more than ten members of an entourage, 1000 *shi* to 600 *shi* officials can feed not more than five, 500 to 200 *shi* officials feed not more than two, and 200 *shi* and below can feed only one follower.

Considering that the food ration for a convict laborer who was involved in heavy work was a half *dou* of unhusked millet (禾 *he*) per day and a soldier and male adult of the military family received 1 to 1.11 *dou* of unhusked millet per day,⁷¹ the regulated amount of food for traveling officials, a half *dou* of highly polished grain with fermented sauce as one meal among three meals a day (*canshi* 參食), is not a small amount.⁷² Actually, the ration distributed in the Conveyance stations was more than what the lower officials would have been able to eat based on their salaries. Therefore, low-ranking officials whose salaries were not even enough to feed themselves and their family ate better meals, in terms of the amount of grain, during trips, if they were fed at conveyance stations according to the statutes.

⁷¹ Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 32–33; Loewe, *Records of Han Administration.*, vol. 2, 68.

⁷² The meaning of *canshi* is controversial. While the editors of the Zhangjia shan slips interpret it as three meals a day, the editors of the Shuihudi qin jian previously explain this as 1/3 *dou*. See Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 33–34; Zhangjiashan, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian*, 40. Yun, *Suhoji Jinmyojukgan Yeokju*, 121–122.

However, this does not mean the statutes were established to guarantee good food for officials and messengers who were on trips required for government matters. Rather, as I mentioned, they were likely designed to protect against the abuse of government property. According to “The Statutes on Granaries” from the site of Shuihudi, if an official or a messenger who is dispatched from the central government to the province was already given their monthly portion of food from his commandery, he cannot receive the food from the *zhuanshe*.⁷³ This was to prevent double disbursement. Also, if the travelers were on military business, or they were traveling to a subordinate county of the commendary (*jun*) where they were from, they also did not receive food from the *zhuanshe*, but had to supply it themselves.⁷⁴ In other words, an official dispatched by a *jun* of which he is a resident to another county within the *jun* cannot ask for food in the county’s Conveyance station by law. This may have been to protect against abuse from officials who were sent from a higher governing unit.

The *Zhuanshi lü* from the site of Zhangjiashan also goes into great detail in stating the restrictions and the conditions of the recipients, clarifying the penalty. The statutes limit the size of retinue of officials receiving rations according to salary grade and rank: 2000 *shi* officials cannot feed more than ten members of an entourage, 1000 *shi* to 600 *shi* officials can feed not more than five, 500 to 200 *shi* officials feed not more than two, and 200 *shi* and below can feed only one follower.⁷⁵ Also, it restricts the length of time that the officials and his retinue can be served with cooked food in the Conveyance stations. If they stay more

⁷³ “Cang lü” slip no.44, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 30.

⁷⁴ “Cang lü” slip no.45, *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷⁵ “Zhuanshi lü” slip no.235-6, Zhangjiashan, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian*, 40.

than ten days, they were supposed to cook for themselves with the given grain. If they just stay in the region without doing any business, which maybe means if they pass through the region, they could not be served more than two meals.⁷⁶ The statutes say that if the rules are violated, for example, if ineligible people, officials with excessive numbers of attendants, or travelers with personal affairs received food in the Conveyance stations, everything they ate should be counted as stolen goods and they should be regarded as robbers. If they used the horses and the food improperly, they should pay the average cost in cash.⁷⁷

While the *Zhuanshi lü* from Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan describe the established rules on what and how officials travelling on business should be served, the bamboo slips discovered from the site of Xuanquan zhi (懸泉置, Xuanquan Conveyance station) in Xiaogu 效穀 county of Dunhuang commandery give a clearer picture of what and how officials actually ate at the *zhuanshe*. The Xuanquan zhi, an important post for foreign relations with the northwest in Dunhuang, seems to have been established around 116-111 BCE under emperor Wu and abolished at the end of Eastern Han.⁷⁸ From the fragmentary account written and submitted by the *chuse* (廚嗇 Kitchen Supervisor) we can see that food was given to roughly more than 110 messengers, military officials, envoys and revenues who stayed there or passed by while traveling to the west and east.⁷⁹ They generally had one to three meals at a stay.

⁷⁶ “Zhuanshi lü” slip no.234, Ibid.

⁷⁷ “Zhuanshi lü” slip no.230, Zhangjiashan, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian*, 39–41. Oh, “Janggasan Han Gan <Yi Nyeon Lyul Lyeong> Jeon Sik Lyul 張家山漢簡 <二年律令> 傳食律(228簡-238簡).”

⁷⁸ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui*, 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 148–9. The number of recipients excludes the cases of the distribution to 300 *xingshi* 形士 at the stay of the party of Marquis of Changluo 長羅侯. The document says that they released 28 *shi* and eight *dou* of

According to the records, the regulated policies from *Zhuanshi lü*, such as the maximum number of meals and the restriction on the number of eligible attendants were well observed in regards to the food that was served; however, there are several discrepancies in the records from Xuanquan when compared to the Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan statutes. First, the ration of grains was less than the amount that was prescribed in the statutes. According to the *Zhuanshi lü* from both Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan, even the attendants were supposed to receive at least a half *dou*, or five *sheng* of polished grain. The amount of food prescribed in the statutes is regulated differently according to rank or status. However, the Xuanquan slips show that the food recipients from the posts mostly had three, sometimes four *sheng* (or 0.3 and 0.4 *dou*) of grain. (see Table 2)

Also, in terms of the kind of grain, the *Zhuanshi lü* mentions grains according to the degree of polishing, finely polished grain, *beimi* 粳米 and roughly polished grain, *limi* 糲米, whereas the Xuanquan records mostly use two different species of grain, *su* 粟, various millets, and *mi* 米, rice. The two characters of *su* and *mi* are sometimes interpreted as unhusked and husked grain, but in this record it would be more reasonable to see than as indicating two different kind of grain for two reasons. First, according to the *Cang lü* from Shuihudi, the book keeper should record the amount of grains separately according to the species, not according to the degree of polishing.⁸⁰ Second, in addition to the two characters *su* and *mi*, the Xuanquan record contains the character of *mai* 麥, which indicates a specific

rice to the Chief of an official's courier station Fengde and the Assistant for the Supervisor of Field Xuan, to feed three hundred *xingshi*. As the Chief of an official's courier station and the Assistant for the supervisor belonged to the *xian*, it seems that *xingshi* means the local residents who worked as guards or policemen to ensure the security of the villages and the courier stations during the stay of the party of Changluo hou. This shows that the *chuanshe* also fed the local staffs of *xingshi*, maybe temporary position, with grain and soybean paste during the special event of Changluo hou's visiting.

⁸⁰ "Cang lü" slip no. 33, 34, 35, Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 25; Yun, *Suhoji Jinmyojukgan Yeokju*, 104–107.

species, wheat.⁸¹ There is no reason to believe that *su* and *mi* indicate unhusked and husked grain, but two different grains. Therefore, we can say that they distributed two actual different species of grains unlike in the statutes from Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan.

The statutes also clarify that different types and amounts of food that should be given according to the rank, job or status of an individual, but the account shows that there was no actual discrimination among the messengers, attendants and slaves. Also, it seems that there were no significant differences in terms of the social and political ranks between the recipients who were served with millet and those who were given rice in Xuanquan. For example, a “pass holder”, or a messenger, and his attendant received the same amount (0.3 *sheng*) of millet four times (no.85). Even a noble’s wife and her three slaves were all given same amount of rice (no.86).⁸²

Table 2. Food Ration and Recipients from Xuanquan slips

Recipients (ranks)	Food	Amount (<i>dou</i>)	No. of recipients	No. of meal	Amount(<i>dou</i>) /person/meal
Assistant of Liquan xian, Dan Men an (<i>doushi</i>) and one Attendant	Millet	2.4	2	4	0.3
Jincheng Yun Wuwei Luojian and one attendant	Rice	1.2	2	2	0.3
The wife of Jincheng Qi yang Chang zhang jun and three	Rice	1.2	4	1	0.3
Messenger of Da yue shi and others	Millet	1.8	6	1	0.3
Soushu Gaobou..?	Millet	0.6	1	2	0.3

⁸¹ Slip no. 180, Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui*, 130.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 73–74.

Three messengers	Millet	2.4	3	2	0.4
Messengers and others	?	?	3	1	0.4
?	Millet	6.3	7	3	0.3
?	?	?2.4	2	4	0.3
Hu Qian du li Lixiang and servant	Rice	0.8	2	?	?
Zhu qian shi Li Xiang and one attendant	Rice ⁸³	0.6	2	?	?
Two of the leaders of Qiang tribe	Pork	10 <i>jin</i>			
Suo shuJia..and Marquis of Xihan	Millet	1.8		Total 6	0.3

The same lack of discrimination can also be found in the records of chicken purchases and expenditures from Dunhuang, which shows how many chickens were acquired and served to each official who visited the post in Xianquan county in Dunhuang during 62 BCE (no.113-131, Table 3).⁸⁴ Based on these documents, table 3 shows the recipient's official position, the number of the meals and the number of chickens they had in this Conveyance station. The visitors ranged widely and were mid to low ranking officials from 100 *shi* to 1,000 *shi*. However, regardless of their rank, they were equally served with one chicken per meal, except the Senior Scribe on slip no.113, who was served with two chickens at a meal. Although no statute on meat distribution at *zhuanshe* has yet been discovered, the Xuanquan records clearly show that meat, such as chicken and pork (*rou*, 肉) were served to certain groups of officials or messengers. However, given the surviving

⁸³ with one *jin* of pork

⁸⁴ This is the record from January to December 14th in the 4th year of Yuankang (元康四年). *Hu and Zhang, Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui*, 77–80.

textual sources, it is impossible to find any pattern or rules regarding the recipients, amounts or circumstances of the foods they were given except the trend that there was less discrimination based on rank in the amount of meat given those who were served meat.

Table 3. Registration of chicken expenditure and acquisition in Xuanquan, Dunhuang in 62 BCE.

Slip No.	Documents illustrated
113	Expended one brace (雙) of chicken for one meal for Senior Scribe in the east hall.
114	Expended one brace of chicken for two meals for Attendant of Messenger Wang staying overnight in the east hall.
115	Expended two braces of chickens for four meals for Clerk of the Superintendent of Agriculture Tien during the round trip in the east hall.
116	Expended one brace of chicken for two meals for Clerk of the Counselor-in-chief Fan during the round trip in the east hall.
117	Expended two braces of chickens for two meals for Senior Scribe during the round trip in the east hall.
118	Expended one chicken for one meal for Palace Physician Wan Qiu in the east hall.
119	Expended one brace of chicken for one meal for Attendant Official of Regional-inspector and one Retainer clerk of the Regional-inspector in the east hall.
120	Expended one brace of chicken for two meals for the Clerk of the Superintendent of Agriculture Feng during the round trip in the east hall.
121	Expended one chicken for one meal for the Messenger Mr. Wang in the east hall.
122	Acquired two braces of chickens on October 27th. Assistant Zhang Fu received from the court.
123	Acquired one brace of chicken on October 10th. Kitchen Supervisor Mr. Shi received from the Clerk of the Wu Qiong neighborhood.
124	Acquired one brace of chicken on December 9th. Kitchen Supervisor Mr. Shi received when he met the Assistant of the Yu Li Township.
125	From October 12th to December 14th stored three braces of chickens buying myself with 240 coins. The County supplied 80 braces of chickens.
126	Registration of chicken's expenditure and acquisition in Xian Quan County from October to December 14th.
127	No chicken in September
128	No chicken at present
129	In sum, 40 braces of chickens. From January to December 14th, we received 28 braces of chickens from the county. From January to December 14th, we paid 1215 coins to buy 31 chickens by ourselves
130	Registration of chicken's expenditure and acquisition in Xian Quan County from January to December 14th in 62 BCE.
131	In December 15th, Xian Quan Kitchen Supervisor dare to speak that I sincerely transmit a volume of chicken registration from January to December 14th. I dare to speak.

Table 4. Chicken Expenditure⁸⁵

slip no.	Recipient	no. of person	no. of chickens	no. of meals	no. of chicken /person, meal	Salary grade (<i>shi</i>) ⁸⁶
113	長史君 Senior Scribe	1	2	1	2	1,000
114	使者王君 Messenger Wang	1	2	2	1	
115	大司農卒史田卿 Clerk of the Superintendent of Agriculture Tian	1	4	4	1	100
116	丞相史范卿 Clerk of the Counselor-in-chief Fan	1	2	2	1	1,000
117	長史君 Senior Scribe	1	4	4	1	1,000
118	太醫萬秋 Palace Physician Wan Qiu	1	1	1	1	600
119	刺史 Attendant Official of Regional-inspector, 從事史一人 One Retainer clerk of the Regional-inspector	2	2	1	1	600 100
120	大司農卒史馮卿 Clerk of the Superintendent of Agriculture Feng	1	2	2	1	100
121	使者王君 Messenger Mr.Wang	1	1	1	1	

In addition to these ordinary distributions, there were special circumstances of food distribution which are not addressed in the statutes, including food that was given to the Marquis of Changluo (長羅侯 *changluo hou*) and his staff and for the leaders of the Qiang 羌 tribe. According to the Xuanquan record, before 61 BCE the conveyance station gave the

⁸⁵ This chart is based on the record of *Dunhuang* bamboo slip in Ho, *Dunhuang Xianquan*, 77-80.

⁸⁶ Charles Hucker, *A dictionary of official titles in imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 112, 528; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 8, 11, 60, 90, 92.

Marquis of Changluo, Changhui 常惠, and his attached staff an exceptionally large amount of food.⁸⁷ They were given five lambs, three *shi* of yeast, ten fish, one *shi* and two *dou* of soybean malt for making soybean paste, twenty-one chickens, 180 *jin* of beef, four *dou* of millet for making soup, twenty *shi* of liquor and forty-eight *shi* of rice in order to serve the Marquis, officials, military clerks, patrols and other staffs.⁸⁸ According to the record, except for the chicken, beef, millet, rice and liquor which were prepared by the Conveyance station, the county supplied the lamb, yeast, fish, soybean malt and additional liquor for this special group of people. The items the Conveyance station received from the county were mostly used up except for the soybean malt.⁸⁹ In another record, the Conveyance station of Xuanquan bought ten *jian* of meat with sixty *qian* in order to serve two heads of the Qiang tribe. These records indicate that Conveyance stations in Dunhuang served special groups of envoys with special food, which are not addressed in the Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan strips.

From the comparison of the statutes from Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan and actual records of food distribution from Xuanquan, we can see how imperial ideology based on hierarchical discrimination was supported by the legal statutes, but that there were significant discrepancies between these statutes and the actual distribution of food at the conveyance station in Dunhuang. First, the statutes regulated both the quality and amount of grain given to individuals, but at Xuanquan, no one was actually given the amount of grain prescribed in the statutes. Perhaps, this was acceptable under the law if they generally

⁸⁷The eighteen slips (no.61-no.78) are the register of food served to the Marquis of Changluo, Changhui 常惠 and the attached staff. Chang Hui was enabled as Changluo Hou in 70 BCE. He was deeply engaged in the problems of foreign relations with people in northwest. In either 64 or 60 Chang Hui was sent on a mission to escort a Chinese princess who was intended to be the bride of a future leader of Wusun. see Michael Loewe, *A Biographical Dictionary of the Qin, Former Han and Xin Periods, 221 BCE - AD 24* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 25-26.

⁸⁸ Hu and Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui*, 148–150.

⁸⁹ The record says, “three *dou* of soybean malt remained” after this event.

understood that the statutes were intended to protect the property of government rather to ensure the food supply for those who worked for the government. Even though there were some special occasions of serving special food to certain parties, food distributed in the conveyance stations never exceeded the amount or quality of grain established by the statutes. Second, when officials and messengers were served in the conveyance station, there was no discrimination according to rank or job. Whereas the statutes prescribe different treatment based on bureaucratic or aristocratic ranks, the Xuanquan records prove that there was no such discrimination in the actual distribution of food in amount and kind. Every member of one party was given the same amount and kind of grain. When the conveyance station fed the officials with chickens, there was no difference in the amount of chicken given to those holding different ranks.

There existed discordance between the ideology of the government, as manifested in the statutes, and their implementation shown in the practice of food rations in the officials' conveyance station. The Qin and Han rulers tried to establish their ideal social order by enacting discriminatory laws based on ranks. The actual implementation of food distribution at Xuanquan, however does not show any of these discriminatory practices actually taking place.

4) Food Rations for Convicts and Bondservants

A large part of the "Statutes on Granaries" from Shuihudi tomb no. 11 is about the food rations for convict laborers who were sentenced to work for the government during the Qin period. Since the legal tradition of the Han was generally inherited from the Qin, the

Shuihudi Qin laws are an important source for the regulations on food rations for convicts laborers not only during the Qin, but also during the Han period.

During the Qin and Han periods, there were several groups of convict laborers, categorized according to their penalty. The heaviest of the hard labor punishments was that of the “Tattooed Wall-Dawn” (*qing chengdan* 黥城旦) or, for women, “Grain Pounder” (*qing chong* 黥舂). They were generally sentenced to five or six years. The next group was the “Intact Wall-Dawn” (*wan chengdan* 完城旦) or, for women, “Intact Grain Pounder” (*wan chong* 完舂). They served four years. All these groups could also be shaved, tattooed, or mutilated. The next group of hard labor convicts were sentenced for three years as “Gatherers of Firewood for the Sprits” (*guixin* 鬼薪), and their female counterparts, the “Sifters of White Grain” (*baican* 白粲). One degree lower again were the “Shaved Bondservants” and “Shaved Bondwomen” (*nai li chen* 耐隸臣 and *nai li qie* 耐隸妾) for three years. “Shaved Robber-Guard” (*nai sikou* 耐司寇) for women and “Work like Robber-Guard” (*zuo ru sikou* 作如司寇) were the next group, and they were to be sentenced for two years. The last two groups were the “Forced Labor” (*fu zuo* 復作) for both male and female who worked three months to one year, and the “Frontier Labor Fine” (*shu fazuo* 戍罰作) sentence of one month to one year for men.⁹⁰

These titles indicating the work they were involved in, like “Grain Pounder” and “Gatherers of Firewood for the Spirits,” had already become meaningless by the Qin period. Except for a few amnestied convicts who joined the frontier defense force, convicts of all grades often worked together in China on public works projects or in factories for the state.

⁹⁰ Anthony J Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in Early Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 228–9.

For example, hard-labor convicts worked on building roads, digging canals, preparing imperial tombs, building the Great Wall, transporting army provisions, and toiling in state mines or in government iron bureaus. Female convicts also could be condemned to hard labor, but their tasks were different – to hull and sift grain.⁹¹ A group of documents titled “Registers of convict laborers performing their tasks” (*zuotubu* 作徒簿) discovered at Liye describe the details of the day-to-day work the convict laborers were involved in under the supervision of officials at Qianling 遷陵 County in the Dongting 洞庭 Commandery of Qin. For example, it says that “wall-builders” were forced to repair suits of armor, overhaul the cart, or gear up the wagon, and “grain pounders” were to weave the silk on the *yiyou* 乙酉 day of the eighth month in the 29th year (218 BCE).⁹²

“Convicts” (*tu* 徒 or *xingtu* 刑徒) were of the lowest status, with “slaves” (*nubi* 奴婢), in Qin and Han society. These two groups are frequently mentioned together in historical documents because they were treated similarly if they were involved in the same public works or another construction project. However, convicts were those who were sentenced to servitude for a definite period of time, whereas slaves were those who served for life. Usually, convicts were sentenced to hard labor for one to six years even though some were sentenced as much as 12 years. Convicts were treated very similarly to, or worse than, government slaves during their sentence, but, if they could survive their sentence, they were

⁹¹ A.F.P. Hulsewé, “Ch’in and Han Law,” in *The Cambridge History of China*. vol. 1, Edited by Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 533.

⁹² Slip no.8-686, Hunan sheng wenwu Kaogu yanjiusuo 湖南省文物考古研究所, ed., *Liye Qin Jian*, 98; Maxim Korolkov, “Convict labor in the Qin Empire: A preliminary study on the ‘Registers of convict laborers’ from Liye,” paper presented at the conference “Excavated Texts and Ancient History,” Fudan University, Shanghai, October 19-20, 2013, 7-8.

freed and became commoners when the term was completed.⁹³ In spite of the differences between the two groups, since they were often involved in the same work, it is still controversial to identify some terms and the nature of the status as “bondservants” (*lichen* 隸臣) and “bondwomen” (*liqie* 隸妾). Thus, it is not clear whether these terms indicated sentenced criminals or hereditary bondservants.⁹⁴ However, no matter what their status was, in terms of food distribution, unless they were loaned to commoners, convicts, and governmental slaves were all fed by the government by the law as we can see from the articles from “The Statutes on Granaries” from Shuihudi.⁹⁵

According to *Cang lii*, food rations were distributed two different ways: a grain ration given monthly or a ration of porridge twice a day. Grain was distributed once a month to those who worked for the government (*cong shi gong* 從事公) according to the work load, age, and gender, whereas cooked grain, perhaps in the form of porridge, was distributed to feed (*shi* 食) those who were engaged in hard labor for construction, according to workload. For example, “bondservants” (*lichen* 隸臣) and “bondwomen” (*liqie* 隸妾) were supposed to receive rations of two *shi* and one and a half *shi* of unhusked grain (*he* 禾) per month, respectively, if they were engaged to work at the court; if they did not work for

⁹³ Even though convicts were guaranteed their freedom once the sentence period ended, they were not superior in status to slaves. It seems that convicts were treated as men who deserved to die. Usually they had to work clad in a felon’s dress, often shackled and with shaven heads, sometimes even tattooed on the face or shoulder. C. Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China During the Former Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-A.D. 25*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 41.

⁹⁴ Robin D.S. Yates, “Bureaucratic Organization of the Qin County of Qianling 遷陵 in the Light of the Newly Published Liye Qin jian (yi) and Liye Qin jian du jiaoshi (diyi juan),” a paper presented at the Fourth International Conference on Sinology, June 20-22, 2012, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan.

⁹⁵ “In case commoners wish to borrow bond-women who are not yet employed and who are clothed and fed by the government, they are to be loaned; they are to be clothed and fed by them. The officials will in every case stop to make them serve” (*Cang lii* 48), *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 32; Hulsewé, 30.

the court, they could not receive rations from the government.⁹⁶ “Small Wall-Dawn” (*xiao chengdan* 小城旦) and “Small Bondservants” (*xiao lichen* 小隸臣) who were not fully five feet and five inches (c. 1.50 m) received one and a half *shi* of unhusked grain regardless of the workload if they worked at the court, whereas one *shi* was given when they were not engaged in court work. The rations for their female counterparts, “Small Bondwomen” (*xiao liqie* 小隸妾) and “Small Grain Pounder” (*xiao chong* 小舂) whose height is five feet and two inches (1.43m) were one and a quarter *shi* of unhusked grain if they worked in the *yamen* and one *shi* if they did not work. Infants who have no mother or whose mother is assigned to work for the government received a half *shi* of grain per month. “Grain Pounders” received one and a half *shi* monthly.⁹⁷

However, “Wall Builders” (*chengdan* 城旦) and others, such as “Grain Pounders,” “Grain Pounder Robber Guards” (*chong sikou* 舂司寇) and “Sifters of White Grain,” who worked to build the Great Wall or a similar project with a similar workload, were supposed to receive food twice a day in different amounts according to their gender: for men a half *dou* in the morning and one-third *dou* in the evening (for a total of 5/6 *dou* daily); for women one-third *dou* each in the morning and evening (for a total of 2/3 *dou*). If a “Wall Builder” worked as a guard, he received the same as women, one-third *dou* per meal.⁹⁸ According to the statutes, the government “fed” (*shi* 食) these hard laborers involved in construction work twice a day. It seems that the form of grain the hard-labor convicts

⁹⁶ If a *lichen* (bondservant) was engaged in agricultural work, he received two and a half *shi* of grain from the second month to the ninth month.

⁹⁷ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 31; Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 32.

⁹⁸ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 17:32–33; Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 33–34.

received was not grain, like that received by those who worked for the government, but cooked grain or porridge.

If we assume that their daily ration of food was grain, like it was for others who worked for the government, the total amount of their ration per month could amount to more than that given to ordinary convicts – two and a half *shi* for men, two *shi* for women – which would be enough to survive.⁹⁹ However, as a form of cooked grain or porridge, it could increase to at least three times or more in capacity. This means the dietary condition of hard labor convicts depended on the degree of thinness of the porridge. If they received food by cooking with a reasonable amount of water, the actual grain amount they consumed was about a third of what other convict workers in the court had, but if they added much water, it could be less than 10%. In any case, it would be easy to understand if we remind ourselves that the daily food the hard-working convict laborers received as cooked grain or porridge was about double the amount for those who were sentenced “to starve” with a ration of one-third *dou* per day.¹⁰⁰

If the distributed cooked grain was prepared properly with a reasonable amount of water, the overall dietary condition would have not been so severe as to endanger survival. However, literature and archaeological remains show a different picture. Cai Yong (蔡邕 132-192), a scholar and later a hard labor convict in 159 CE, wrote about the starvation of the convict laborers, saying, “because of the freezing and starvation, the number of those who did not survive to live out their fated years was very great.” Kong Rong (孔融 153-208),

⁹⁹ Moonsil Lee, “Dietary Conditions and Differential Access to Food Resources among the Various Classes during the Han Period” (University of Pittsburgh, 2004), 50–54. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 32–33.

¹⁰⁰ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 34; Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 34–35.

a high official at the end of the Eastern Han, also mentioned the high mortality rate of convict laborers caused by malnutrition, accident, and disease.¹⁰¹

The possibility of thinning the porridge and giving less food can be supported by two clues from the statutes. First, the statutes say, “When feeding *chengdan* (Wall Builders) by the day, at the end of the month one takes the surplus to serve as rations for the later ninth month.”¹⁰² This means the court could have a surplus of grain after they fed the convicts, even following the regulated daily amount. In order to make more surplus, they could make thin porridge, which was not against the law. Second, according to the law, “Those who are ill will be fed in consideration of the circumstances, letting the officials decide.”¹⁰³ Therefore, the official who was in charge of feeding those who were sick was not violating the law even if he reduced or stopped feeding them. So far, no statute that mentions a penalty for officials who distributed less than the stipulated amount of food to the convicts has been found, whereas the statutes expressly forbid giving them too much food: “For increasing their food when the *chengdan* perform easy tasks, the officials in charge will be judged according to the statute on infringing the ordinances.”¹⁰⁴ The possibility that officials could provide less food than expected without breaking the law could explain the high mortality rate at the convict workers’ camp.

This can be supported by the fragments of court accounts discovered in the Liye documents, which show that convict laborers actually received a lesser amount of rations than the regulation stipulated. Since many of the records are missing fragments containing

¹⁰¹ Yan Kejun, *Quan shanggu*, 1:852, 1:924; Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in Early Imperial China*, 241.

¹⁰² Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 33; Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 34.

¹⁰³ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch’in Law*, 32; Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 33.

¹⁰⁴ “Cang lü” slip no. 58, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 34.

significant characters, it is hard to generalize or theorize the reality of grain distribution. Fortunately, several perfectly preserved records on the grain ration to “adult bondwomen” (*daliqie* 大隸妾) suggest that there were discordances between the statutes and their implementation, particularly in the aspect of the distributed amount. The wooden slips numbered 760, 762, 763, 766, 1557, and 2249 contain the name of the issuing storehouse, the amount and kind of grain, the date of distribution, the officials responsible for the granary, the inspector, the convict’s name and sentence. From the readable slips, it is detected that in the 31st year of Yingzheng’s reign (r. 246-210 BCE), 216 BCE, unhusked grain, *su* 粟, was distributed to several *daliqie* or *liqie*. Multiple officials were involved in the process of issuing, and a *lingshi* was in charge of inspection, as the legal codes from the “Statutes on Granaries” prescribe. However, the recorded amount each bondwoman received was not one and a half *shi*, or one *shi* and five *dou*, as in the statutes, but one *shi* and two and a half *dou* or less (see Table 5). Even though this is not according to regulation, there seems to be no penalty applied to the officials who were involved in the process of distribution. In addition to the case of these bondwomen, we can find a slip record that a “Small Bondservant” (*xiao lichen* 小隸臣) named *yi* 益 received two *dou* of unhusked grain (no. 1551) even though the Qin law discovered in Shuihudi prescribes one and a half *shi* (or fifteen *dou*) of unhusked grain regardless of the workload if the convict worked at court, and one *shi* (or ten *dou*) when a convict was not engaged in court work.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the officials who were involved in this issuing did not experience any problem or penalty for not observing the rule. In fact, we have not found any statute naming a penalty for a case of giving too little, while there are several laws naming the penalty for giving too much grain.

¹⁰⁵ Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian, 32–33.

Table 5. Distributed grain to bondwomen from Liye documents

Slip no.	Date (31 st year)	Grain	Recipient	Amount
760	3 rd month <i>Bingyin</i> day	<i>su</i> 粟	daliqie 大隸妾 X	1 <i>shi</i> 2 ½ <i>dou</i>
762	12 th month <i>Wuxu</i> day	<i>su</i>	daliqie <i>yuan</i> 援	1 <i>shi</i> 2 ½ <i>dou</i>
763	3 rd month <i>Guichou</i> day	<i>su</i>	daliqie <i>bing</i> 并	1 <i>shi</i> 2 ½ <i>dou</i>
766	11 th month <i>Bingchen</i> day	<i>su</i>	daliqie <i>shi</i> 始	1 <i>shi</i> 2 1/3 <i>dou</i>
1557	4 th month <i>Wuzi</i> day	<i>su</i>	liqie 隸妾 <i>lian</i> 廉	1 <i>shi</i> 2 1/15 <i>dou</i>
2249	2 nd month <i>Jichou</i> day	<i>su</i>	liqie <i>yuan</i> 援	1 <i>shi</i> 2 ½ <i>dou</i>

In fact, there is an article regarding the reduction of rations for convict laborers. An article from “The Statutes on Currency” (*Jinbu lü* 金布律) says “when bondservants or bondwomen lose government tools or cattle, as from that date their issues of clothing and food are to be decreased, but not more than one-third is to be taken” (no. 77-78).¹⁰⁶ With the fact that the bondwomen of Liye generally received 2.5 *dou* less, or one-sixth of the regulated amount, we can assume that possibly they received the reduction of their rations because they lost government tools or cattle. However, it is doubtful that every bondwoman in this record was involved in the incident of losing government property, and the government, therefore, decreased the overall rations. Moreover, from the Liye slips I cannot find any mention of the compensation withdrawn from their ration. Therefore, I can say that it seems that giving a smaller amount of rations than the regulation called for was not considered contravention of the law in the Qin legal system. Considering that it was legally acceptable to give less, it is reasonable to say that the highly-detailed articles on the issue of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 38–39.

the amount of food rations given to the convict labors were designed not to guarantee a certain amount of rations be supplied to the convicts but to suggest the *maximum limit* that the administration was allowed to disburse to them. This can be understood in the same context as the state's effort to prevent the abuse of government property by enforcing the law for managing the government granaries as well as the rations at the conveyance stations.

II. Salaries, Rations and Gifts: Ideology of Food Redistribution

“The ancient kings hated any disorder and hence established the rules of proper conduct, *li*, and justice to divide the people, to cause them to have the classes of poor and rich, of noble and inferior.”¹⁰⁷

Li 禮 “propriety,” one of the key Confucian concepts, aims for the distinction of members of society according to their position and status. In ancient China, the social order based on *li* was highly respected in order to establish the ideal society, emphasizing not only the proper conduct of individuals, but also the right treatment of them. To maintain a stable state, lords were expected to demonstrate “expertise in providing clear principles for the orderly disposition of the people,”¹⁰⁸ following the notion of *li*.

The salaries and rations that were part of food redistribution system of the Han also embody the concept of *li* by emphasizing distinctive treatment. The distinction of the classes, or the virtue of *li*, was realized in the scale of salary, which was given the half in grain and the other half in cash; and the system eventually resulted in huge differences of economic condition between the highest and the lowest officials. The examination of the salary charts in historical literature, such as the *Shi ji* 史記 and the *Han shu* 漢書, shows that the lower-ranking officials found it hard to live on their petty salaries while officials in high

¹⁰⁷ Xunzi; Shuren Liang, 荀子約注 *Xunzi Yue Zhu* (Taipei Shi: Shi jie shu ju, 1962), 102; Homer H Dubs, trans., *The Works of Hsüntze* (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1928), 124.

¹⁰⁸ Xunzi; Shuren Liang, *Xunzi Yue Zhu*, 164–165; Xunzi; John Knoblock, *Xunzi : a Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, vol. 2 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 181–182.

positions received a more than adequate salary.¹⁰⁹ Even though there were some adjustments to salary levels throughout the Han period, the overall structure of the salary system, which resulted in the poverty of lower ranking officials and large salary inequalities between the higher and lower officials, remain unchanged. Despite lower-ranking officials being unable to live on their government salaries, the highly discriminatory system was purposely maintained as a means of realizing the concept of proper treatment.

Benhabib and Przeworski mention that democracy cannot be sustained if redistribution is insufficient for the poor or excessive for the rich, and if no redistribution simultaneously satisfies the poor and the wealthy.¹¹⁰ The relationship between “fair” redistribution and political stability is an important matter not only for contemporary democracy, but also for any society, including ancient China. Considering the issue of food redistribution system in the context of political stability, the Han redistribution system through salaries seems to have been far from the ideal of satisfying all people of various statuses or caring for lower-ranking officials. Nevertheless, it has not been observed that the unsatisfying redistribution system which caused such inequality and the financial stress of lower-ranking officials threatened the structure of the Han government. How did the massive Han bureaucracy remain stable despite this problematic system and why was it not reformed even though the emperor knew of the economic problem of lower-rank officials?¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ I define the scope of lower-level officials as those who were below 600 *shi* of salary grade, following the categorization which is shown from the Zhangjiashan slips. (no. 298-300 and 302) According to the Zhangjiashan slips, whole salary levels were categorized into three groups: 2000 *shi* and up, 1000 *shi* to 600 *shi*, 500 *shi* and down.

¹¹⁰ Jess Benhabib and Adam Przeworski, “The Political Economy of Redistribution under Democracy,” *Economic Theory* 29, no. 2 (October 1, 2006): 272.

¹¹¹ There are several cases in the historical literature in which the emperor gave food to the lower officials who suffered from low income. For example, in 48 and 44 BCE, Emperor Yuan (元帝, r. 48-33 BCE) who

What kind of supplementary redistribution system did the ruler use to make up for the deficiency caused by the salary system which was based on the ideal order of *li*?

In order to answer to these questions, in addition to examining the regular salary system for officials, I propose to pay attention to the alternative salary system for military officers and their families on the frontier as well as irregular food distribution in the form of imperial gifts. These two supplementary systems worked to satisfy lesser military officials by guaranteeing food for the family in addition to the regular salary, and for supporting the low-rank bureaucratic officials by providing additional sources to feed their family as a means of displaying the emperor's benevolence (*ren* 仁) and establishing loyalty (*zhong* 忠). Therefore, in this chapter, I will examine regular and irregular food redistribution from the court to officials, focusing on the salary and gift-giving systems in order to show how political ideology was embodied in the salary scale and imperial gifts, and how the ration system and the gift-giving worked as supplementary methods to establish a satisfactory redistribution system during the Han period. In the first section, the salary system will be examined based on historical literature, and then it will be compared to the administrative documents related to salary and rations for military officials discovered at Han sites in Juyan 居延. Then, the statutes concerning imperial bestowals unearthed from the early Han site of Zhangjiashan 张家山 will be analyzed both in light of society's ideological foundation and the realistic role that imperial gifts played in the context of the economic situation of the recipients.

already recognized the poor condition of low rank officials, kindly granted them beef and wine. See *Han shu* (9.279, 285).

1) Salary-grade and Food for Officials

During the Qin and Han periods, the most broadly executed form of regular food distribution was through official salaries, with both central and local officials being paid half of their salaries in grain—a massive feat considering that the total size of bureaucracy in 5 BCE was 130,285 men.¹¹² Although the preparation and distribution of such a large amount of food is impressive, the amount of grain and cash given to lower-level officials, who were below 600 *shi* of grade level, was not enough for one family to live on. Why did the Han government keep this salary system even though it could not supply the fundamental needs of lower level officials? And, how did they maintain the bureaucratic system, without encountering any significant trouble, such as revolt and rebellion, from these officials?

All Han officials were ranked on a scale of eighteen salary grades. Among the eighteen salary grades, sixteen were identified by the ancient measure of *shi* 石, which indicates a volume measure of grain, from 10,000 *shi* down to 100 *shi*. Below these, there were two grades which were not expressed in terms of *shi*, the officials “Whose Salaries are in Terms of *Dou* 斗” (*doushi* 斗食) and the Accessory Clerks (*zuoshi* 佐史).¹¹³ The names of each rank, except the lowest one, used the unit for a capacity of grain. The scale must have originally expressed the salary in kind, but it became simply a tool for indicating the bureaucratic ranking, and the salaries that each man actually received did not match the title by the Han period. Instead, fixed amounts of grains or coins were given to the officials based on their salary grade.

No historical document provides a complete list of salaries for Western Han officials and only a rudimentary picture of the official salary system can be reconstructed based on passages in the *Han shu*. For example, during the reign of Emperor Wu the salaries of the Commander-in-Chief (*dasima* 大司馬 and the General-in-Chief (*dajiangjun* 大將軍) were 60,000 cash (*qian* 錢), and the salary of the Grandee Secretary (*yuishi dafu* 御史大夫) was

¹¹² This number includes the officials from the Chancellor down to the Accessory Clerks in central government, commaderies, counties, marches and metropolitan who were paid by central government, not the lower staffs of county and district paid from the county resources. The number could be as high as 500,000 if these lower level clerks and support staffs included. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 156.

¹¹³ *Shi* 石 was a measure for capacity. One *shi* is equal to one *hu* 斛, which is 19.968 liters. One *shi* is equal to 10 *dou* 斗. Michael Loewe, “The Measurement of Grain during the Han Period,” *T’oung Pao* 49, no. 1/2, Second Series (January 1, 1961): 64–95. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 4.

40,000 cash per month.¹¹⁴ In 8 BCE, according to the edict of Emperor Cheng (成帝, r.33-7 BCE) each of the Three Excellencies (*sangong* 三公), the Chancellor (*chengxiang* 丞相), the Commander-in-Chief and the Grand Minister of Works (*dasikong* 大司空), who each ranked 10,000 *shi*, had the same salary level of 60,000 cash per month.¹¹⁵ Another passage in the *Han shu* also indicates that officials with salary-grade equivalent to 2,000 *shi* received 12,000 cash monthly, while official with salary-grades equivalent to 800 *shi* received 9,200 cash during the Western Han period.¹¹⁶ With this dispersed information, it is hard to reconstruct a salary list for Western Han officials, but we can see that officials' salaries were regulated in cash (*qian* 錢), although they may not have been paid fully in cash, and that there were frequent adjustments of salaries and official positions during the Western Han period.

The salary lists of Eastern Han officials are recorded in three different places: the *Baiguan zhi* (百官志, “Treatise on Bureaucratic Posts”) of the *Hou han shu zhi* 後漢書志, in the commentary to the “Basic Annals of Emperor Guangwu” (光武 r. 25-57 CE) in the *Hou han shu ji* 紀 and in the commentary to the “Table of Bureaucratic Posts” *Baiguan gongqing biao* 百官公卿表 in the *Han shu*.¹¹⁷ All three passages relate to an edict proclaimed by Emperor Guangwu in the fourth month of the twenty-sixth year of the Jianwu 建武 era (50 BCE). It is known that the *Baiguan zhi* in the *Hou Han shu zhi* was not originally recorded

¹¹⁴ See the commentary to *Han shu* (10.329)

¹¹⁵ See *Han shu* (10.329); Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 11,125.

¹¹⁶ See *Han shu* (72.3073). The official ranking of Equivalent 800 *shi* seems to have existed during the Former Han, but the salary list of Later Han does not contain this ranking.

¹¹⁷ *Hou Hanshu* (1B.77, 28.3632-3); *Han shu* (19A.721)

by the author of *Hou Han shu*, Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445 CE), but added in 1022 CE from *Xu han zhi* (續漢志, “Sequel to the Treatises of Han”) written by Sima Biao 司馬彪 (between 238 and 246 -306 CE) of the Jin 晉 period (265-420 CE).¹¹⁸ The commentary to the “Basic Annals of Emperor Guangwu” in the *Hou Han shu* by Li Xian (李賢, 653-684) of the Tang 唐 Dynasty (618-907) also indicates that this list is from the *Xu han zhi*. The commentary of Yan Shigu (顏師古 581~645) to the *Baiguan goingqing biao* in the *Han shu* also seems to have been cited from the same source, when he introduced the general rule of official salaries during the Han period.

In spite of the same original source, the lists in these three different texts are not identical. In particular, the list in the *Baiguan zhi*, which was written in the main body of the *Hou Han shu* treatise, is relatively incomplete and erroneous compared to the others. Table 6 shows the comparison of the salary lists from the three different sources with bold font numbers that are not identical. As we can see from the table, transcription errors are clearly evident in the *Baiguan zhi* as the same amount (40 *hu*) is recorded for both Equivalent 400 *shi* and 300 *shi* officials. I have reconstructed the salary list of 50 CE following Yan Shigu’s commentary, which seems most reasonable, and supplemented the missing parts from the other two lists. The reconstructed salary list of 50 CE and the graph of salary amounts from Figure 2 clearly show that the officials’ monthly salaries were systemically regulated in relation to a scale based on the amount of unhusked grain (*gu* 穀) with a large difference between the high and middle to lower-level officials. However, in fact, the

¹¹⁸ It has been generally assumed that *Hou Hanshu* treatise was compiled by Sima Biao, but some argue that Sima Biao was not an author but a copier of an earlier text which was written by Hu Kuang who lived in the second century CE. See Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 1-2.

salaries must have been given half in coin and half in grain, as clearly stated at the end of the list in *Baiguan zhi* (“凡諸受奉，皆半錢半穀”).

Table 6. Official Salary List of 50 CE

	<i>Baiguan zhi</i> (HHS <i>zhi</i> 28)	Commentary to <i>Guangwu di ji</i> (HHS 1B) (from <i>Xu han zhi</i>)	Commentary to <i>Baiguangongqing biao</i> (HS 19A, by Yan Shigu)	Reconstructed Salary list of 50 CE
10,000 <i>shi</i>	350 <i>hu</i>	350 <i>hu</i>	350 <i>hu</i>	350 <i>hu</i>
Fully 2,000 <i>shi</i>	180	180	180	180
2000 <i>shi</i>	120	120	120	120
Equivalent to 2000 <i>shi</i>	100	100	100	100
1000 <i>shi</i>	80	90	90	90
Equivalent 1000 <i>shi</i>	Missing	80	80	80
600 <i>shi</i>	70	70	70	70
Equivalent 600 <i>shi</i>	50	55	60	60
400 <i>shi</i>	45	50	50	50
Equivalent 400 <i>shi</i>	40	45	45	45
300 <i>shi</i>	40	40	40	40
Equivalent 300 <i>shi</i>	37	37	37	37
200 <i>shi</i>	30	30	30	30
Equivalent 200 <i>shi</i>	27	27	27	27
100 <i>shi</i>	16	16	16	16
Equivalent 100 <i>shi</i>	Missing	Missing	Missing	(14?)
Officials Whose Salaries are in Terms of <i>Dou</i>	11	11	Missing	11
Accessory Clerks	8	8	Missing	8

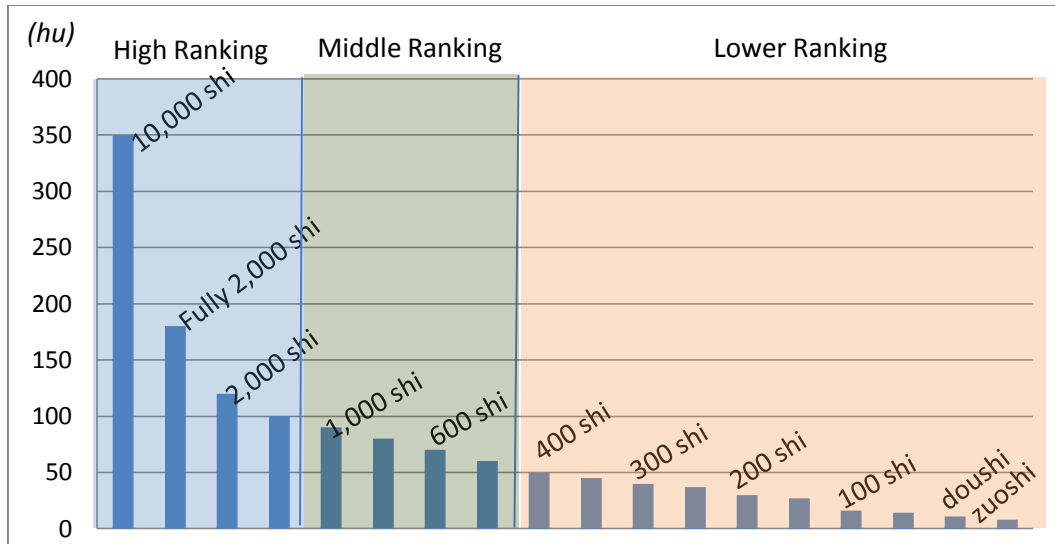


Figure 2. Official Salary Chart of 50 CE

With this salary list and the register of officials discovered from the late Western Han site of Yinwan 尹灣, it is possible to estimate approximately the total amount of grain, as a form of salary, given to local officials in Donghai Commandery (東海郡 *Donghai jun*). A wooden board from Yinwan (no. 1) records a total of 2,163 officials with twenty-two different official titles in thirty-eight sub-units, eighteen counties (*xian* 縣), two estates (*yi* 邑) and eighteen marquisates (*houguo* 侯國) in Donghai commandery during the reign of Emperor Cheng.¹¹⁹ Although it is hard to say that these documents include all the officials working in the local government and provide the exact amount given to officials as part of their salaries, it is possible to estimate the minimum amount of grain that was distributed in each local administrative unit around the year of 10 or 9 BCE. For example, the records for

¹¹⁹ Lianyun'gang shi bo wu guan.; Zhongguo wen wu yan jiu suo, ed., *Yinwan Han Mu Jian Du Zong Lun* 尹灣漢墓簡牘綜論 (Beijing: Ke xue chu ban she, 1999), 33-36; Pak-yuen Liu, *Jian Du Yu Zhi Du: Yinwan Han Mu Jian Du Guan Wen Shu Kao Zheng* 簡牘與制度：尹灣漢墓簡牘官文書考證 (Guilin Shi: Guangxi shi fan da xue chu ban she, 2004).

Xiapi 下邳 County , which had the largest number of local officials recorded includes one 1,000 *shi* official (*ling* 令), three 400 *shi* officials (*cheng* 丞 and *wei* 尉), three of 100 *shi* (*guan youzhi* 官有秩 and *xiang youzhi* 鄉有秩), thirty-two of *Doushi* (*lingshi* 令史, *yushi* 獄史, *guan sefu* 官嗇夫, *xiang sefu* 鄉嗇夫, *youjiao* 游徼 and *laojian* 牢監) and twenty-two of Accessory Clerks (*weishi* 尉史, *guan zuo* 官佐, *xiang zuo* 鄉佐, *yu zuo* 郵佐).¹²⁰ If we assume that a half of each salary was distributed in unhusked grain, the total amount of grain used for their salaries was 408 *shi* per month or 4,896 *shi* per year. The total amount given to the 1,911 officials of the thirty-eight subordinate levels of local administrations under Donghai commandery, which does not include grain that would have been given to the 689 Head of Courier Stations (*tingzhang* 亭長) whose salary rank is not known, is 7,038 *shi* of unhusked grain per month or 84,456 *shi* a year, which is about 140.5 kiloliter per month or 1,686.4 kiloliter annually.¹²¹ The amount would be much larger than this if the salaries for all the subordinate administrative units and the Donghai commandery itself were counted in this record. Considering that the total number of commanderies and kingdoms were 103 at the end of Western Han,¹²² and the number of central government officials was larger than that of a commandery, the annual amount which the Han government paid for salaries can be estimated as more than nine million *shi* per year. Considering that the total amount of land under cultivation at the end of Western Han was known as 8,270,536 *qing* 頃 (or

¹²⁰ In addition, there are fifty-four Constables (*Tingzhang* 亭長) whose salary rank is unknown, but maybe less than the Accessory Clerks. I do not account for them in this estimation. Lianyungang shi bo wu guan.; *Zhongguo wen wu yan jiu suo*, 尹湾漢墓簡牘綜論 *Yinwan Han Mu Jian Du Zong Lun*, 33–36.

¹²¹ 1 *hu*=19.968 liters, 1 liter= 0.264 gallon

¹²² *Han shu* (28B.1639,1640); Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol.1, *The Ch'in and Han Empires*, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 507.

827,053,600 *mu* 畝)¹²³, and the estimated land tax on each *mu* would have been about four *sheng* (or 0.04 *shi*) per *mu*,¹²⁴ the total amount of grain that the Han government collected as land tax would have been about 33,082,144 *shi* annually. With this estimation, we can say that approximately as much as 30% of collected land tax in grain was distributed to the officials for half of their salaries.

The salary list and the information about the prices of commodities and livestock make it possible to imagine the standard of living of Han officials. Based on the food prices recorded in the *Jiuzhang suanshu* 九章算術, the earliest specialized mathematical work composed around 200 BCE, we have rough ranges for the prices of commodities and livestock.¹²⁵ According to these records, a cow was valued around 1,200- 3,750 cash (*qian*), a pig 300-900, lamb 150-500, dog 100, chicken 70 and rabbit 29 (See Table 7). Moreover, a bamboo slip from Xuanquan, Dunhuang provide the records that one *jin* (斤, 245g) of meat (not beef, maybe pork or another animal) cost six coins, and one chicken (for meat) was bought with 40 coins.¹²⁶ Considering the prices of commodities and food during the Han period, we can assume that high ranking officials were able to enjoy various food resources in their daily lives. It can be assumed that, with their salaries alone, high officials above the salary grade of “Equivalent to 2,000 *shi*” whose total monthly income in cash value was about 10,000 *qian*, were able to afford a variety of meats in daily meals, as much as those of

¹²³ *Han shu* (28B.1640), One *qing* 頃= 100 *mu* 畝

¹²⁴ Hsu Cho-yun, *Han Agriculture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980), 75.

¹²⁵ Translated by Shen, Kangshen. *The Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹²⁶ Pingsheng Hu and Zhang Defang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han Jian Shi Cui* (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2001), 78,171. One *jin* was about 8.6 oz or 244g. Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China*, 364; Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 280.

Lady Dai from Mawangdui tomb No.1, whose family's annual tax income was 140,000 *qian* (about 11,667 *qian* per month).¹²⁷ (see Table 8 for discovered food remains from Mawangdui tomb no.1)

Table 7. Prices of Commodities from the *Jiuzhang suanshu*

Items	Prices (<i>qian</i>)
Land (/mu)	70~300
Hemp (/shi)	70
Barley (/shi)	40
Bean (/shi)	30
Red bean (/shi)	50
Millet (/shi)	100
Glutinous Millet (/shi)	60
Wine (/shi)	100~500
Fish (3chi=70cm)	50
Horse (1)	5454
Cow	1200~3750
Pig	300~900
Lamb	150~500
Dog	100
Chicken	70
Rabbit	29

Table 8. Foodstuffs from Mawangdui tomb no.1

Grains and Beans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Rice (稻, <i>Oryza sativa</i> L.) ·Wheat (小麦, <i>Triticum turgidum</i> L.) ·Barley (大麦, <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> L.) ·Glutinous millet (黍, 稷, <i>Panicum miliaceum</i> L.) ·Millet (粟, 小米, 谷子, <i>Setaria italica</i> [L.] Beauve.) ·Soybean (大豆, <i>Glycine max</i> [L.] Merr.) and Fermented Soybeans (豆豉) ·Red lentil (赤豆, <i>Phaseolus angularis</i> Wight.)
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¹²⁷ Sima Qian in the *Shiji* assumed that nobles collected on the average two hundred cash from each household per year. Marquis of Dai had 700 households in his fief, which made 140,000 cash tax income annually.

Fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Melon (甜瓜, 香瓜, <i>Cucumis melo</i> L.) ·Jujube (枣, <i>Zizyphus jujuba</i> Mill. var. <i>inermis</i> [Bunge] Rehd.) ·Pear (梨, <i>Pyrus pyrifolia</i> Nakai) ·Plum (梅, <i>Prunus mume</i> (Sieb.) Sieb. et Zucc.) ·Strawberry (杨梅, <i>Myrica rubra</i> Sieb. et Zucc.)
Vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Malva (葵, 冬苋葵, 冬葵, <i>Malva Verticillata</i> L.) ·Mustard (芥菜, 辣菜, 腊菜, <i>Brassica cernua</i> Hemsl.) ·Ginger (姜, <i>Zingiber Officinale</i> Rosc.) ·Lotus root (藕, <i>Nelumbo nucifera</i> Gaertn.) ·Hemp (大麻, <i>Canabis sativa</i> L.)
Mammal Meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Hare (华南兔, 野兔 <i>Lepus sinensis</i> Gray) ·Dog (家犬, 狗 <i>Caina familiaris</i> Linné) ·Deer (梅花鹿, 花鹿 <i>Cervus nippon</i> Temminck) ·Ox (黄牛, 牛 <i>Bos taurus domesticus</i> Gmelin) ·Sheep (绵羊, 羊 <i>Ovis aries</i> Linne)
Bird Meats and Eggs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Wild goose (雁, <i>Anser</i> sp.) ·Mandarin duck (鸳鸯, 匹鸟, 官鸭 <i>Aix galericulata</i> L.) ·Duck (鸭, <i>Anas</i> sp.) ·Bamboo chicken (竹鸡, 泥滑滑, 竹鹪鹩 <i>Bambusicola thoracica</i> Temminck) ·Chicken (家鸡, <i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i> Brisson) ·Pheasant (环颈雉, 野鸡, 山鸡, 雉鸡, 项圈野鸡, <i>Phasianus colchicus</i> Linne) ·Crane (鹤, <i>Grus</i> sp.) ·Pigeon (斑鸠, <i>Streptopelia</i> sp.) ·Owl (鸱, <i>Athene</i> sp.) ·Magpie (喜鹊, 鹊, 飞驳鹊, 干鹊, 客鹊 <i>Pica pica</i> L.) ·Sparrow (麻雀, 互雀, 家雀, 老家雀, 只只 <i>Passer montanus</i> L.) ·Turtledove (火斑鸠, 红鸠 <i>Oenopopelia tranquebraica</i> Hermann) ·Eggs (蛋壳)
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Carp (鲤鱼, 鲤, 礼鱼 <i>Cyprinus carpio</i> L.) ·Crucian carp (鲫鱼, <i>Carassius auratus</i> L.) ·Bream (刺鲃, <i>Acanthobrama simony</i> Bleeker) ·Silver Xenocypris (银鲴, <i>Xenocypris argentea</i> Günther) ·Catfish (鲶鱼, <i>Elopichthys bamausa</i> Richardson) ·Perch (鳊鱼, <i>Spiniperca</i> sp.)
Spices and Medical Herbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Lemon-grass (茅香, <i>Hierochloë odorata</i> [L.] Beauv.) ·Galangal (高良姜, <i>Alpinia officinarum</i> Hance) ·Cassia bark (桂皮, <i>Cinnamomum chekiangense</i> Nakai) ·Chinese prickly ash (花椒, <i>Zanthoxylum armatum</i> DC. and <i>Z.planispinum</i> Sieb. et Zucc.) ·Flower bud of lily (辛夷, <i>Magnolia denudata</i> Desr.) ·Magnolia (藁本, <i>Ligusticum</i> cf. <i>jeholense</i> Nakai et kitagawa) ·Ginger (姜, <i>Zingiber Officinale</i> Rosc.) ·Wild ginger (杜衡, <i>Asarum fargesii</i> Franch.) ·Fragrant thoroughwort (佩兰, <i>Eupatorium fortunei</i> Turcz.)

It is therefore doubtful that high-ranking officials had trouble feeding their families, clients and servants. But, were lower-level officials, whose salary levels were below “Equivalent to 600 *shi*,” able to sustain themselves and their families with their salaries? Around 150 CE, an official, Cui Shi 崔寔 (ca.103-171 CE) who earned 20 *hu* of unhusked grain and 2,000 cash per month, wrote that he was suffering due to his low salary. Cui was at the time a lower level official of the rank of 300 *shi*, probably a County Magistrate in a minor county. He laments that with 2,000 cash of his salary, he had to spend 1,000 cash to hire one retainer, 500 cash to buy fodder for horses, oil for cooking or lamps, pork, and 500 cash to buy firewood, coal, salt and vegetables. Also, he said that six *shi* of unhusked grain were needed to feed two adults for a month and the rest of the grain was used for horses. He complains that he does not have money to buy clothes and wine, nor to perform religious rites, and that he even cannot buy food, indicating he might starve to death. According to his complaint, he could barely feed his own family of two adults (and maybe some children) and that with the received grain he was able to purchase only pork and vegetables. Even though his essay is obviously exaggerated, his complaint seems realistic when we consider that he actually died penniless after spending all his money on his father’s funeral.¹²⁸ His writing suggests that some lower-grade officials may have had difficulty ensuring quality food on a daily basis if they relied on their salaries alone.

Needless to say, it was therefore impossible for officials of the two lowest salary grades, *doushi* and *zuoshi*, to experience good daily meals relying on their salaries. In fact, the condition of food security for the lowest officials was worse than for many peasants.

According to a text attributed to Li Kui (李悝, 4th century BCE), a small farmer owning a

¹²⁸ *Hou han shu* (52.1731-1733); Hsu, *Han Agriculture.*, 1980, 59; Yan Kejun, comp., *Quan shang gu San dai Qin Han San guo Liu chao wen* Beijing: Zhong hua shu ju: Xin hua shu dian Beijing fa xing suo fa xing, 1965), juan 46, vols. 1, 9.

100 *mu* plot of land (11.39 English acres) had an annual yield of 150 *shi* of unhusked grain from his own farm.¹²⁹ Even if we consider that farmers did not always have a good harvest and that they were subject to all kinds of government taxes, we can assume that the income of the lowest two official salary grades, whose annual incomes were 96 *shi* (8 *shi* a month) and 132 *shi* (11 *shi* a month) respectively, was much less than the income of the prototypical small landowner, though their incomes had greater reliability.

Based on the information that 10,281 soldiers who consumed 27,363 *hu* of unhusked grain (or 2.66 *hu* per soldier) did not live well, it has been assumed that the average monthly consumption of grain was 3 *hu* per adult male.¹³⁰ The Juyan slips which show a soldier was given 3 or 3.3 *hu* of grain per month also support this. With this information, Wolfram Eberhard assumes that a normal family consisting of an old woman, a grown man, a grown woman, an older child, and a younger child, probably consumed about 10.5 *shi* of unhusked grain per month during the Han period.¹³¹ Even though we assume that people who could raise domestic animals and cultivate crops and vegetables for themselves did not live on unhusked grain alone, so the average amount of consumed grain could be less than 3 *hu* per month,¹³² it seems that officials of the lowest two salary grades whose monthly salary were 8 *shi* and 11 *shi* of unhusked grain would find it hard to survive unless they or

¹²⁹ *Han shu* (24A.1125)

¹³⁰ *Han shu* (69.2986); Wolfram Eberhard, "Bemerkungen Zu Statistischen Angaben Der Han-Zeit," *T'oung Pao* 36, no. 1, Second Series (January 1, 1940): 7; Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 127, 194 n.17.

¹³¹ Eberhard, "Bemerkungen Zu Statistischen Angaben Der Han-Zeit": 5-8.

¹³² Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 127.

other family members earned outside income, such as making cloth for the market. With the salary alone, it was not possible for them to ensure enough quality food for daily meals.¹³³

In addition to the list of 50 CE, another salary list is given in a commentary of the *Hou han shu* treatise.¹³⁴ This commentary introduces the salary list of the Yanping 延平 era (106 CE) which lists amount in terms of husked grains and coins. Based on the commentary of the *Jin Baiguan biao* 晉百官表 by Xun Chao 荀綽, it records the following monthly allocations: 9,000 cash and 72 *hu* of husked grain (*mi* 米) for Fully 2,000 *shi*, 6,500 cash and 36 *hu* for 2,000 *shi*, 5,000 cash and 34 *hu* for Equivalent 2,000 *shi*, 4,000 cash and 30 *hu* for 1,000 *shi*, 3,500 cash and 21 *hu* for 600 *shi*, 2,500 cash and 15 *hu* for 400 *shi*, 2,000 cash and 12 *hu* for 300 *shi*, 1,000 cash and 9 *hu* for 200 *shi*, and 800 cash and 8 *hu* for 100 *shi*. We can certainly see the difference between the salary list of 50 CE, which provides almost a complete set of monthly salaries in the amount of unhusked grain with the list of 106 CE, which gives a partial list of salaries in coin and husked grain (*mi* 米). (see Table 9)

However, because the two lists have different styles and use different kinds of grain, their analysis requires a detailed, rather than cursory approach.

¹³³ It seems that the food security condition of mid-low rank officials during the early and mid Western Han period were much worse. The salary amounts for mid-low officials were increased several times by edicts during the late Western Han period. In 59 BCE, an edict ordered that officials ranking 100 *shi* or less had their salaries increased by 50% (*Han shu* 8.263), and in 7 BCE, salaries those of ranking 300 *shi* and less were increased (*Han shu* 11.336).

¹³⁴ See the commentary no.4 to *Hou han shu* (28.3633).

Table 9. The Salaries of Han Officials from 50 CE and 106 CE

Rank	CE50	CE106	
	in unhusked grain	in coin	in husked grain
10,000 <i>shi</i>	350 <i>hu</i>		
Fully 2,000 <i>shi</i>	180	9000 cash	72 <i>hu</i>
2000 <i>shi</i>	120	6500	36
Equivalent to 2000 <i>shi</i>	100	5000	34
1000 <i>shi</i>	90	4000	30
Equivalent 1000 <i>shi</i>	80		
600 <i>shi</i>	70	3500	21
Equivalent 600 <i>shi</i>	60		
400 <i>shi</i>	50	2500	15
Equivalent 400 <i>shi</i>	45		
300 <i>shi</i>	40	2000	12
Equivalent 300 <i>shi</i>	37		
200 <i>shi</i>	30	1000	9
Equivalent 200 <i>shi</i>	27		
100 <i>shi</i>	16	800	4.8
Equivalent 100 <i>shi</i>	(14?)		
Officials Whose Salaries Are in Terms of <i>Dou</i>	11		
Accessory Clerks	8		

In order to determine if the two lists describe identical salaries, we first need to consider two: the monetary value of grain and the conversion ratio from unhusked grain to husked. Even though the monetary value of grain varied throughout the Han period depending on the annual yield and economic situation, it is generally accepted that one *hu* of unhusked grain was equal to 70 to 80 cash for Former Han and 100 cash for Later Han on average.¹³⁵ The reliable ratio of unhusked and husked grain of ten to six is provided by the *Jiuzhang suanshu* and *Juyan Han jian*, the Han wooden documents discovered in Western

¹³⁵ The lowest notion of the price of unhusked grain recorded is 5 cash in 62 BCE (*Han shu* 1.259; 24A.1141), and the highest is 500,000 cash during a severe famine in 194 CE (*Hou Hanshu* 9.376). This conclusion is reached by Lao Gan, *Juyan Han jian Kaoshi kaozheng* 1:20a-23a, and accepted by Yang Lien-sheng, 'notes on the Economic History of the Jin Dynasty', 142, note 47 and by Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 126.

Gansu.¹³⁶ Based on these premises, it is possible to convert the list of 50 CE to a half in coin and a half in grain as the edict describes. For example, the salary of 10,000 *shi* officials of 350 *hu* of unhusked grain, can be converted to a half (175 *hu*) in cash value and a half (175 *hu*) in the amount of husked grain:

$$175 \text{ (hu) unhusked} \times 100 \text{ qian/unhusked (hu)} = 17500 \text{ qian}$$

$$175 \text{ (hu) unhusked} \times \frac{6}{10} \text{ husked/unhusked} = 105 \text{ husked (hu)}$$

Table 10 shows the two different lists side by side, converting the unhusked grain list of 50 CE of into a similar list to that of 106 CE in which half is recorded in monetary value and a half in husked grain. The two lists are fairly similar; however there are a number of discrepancies, especially in the salary grades of Fully 2000 *shi* to 1000 *shi*. Compared to the salaries of 50 CE, the salaries for Fully 2,000 *shi* and Equivalent 2,000 *shi* of 106 CE show a larger amount of husked grain and the 2,000 *shi* of 106 CE indicates more cash while the salary of 1,000 *shi* shows more grain but less cash (the total value is same as 50 CE) and the 200 *shi* had less grain.

¹³⁶ *Jiuzhang suanshu* 2.1a, Lao Gan 勞幹, *Juyan Han Jian Kaoshi Kaozheng Zhi Bu* 据延汉简考释, 释文之部 (Xichuan: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 1944): 2.30b–79a. Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 130–131, 198; Lien-Sheng Yang, “Notes on The Economic History of The Chin Dynasty,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 9, no. 2 (June 1, 1946): 142, note 47.

Table 10. Comparison of the Converted List of 50 CE with the List of 106 CE

	50 CE (converted)		106 CE	
	In coin (<i>qian</i>)	In husked grain (<i>hu</i>)	In coin (<i>qian</i>)	In husked grain (<i>hu</i>)
10,000 <i>shi</i>	17500	105		
Fully 2,000 <i>shi</i>	9000	54	9000	72 *
2000 <i>shi</i>	6000	36	6500 *	36
Equivalent to 2000 <i>shi</i>	5000	30	5000	34 *
1000 <i>shi</i>	4500 *	27	4000	30 *
Equivalent 1000 <i>shi</i>	4000	24		
600 <i>shi</i>	3500	21	3500	21
Equivalent 600 <i>shi</i>	3000	18		
400 <i>shi</i>	2500	15	2500	15
Equivalent 400 <i>shi</i>	2250	13.5		
300 <i>shi</i>	2000	12	2000	12
Equivalent 300 <i>shi</i>	1850	11.1		
200 <i>shi</i>	1500 *	9	1000	9
Equivalent 200 <i>shi</i>	1350	8.1		
100 <i>shi</i>	800	4.8	800	4.8
Equivalent 100 <i>shi</i>				
Officials Whose Salaries Are in Terms of <i>Dou</i>	550	3.3		
Accessory Clerks	400	2.4		

How can we interpret the differences between the two salary lists of 50 CE and 106? Rather than considering the differences between the two lists as “erroneous”,¹³⁷ it is more reasonable to see their discrepancies as the result of the adjustments of official salaries or the fluctuations of grain prices. In fact, salary adjustments often occurred throughout the Han period, even after guidelines were established by Emperor Guangwu in the year of 50 CE. For example, during the reign of Emperor Ming (60 CE, 明帝, r.58-75), the salaries for *gongqing* (公卿, Dukes and Ministers), the highest official positions, were reduced by 50%.¹³⁸ Also, in 143 and 161, the salaries of all officials were reduced again.¹³⁹ Certainly, the grain price which fluctuated with supply and demand could affect the cash value of their salaries. The converted salary list of 50 CE is made based on the premise that one *shi* of grain was valued at 100 *qian*, which was the average price during the Eastern Han period. Therefore, it could not be unusual that half of officials’ salaries were also fluctuated according to the market valuation of grain. The differences in salaries between the 50 and 106 lists should be examined in this context.

The salary adjustment could be closely related not only to the annual yield and the market price of grains, but also to the political situation. Compared to the salaries in 50 CE, high officials in 106 CE saw an increase in salary and were given more husked grains or cash, while the salary of 200 *shi* officials was reduced. According to the commentary to *Hou*

¹³⁷ Hans Bielenstein sees the entries of more and less amounts of grain in 106 CE as erroneous. After examining the two lists and applying his own formula, he argues that the two salary lists are identical and the principle of paying each official half in cash and the other half in grain was observed by both. Then, he proposes a new adjusted salary list of 106 CE, as correcting some “errors” which do not correspond with the principles of the list. He corrects the grain amounts and cash amount of 106 which are different from those of 50 CE, and fills in the missing parts of the salaries in accordance with the salary list of 50 CE. See Table 6 in Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 131.

¹³⁸ *Hou Hanshu* (1.107)

¹³⁹ *Hou Hanshu* (2.273,309)

han shu (28.3633), the salary list of 106 CE was originally written in the commentary to the “Table of Bureaucratic Posts of the Jin” (*Jin bai guan biao* 晋百官表) by Xun Chao 荀绰 (dates are not known).¹⁴⁰ Xun Chao’s commentary indicates that the salary list is from the Yanping 延平 era, which was only one year of the reign of Emperor Shang (殤帝, early 105 – August or September 106), the barely one hundred-day-old infant enthroned by the Empress Dowager Deng (鄧, 81-121). This received salary list was exactly from the very year of Emperor Shang’s reign under the Empress Dowager. During this time, there were several noted promotions, including the promotion of the brother of the Empress Dowager, as well as recorded natural disasters which both may relate to changes in the level of official salaries.

Considering this political situation, the salary increase for high officials can be interpreted as the Empress Dowager’s tactic to acquire political support from the high officials who had considerable influence over both central and provincial government. The financial burden of increased salary for high officials could be compensated by cutting 200 *shi* from certain officials’ salary rate. The 200 *shi* officials of the low upper salary grade were the best choice for salary reduction for compensating the loss of revenue due to the large number of lower salary grade positions. The government was able to save large amounts of revenue from the slight reduction of their salary. Even though the officials of the lowest ranks, like 100 *shi*, *doushi*, and *zuoshi* comprised the largest contingent in the Han officialdom, it must have been hard to reduce their salaries since they were already experiencing extreme difficulty in their livelihood with the little payment they received from the government.

¹⁴⁰Xun Chao 荀绰 is a historian during the end of the Western Jin period (265-317).

Even though there had been some adjustments in salaries, the overall structure of the salary list decreed under Emperor Guangwu had been well observed throughout the Eastern Han. The records on bamboo slips and wooden boards concerning the monthly payments to military officials, discovered from Juyan and Dunhuang areas, support that this salary list was valid even in northern frontier areas far from the central government during the Eastern Han period. According to the unearthed records, the highest rank in the company, a Company Commander (*Hou*, 候) whose official rank is known as 600 *shi* in general, received 3,000 coins of cash payment monthly which corresponds to the half of salary in cash for Equivalent to 600 *shi* from the established salary list.(slip no. 127.28) *Lingshi* (令史, Scribe Directors) whose rank is *doushi* received 480 coins per month, and *Shuzuo* (書佐, a junior civil official in a commandant's headquarters or Accessory Clerk for Documents) whose rank falls under Accessory Clerks was given 360 coins. (TD 5, nos.1,5,9)¹⁴¹ The cash amounts for these officials were a little bit lower than in the reconstructed salary list in general, but the differences are within the acceptable range considering the fluctuation in grain prices.

While the cash payments that the officers who worked in the military posts received was in accordance with the salary list, the other half of their salary, that in grain, seems to have distributed in a different way, by ration. According to the administrative records discovered from Juyan and Dunhuang, grain was distributed from official sources not only to conscripted soldiers and convicts, but also to officers and any of their family members living together with them in this area in the form of a monthly ration. The rations varied according to the status, gender, and age of the individual, and the type of grain that was

¹⁴¹ Michael Loewe, *Records of Han administration*. (London: Cambridge U.P., 1967), vol. 1, 96.

being distributed. For example, the officers and soldiers regularly guarding the watchtowers received 3.33 *shi* of unhusked grain, whereas officers and soldiers who served on the frontier for a short period received 3 *shi* of unhusked grain in a month. For their family members, adult males aged from 15 to 67 received 3.33 *shi*, adult females and serviceable (aged 7~14) males received 2.16 *shi*, serviceable females and pre-service (aged 2~6) males received 1.66 *shi*, and pre-service females received 1.16 *shi* of unhusked grain in one month (MD 9, 10, see Table 11).¹⁴²

Table 11. Distributed amount of grain for soldiers and family members¹⁴³

	Job position and Age	Amount of grain (<i>shi</i>)
Soldiers	guarding the watchtowers	3.33
	working on agricultural colonies serving on the frontier for short period	3
Families	<i>Da</i> 大 adult male (15~67)	3.3
	adult female (15~67)	2.16
	<i>Shi</i> 使 serviceable male (7~14)	
	serviceable female (7~14)	1.66
	<i>Wei shi</i> 未使 pre-service male (2~6)	
pre-service female (2~6)	1.16	

Based on this information, it is possible to estimate that the total monthly income of grain that one military officer's family of five with one female adult, one aged male (age

¹⁴² Loewe, 2002. *Han administration*, vol. 2, 68-69. Yang, "Notes on Dr. Swann's," 550; Loewe, 1968, *Everyday Life*, 94.

¹⁴³ Loewe, 2002. *Han administration*, vol. 2, 69.

under 67), one serviceable male (aged 7~14) and one pre-service female (aged 2~6) received was about 12.11 *shi* of grain in a month, which approximates the salary level in grain of a 300 *shi* rank official (see table 10). Juyan slips which contain military officers monthly payment in cash prove that the Han military officers generally occupied the mid to low positions whose salary amounts were 300 *shi* to 100 *shi* or even below, except the *Hou* 候, Company Commander, who received 3000 coins, equal to a salary grade of 600 *shi*. (see tables 10 and 12).

Table 12. Official titles and monthly payment from Juyan slips¹⁴⁴

Official's Title		Monthly Payment (coin)
Hou 候	Company commander	3000
Hou chang 侯長	Platoon commander	1200 / 1600 / 1800
Sui chang 隧長	Section commander	900
Sai wei 塞尉	Deputy company commander	2000
Shi li 士吏	Officer serving in a company	1200
Wei shi 尉史	Civil official in a company	600
Shu zuo 書佐	Junior civil official in a commandant's headquarters	360
Ling shi 令史	Civil official in a company	480
Hou shi 候史	Civil official in a platoon	900

¹⁴⁴ Loewe, 2002. *Han administration*, vol. 1, 96.

This means that lower-level officers with family members in the military camp received grains comparable to the grain amount distributed to officials of 300 *shi* salary grade working in the central and provincial governments. Comparing to the central and provincial officials whose salary grades were under 300 *shi*, military officers of the same rank were treated better, with guaranteed amount of grain regardless of rank. With the ration in the military camp, even lesser officers did not have problems in food consumption because they were all guaranteed to receive an appropriate amount of grain, 3 or 3.3 *shi* a month for an adult, in addition to the cash. It seems that the Han government applied this alternative salary strategy for military officials to guarantee the required food amount considering the size of their family. Based on this salary system at the military camp, even the petty officials and their families were free from worrying about food, no matter the size of their family. This salary system combining rationing in military forts might have been installed because the government recognized the lack of salary for the petty officials and the importance of ensuring enough food for military officers to the lowest level. This alternative salary system for the military forts was possibly designed and worked to prevent potential danger by unsatisfied military officers and to stabilize the security of the frontier.

2) Imperial Bestowals and Gifts of Food

In addition to the ration system for military officials, a system of irregular gift-giving fulfilled the needs of both the emperor, who wanted to maintain a solid bureaucracy based upon the loyalty of the officials, and those officials, who sought more income and food. A gift-giving culture was firmly established by the Western Zhou period (1046-771 BCE) in

order to strengthen the bonds between the king and the feudal lords by exchanging gifts and loyalty. During the Han period, this practice continued to ensure the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. In addition to this purpose, giving gifts to officials of both high and low ranks seemed to be used not only for strengthening political ideology, but also for feeding hungry officials who could not eat solely from the salary of their low income. The imperial gift of food can also be understood as a way to make up for the problem of the salary system, which, although founded on the virtue of *li*, failed to display the emperor's benevolence (*ren* 仁) or to secure the loyalty (*zhong* 忠) of lower officials who received petty salaries. In this section, officials' food privileges will be examined in the context of the role of gifting food in Han officialdom.

Han officials had frequent chances to have extra income in addition to their salaries. In addition to the grants which were given to specific officials when they were appointed to an important position or when they died, historical literature frequently describes events during which the emperor bestowed unspecified quantities of wine, food, silk, gold and cash to all officials and his subjects. The emperor regularly gave out gifts during three annual festivals, the New Year, the Beginning of Spring and the La 腊 festival, as well as on irregular occasions to celebrate imperial events such as enthronement, a birth in the imperial family, or when an imperial family member recovered from illness. The *Hou Hanshu* proves that sometimes the imperial gifts to officials caused huge expense to the government:

I heard that the gift made on the La to officials of the rank of Gentlemen upward, and to the Lords, Ministers, Kings and Marquises downward, has reached the point where they empty the treasury and deplete the nation's wealth.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Hou Hanshu (73.1583); trans. by Derk Bodde, *Festivals in Classical China: New Year and Other Annual Observances During the Han Dynasty*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 64.

Hans Bielenstein also argues that Han officials benefited great from these imperial bestowals, providing an example of a minister ranking Fully 2,000 *shi* whose annual income was increased by over 50% due to the annual gifts of silk and cash alone.¹⁴⁶

Even though received texts record many occasions of imperial gifts to officials, they rarely provide details regarding the amount distribute to men of specific salary grades. In general, the documents say that the gifts such as wine, food, and silk were granted to the officials, “to each proportionately” (各有差),¹⁴⁷ with no details given regarding the exact proportions or amounts. Therefore, it has been impossible to estimate the amount of gifts officials in each position received at any one time in addition to their regular income.

Fortunately, the newly discovered wooden strips of early Han statutes, entitled, *Ernian lüling* 二年律令 “Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year” from the Zhangjiashan site describe detailed regulations on food distribution not recorded in received texts.¹⁴⁸ Among the 1,236 slips, 23 strips (no.282 – no.304) in the “Statutes on Bestowal” (*Ci lü* 賜律) contains regulations on the distribution of clothes, coffins and food.¹⁴⁹ Except slip number 303, which indicates the title of “Ci lü”, these slips can be categorized into four groups according to the items, recipients and methods: 1) rules for bestowal of clothes and coffins to nobles and officials (282-285), 2) rules for bestowal to aid those who are in

¹⁴⁶ Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 127.

¹⁴⁷ The term of “to each proportionately (各有差)” can be seen frequently in *Shi ji*, *Han shu* and *Hou han shu*. For example, see *Han shu* (3.100, 6.179, 7.218, 7.223, 8.242, 9.279)

¹⁴⁸ The laws from Zhangjia shan were excavated in 1983 and first published along with commentaries in 2001. Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhu jian (er si qi hao mu)* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2001). Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian* 張家山漢墓竹簡 : *Er Si Qi Hao Mu* 二四七號墓, Di 1 ban. (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2006). For a complete translation of the Zhangjiashan slips see Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, forthcoming.

¹⁴⁹ *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhu jian*, Beijing: Wenwu chu ban she, 2006, 48-51.

distress (286-288), 3) rules for alternative methods using cash (289,290), and 4) rules for bestowal of food items (291-302). The statutes on clothes, coffins and relief food clarify when the government should bestow what items and to whom. However, the rules for food items (291-301) do not indicate any situations or restrictions. They only indicate the prescribed amount, kind and quality of food for all the people from nobles down to convicts in the empire. Based on these statutes, we shall assume that food distribution to officials “to each proportionately” occurred both regularly and irregularly and must have operated under the following regulations during the Han period:

賜不爲吏及宦皇帝者，關內侯以上比二千石，卿比千石，五大夫比八百石，公乘以六百石，公大夫，官大夫比五百(291)石，大夫比三百石，不更比有秩，簪褭比斗食，上造，公士比佐史。毋爵者，飯一斗，肉五斤，酒大半斗，醬少半斗。(292) 司寇，徒隸，飯一斗，肉三斤，酒少半斗，鹽廿分升一。(293)

For bestowals on those who are not acting as officials, as well as those who personally serve the Emperor at court: Lord within the Passes [rank] and above is comparable to [the salary grade of] two-thousand bushels; Ministerial [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] one-thousand bushels; Fifth Grandee [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] eight-hundred bushels; Royal Conveyance [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] six-hundred bushels; Grandee of the Realm and Grandee of the Bureaucracy [ranks] are comparable to [the salary grade of] five-hundred [291] bushels; Grandee [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] three-hundred bushels; Corvée Exempt [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] “stipendiary officials”; Embellished Horse [rank] is comparable to [the salary grade of] “fed by the *dou*”; Sovereign’s Accomplished and Knight of the Realm [ranks] are comparable to [the salary grade of] Assistant Scribes. [For bestowals on] those without rank: one *dou* (approx. 2 l) of cooked grain, 5 *jīn* (approx. 1.24 kg) of pork; $\frac{2}{3}$ of a *dou* (1.33 l) of grain liquor, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of a *sheng* (approx. 66.7 ml) of fermented sauce [292]. Robber-guards and convict laborers and servants: 1 *dōu* (approx. 2 l) of cooked grain, 3 *jīn* (approx. 744g) of pork, $\frac{1}{3}$ of a *dou* (approx. 666.7 ml) of grain liquor, and 1/20th of a *sheng* (approx. 10 ml) of salt.[293]

賜吏酒食，率秩百石而肉十二斤，酒一斗；斗食令史肉十斤，佐史八斤，酒各一斗。(297)

For bestowals on officials of grain liquor and food: the rate is 12 *jin* (approx. 2.98 kg) of pork and 1 *dou* (approx. 2 l) of grain liquor per one-hundred bushels of salary grade. For those Scribe Directors “fed by the *dou*,” 10 *jin* of pork (approx. 2.48 kg), for Assistant Scribes, 8 *jin* (approx. 1.98 kg) of pork, and 1 *dou* (approx. 2 l) of grain liquor, for each. [297]

二千石食，粢糲各一盛，醯，醬各二升，介（芥）一升（298）

For officials [with a salary grade of] two-thousand bushels: treated grains; one serving each of polished grain, polished, long-grain, non-glutinous rice, and [polished] glutinous rice, two *sheng* each (approx. 400 ml) of vinegar and fermented sauce, and one *sheng* (approx. 200 ml) of mustard [sauce]. [298]

千石吏至六百石，食二盛，醯，醬各一升（299）

For officials [with a salary grade of] one-thousand bushels to six-hundred bushels: two servings of treated grain and one *sheng* (approx. 200 ml) each of vinegar and fermented sauce. [299]

五百石以下，食一盛，醬半升（300）

For [officials with a salary grade of] five-hundred bushels on down: one serving of treated grain, and half a *sheng* (approx. 100 ml) of fermented sauce. [300]

食一盛用米九升（301）

For one serving of treated grains, use nine *sheng* (approx. 1.8 l) of milled grain. [301]

賜吏六百石以上以上尊，五百石以下以下尊，毋爵以和酒（302）¹⁵⁰

For bestowals on officials [of grain liquor]: [for those with a] salary grade of six-hundred bushels on up, use the “upper quality” [rice liquor]; [for those with a

¹⁵⁰ Hao Peng, *Er Nian Lü Ling Yu Zhou Yan Shu : Zhangjiashan Er Si Qi Hao Han Mu Chu Tu Fa Lü Wen Xian Shi Du* 二年律令與奏讞書：張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2007), 211–214.

salary grade of] five-hundred bushels on down, use the “lower quality” [millet liquor]; for those without rank use adulterated grain liquor. [302]¹⁵¹

These statutes on food bestowals not only provide information about the amount and type of food given, but also demonstrate the ideological underpinnings of Han society, with amounts given based on the social hierarchy, regulating the amount, type and the quality of food. First, meat, fermented liquor and grains were items commonly distributed to all people, but the amount of each item varied according to the social status and official position of the recipient. In particular, the amounts of meat and wine are regulated by the ratio, 12 *jīn* of meat per 100 *shì* of rank and 10 *dōu* of fermented liquor per 100 *shì* of rank, demonstrating highly systematized differences according to salary grade. For example, the highest official receives thirty times more meat and fermented liquor than the lowest official. Commoners and convicts receive less meat and liquor than officials, but commoners received much more than convicts, also receiving double the amount of fermented liquor.

Second, bestowals of sauces and spices show clear differences between the salary grades and among the lower statuses. Mustard was given only to the 2,000 *shì* officials. Vinegar was given to high (2,000 *shì*) and middle officials (from 600 to 1,000 *shì*).¹⁵² Fermented sauce was given to all except convicts. Instead, convicts are given 0.05 *dōu*, or 0.1 liter of salt, which could be used for making fermented sauce. It shows that people with high social status enjoyed more varied spices from the imperial bestowals.

Third, these statutes on food bestowals indicate not only the amount and sort of the food given, but also the quality of the food given, according to salary grade, rank, or social

¹⁵¹ Translation from Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript)

¹⁵² The use of these three categories is also seen in the *Zhuanshi lü* 傳食律(232-237) of *Ernian lüling*.

status. For example, the quality of grain for 2000 *shi* officials is regulated as “refined grain, refined rice, and glutinous rice” (slip no. 298).¹⁵³ It also mentions the different qualities of fermented liquor. The highest quality of fermented liquor was reserved for high and middle-level officials, the low quality for low officials, and adulterated wine mixed with dregs and diluted with water for commoners and convicts.

By indicating differences in the amount and type of food given, based on rank, salary grade or social status, the statutes highlight the social belief in the importance of discrimination according to a hierarchical order. This type of distribution had both symbolic and practical meaning. I will now focus on the food given to officials in order to examine the symbolic significance of the gift of food and the practical benefits of these gifts to the lower-ranking officials.

Treated grain was distributed using the unit of *cheng* 盛, which might indicate a serving bowl or container for food. High officials of 2,000 *shi* received three *cheng*, officials ranking 1,000 *shi* to 600 *shi*, two *cheng*, and officials ranking 500 *shi* and below one *cheng*. According to the statutes, one serving (*cheng*) of treated grain required nine *sheng* of husked grain, which is one and a half *dou* of unhusked grain. If we consider that a soldier and a male adult received about 3 to 3.33 *shi* of grain per month (daily 1 – 1.11 *dou*) as rations,¹⁵⁴ the distributed grain to low officials, one *cheng*, was at most about 50% more than the daily consumption of a male adult, or comparable amount necessary for one family of three adults to consume in a meal assuming that they ate two meals per day. The amounts of the distributed treated grain for mid and high officials were not significantly more than those of

¹⁵³ It does not indicate the quality and sort of the grain for middle to lower-level officials.

¹⁵⁴ Lien-sheng Yang, “Notes on Dr. Swann’s Food and Money in Ancient China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 13, no. 3/4 (December 1, 1950): 550; Loewe, *Records of Han Administration.*, vols. 2, 68.

low-ranking officials: one or two more servings. It seems that two and three *cheng* of cooked grain for mid and high-ranking officials must have been consumed by their family members and subjects for one or more meals. The amount and the form of the distributed grain imply that the gift of treated grain was symbolic, intended to be consumed immediately, not to be stored as additional income.

Unlike the treated grain, amounts of distributed meat and wine differed greatly based on salary grade. While the highest officials received three times more cooked grain than the lowest, they received up to thirty times more meat and wine than the lower-ranking officials. One *jin* of meat is about 244 grams or 8.6 ounces, which is a large portion for one person. The high officials, with a salary grade of 2,000 *shi*, were able to feed up to 240 people fully with the meat they received if they served one *jin* to one person. This large amount of meat was possibly intended to be used for parties for a large audience or for several days. If they minced the meat and added vegetables and other ingredients, they could serve up to 500 people at once a smaller number for several days. The mustard, exclusively distributed to the 2,000 *shi* officials, seems to have not only been used to add flavor but also to preserve the food for several days.¹⁵⁵ Otherwise, meats were probably smoked and hung over the stove, as depicted in Eastern Han tomb reliefs and murals (see Figure 3 and 4).

¹⁵⁵ Mustard was the essential condiment to preserve cooked food for several days, especially when the upper class had parties for several days, as in pre-modern Korea. It can be assumed that the ancient Chinese also used mustard to preserve cuisines.



Figure 3. Food preparation scene from the Wuliang Shrine¹⁵⁶

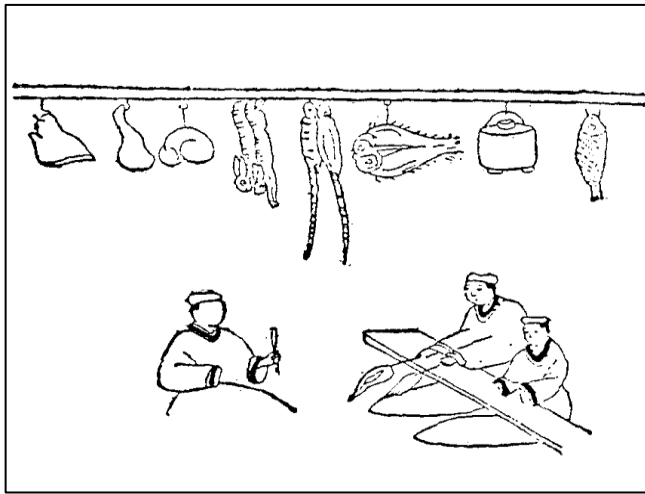


Figure 4. Kitchen scene from a late Eastern Han tomb at *Pangtaizitun*¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Xingzhen Liu and Fengxia Yue, *Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs: The Wu Family Shrines in Shandong Province.*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 96.

¹⁵⁷ Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 182., Lee, Wenxin. "Liaoyang faxian de san zuo bi hua gu mu," *Wen wu zhan kao zi liao.* no. 5 (1955), 27-28.

Even Accessory Clerks, the lowest level officials, could enjoy exceptionally large amounts of meat as imperial gifts. Eight *jin* of meat, the amount given to Accessory Clerks, can feed one family for one or more days depending on how it is prepared. Rather than serving the meat as a single dish, low-ranking officials must have used the meat for making stew, *geng* 羹, which was the main food consumed in ordinary meals.¹⁵⁸ With the distributed meat, they were able to enjoy meat *geng*, which was more a luxury than a daily necessity in Han China. Or, if they sold the meat, they might be able to buy more grain that they could use to sustain their family for a longer period of time. For example, if one *jin* of meat cost six coins as the Han wooden records from Xuanquan indicate, the lowest officials were able to buy more than one *shi* of bean or barley with eight *jin* of the distributed meat (see table 7).

Fermented liquor was given at the rate of one *dou* of fermented liquor per 100 *shi* of rank. Accessory Clerks whose rank was below 100 *shi* were bestowed with seven *sheng* (0.7 *dou*) which is about 1.4 liters, or more than four bottles of the standard longneck bottles of North America (341 ml. capacity each). The highest officials received 2000 *dou*, or 40 liters of liquor, an amount that is more than 117 beer bottles. Like the meat, the amount of the distributed liquor to high officials was enough to have parties with a large number of guests, and the lowest officials were also given a significant amount of liquor, even though the quality was inferior. Unlike the symbolic treated grain, the bestowed meat and liquor could be practically used for having parties, feeding subjects, storing for future use or transferring for pecuniary need.

¹⁵⁸ Kwang-chih Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 74.

Table 13. Gift Food to Officials According to the Salary Grade

Salary Grade	Grain	Meat	Liquor		Others (<i>sheng</i>)
2000 <i>shi</i>	3 <i>cheng</i> (4.5 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	240 <i>jin</i> ¹⁵⁹ (58.56 kg)	20 <i>dou</i> ¹⁶⁰ (40liters)	High quality	Mustard (1), Vinegar (2), Fermented sauce (2)
1000 <i>shi</i>	2 <i>cheng</i> (3 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	120 <i>jin</i> (29.28 kg)	10 <i>dou</i> (20 L.)		
800 <i>shi</i>		96 <i>jin</i> (23.424 kg)	8 <i>dou</i> (16 L.)		
600 <i>shi</i>		72 <i>jin</i> (12.568 kg)	6 <i>dou</i> (12L.)		
500 <i>shi</i>	1 <i>cheng</i> (1.5 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	60 <i>jin</i> (14.64 kg)	5 <i>dou</i> (10 L.)	Low quality	Fermented sauce(1/2)
300 <i>shi</i>		36 <i>jin</i> (8.784 kg)	3 <i>dou</i> (6 L.)		
Officials whose salaries are in terms of <i>dou</i>		10 <i>jin</i> (2.44 kg)	-		
Accessory Clerks		8 <i>jin</i> (1.952 kg)	0.7 <i>dou</i> (1.4L.)		

Regarding the imperial distribution of wine, we need to pay attention to the legal statute on the quality of liquor, which differs according to status.

賜吏六百石以上以上尊, 五百石以下以下尊, 無爵以和酒。(302)¹⁶¹

For bestowals on officials: [for those with a] salary grade of six-hundred bushels on up, use the “upper quality”¹⁶² [for those with a salary grade of]

¹⁵⁹ One *jin* is about 244 or 245 grams which is about 8.6 ounce. Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), xxxviii.; Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China*, 364.

¹⁶⁰ One *dou* is about 1.996 liters. Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, 1:xxxviii.

¹⁶¹ Hao Peng et al., *Er nian lü ling yu zhou yan shu* : Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu chu tu fa lü wen xian shi du (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2007), 214.

five-hundred bushels on down, use the “lower quality”; for those without rank use flavored liquor. [302]¹⁶³

The grain liquor grade *shangzun* “upper quality” appears in *Hanshu* (71.3051). According to the commentary written by Ru Shun, the three quality levels of liquor were determined by the type of grain fermented: rice (*dao* 稻 *Oryza sativa*) for upper quality, panicked millet (*ji* 稷 *Panicum miliaceum*) for middle quality, and foxtail millet (*su* 粟 *Setaria italica*) for lower quality.¹⁶⁴ Even though there is another interpretation by Yan Shigu, who states that quality depends on the process of manufacture and the level of purity, it is generally believed that the levels of liquor were determined by the raw materials.¹⁶⁵

The meaning of *hejiu* 和酒 is still controversial: Yates and Barbieri-Low follow Peng Hao et al. (2007, 214n2), who see it as an adulterated liquor, probably an unfiltered type (with dregs), or one diluted (mixed) with water,¹⁶⁶ while Zhangjiashan (2001, 2006) glosses *hejiu* as “liquor with mixed-in additives” (*hunhe jiu* 混合酒). In order to interpret this, we need to remember the nature of imperial gifts in terms of purpose and intention. An

¹⁶² Zhangjiashan (2001, 2006) cites *Han shu* (71.3051), which mentions the grain liquor grade of *shàngzūn* 上尊 “upper quality.” The commentary to that passage by Ru Shun, explains that, according to the Han statutes, the difference between the quality levels (上, 中, 下) of liquor was determined by the type of grain fermented. Fermented *dào* 稻 “rice” (*Oryza sativa*) resulted in “upper quality” grain liquor, fermented *ji* 稷 “panicked millet” (*Panicum miliaceum*) resulted in “middle quality,” and fermented *su* 粟 foxtail millet (*Setaria italica*) resulted in “lower quality.” Yan Shigu rejected this explanation and suggested that the difference had more to do with the process of manufacture, and the level of purity, rather than the raw materials. Tomiya (2006a, 2:200-1n1) follows Ru Shun’s explanation.

¹⁶³ Translated by Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, “Statutes on Bestowals” in *Law and Society in Early Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript).

¹⁶⁴ Zhangjiashan *er si qi hao Han mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu*, *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhu jian (er si qi hao mu)* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2001), 50; Peng et al., *Er nian lü ling yu zhou yan shu*, 214.

¹⁶⁵ Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, “Statutes on Bestowals” in *Law and Society in Early Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript), fn.85.

¹⁶⁶ Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D.S. Yates, “Statutes on Bestowals” in *Law and Society in Early Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript).

emperor bestowed symbolic food, meat and wine, in order to manifest his mercifulness, not only to reconfirm the social hierarchy. In this sense, liquor adulterated with dregs or mixed with water seems inappropriate as a gift from the emperor. Considering the symbolic meaning of the imperial gift of wine, even though the wine was given to officials “without rank,” which might refer to those with a salary grade below one hundred bushels, such as “fed by the *dou*” officials and the Assistant Scribes,¹⁶⁷ it is not reasonable that such low quality liquor was distributed as an imperial gift. Wine had been the most important item in offering rituals to the gods and spirits since ancient times.¹⁶⁸ As Poo points out, the value of wine as a royal gift was very high, as wine was already a gift to the gods and ancestors.¹⁶⁹ People might have been expected to use the bestowed liquor for various rituals in their own places or communities first before consuming it for themselves. In this context, the assumption of giving poor quality liquor to his subjects does not meet the intention and the nature of the event which was to enhance the authority of emperors by distributing high-value food. Even though the emperors gave food stuffs in different amounts or different forms according to their aristocratic and bureaucratic status in order to reaffirm the social hierarchy, adulterated wine or mixed with water would be far from a special gift from the emperor.

In addition to liquor made with grains such as rice and millet, the ancient Chinese seem to have enjoyed various kinds of flavored wine using pepper, ginger, honey, and other fragrant plants. According to the *Qimin yaoshu* text, a wine spiced with pepper (*Jiao jiu* 椒

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Mu-Chou Poo, “The Use and Abuse of Wine in Ancient China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 2 (January 1, 1999): 135.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 140.

酒) was popular at the La 臘 (the real New Year) and the lunar New Year.¹⁷⁰ Also, in *Shuo wen jie zi*, the second-century lexicographer Xu Shen (c. 58-147 CE) recorded *chang* 鬯 as a wine brewed with certain fragrant grass mixed with steamed grain. The *chang* wine, which is believed to have been used as ritual wine during the Zhou period, may have been used as a royal gift during the Han period.¹⁷¹ As Yates and Barbieri-Low point out, this kind of wine could be too luxurious to be given to the lowest officials if it were made with rare fragrant or expensive ingredients. In other words, the quality of the wine could vary depending on the kind of raw materials used. Therefore, I incline toward the interpretation evaluating *hejiu* as a kind of flavored wine. In particular, I believe that the flavored wine distributed to the officials of low salary-grade would be made with easily obtainable or widely enjoyed fragrant grass or plants such as pepper, ginger, or other. This could be a proper form of wine from the emperor satisfying the goal of displaying imperial authority with a type of meaningful and valuable food.

In Han times, the gift-giving system was effectively manipulated in order to maintain the bureaucratic system, both symbolically and practically. The gift giving system proclaimed and perpetuated the social hierarchy and displayed the merciful care of the emperor as a father. By supplementing the inadequate salaries of lower-ranking officials as well as the income of commoners and convicts, the emperor was portrayed as a provider who generously fed his hungry subjects with luxurious food. Most of all, the salary grade system with poor pay for the low officials as well as Han society in general was able to be maintained without encountering serious social problems instigated by unsatisfied low

¹⁷⁰ Bodde, *Festivals*, 66.

¹⁷¹ Poo, "The Use and Abuse of Wine in Ancient China," 140.

officials due to effects of the gift-giving system, which mitigated the difficulties of obtaining a livelihood and solidified the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.

In order to establish the ideal society, the Qin and Han emperors proclaimed edicts based on Legalism and Confucianism, upholding discrimination according to status. Food distribution was one of the most effective ways to manifest this ideology in the everyday life of subjects. With the salary system for officials, the emperors tried to demonstrate and reinforce the hierarchical order of society. However, the salary system based on the concept of *li* had realistic problems that could have caused social and political disturbances because of the inadequate amount of pay for lower officials. The gift-giving system was applied as a supplementary device, not only to solve the problem of the lack of sufficient salary for lower-level officials, but also to highlight the virtue of the emperor, who took care of the people in poverty with the symbolic and practical action of gifting them with special food. The alternative salary payment system for military officials on the frontier also worked to maintain social and political stability by guaranteeing enough food for those who lived in the military camps.

III. Welfare Food Policies

方春和時,草木羣生之物皆有以自樂,而吾百姓鰥寡孤獨窮困之人或阡於死亡,而莫之省憂. 為民父母將何如? 其議所以振貸之.

Just now it is spring, when nature is harmonious, and the plants and trees and all living beings have means of enjoying themselves, yet among my subjects there are widowers, widows, orphans, and childless, distressed and suffering people, and some at the point of death, but no one goes to look after their suffering. What should those who are the father and mother of the common people do about this situation? Let it be discussed what are the means to aid and lend to them.¹⁷²

This edict proclaimed by Emperor Wen (文帝, r. 180-157 BCE) in the spring of 179 BCE indicates the purpose for and recipients of special treatment by the Han emperor and ministers. In order for society to be enjoyable and harmonious and without suffering, rulers wanted to discuss ways to aid “widowers, widows, orphans, and childless, distressed and suffering people, and some at the point of death...” This idea recalls a phrase from Mencius (Mengzi 孟子), referring to the importance of governmental aid for the hungry:

為民父母,民飢而死,則曰,非我也,歲也,何異乎以刃殺之,則曰,非我也,兵也?¹⁷³

As parents of a subject, when people starve to death, if they say “It’s not my fault, but the bad harvest,” how is that different from saying, “It’s not my fault, but the weapon” when one kills someone with a knife?

¹⁷² *Han shu* (4.113); Homer Dubs, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938), 236-237.

¹⁷³ Lu Liehong 盧烈紅, 新譯鹽鐵論 *Xin Yi Yan Tie Lun* (Taibei Shi: San min shu ju, 1995), 487. This phrase was originally cited from Menzi. 孟子註疏 *Mengzi zhu shu* (1A:6, 2:2666) in *Shisanjing zhu shu*.

In fact, there were legal statutes mentioning aid for the sick and the weak by providing food and clothes, as seen in the early Han statutes discovered at Zhangjiashan 張家山:

吏各循行其部中,有疾病者收食,寒者假衣傳詣其縣.¹⁷⁴

When each official makes a thorough inspection of his post, those who have the appearance of becoming ill or are actually sick are to be taken in and fed, and those who are cold are to be lent clothing, and then they are to be transported through postal-relay stations to the county seat [of the inspecting official].¹⁷⁵

According to these imperial edicts and the statutes, the Han leaders recognized that government is responsible of taking care of the weak and people in need by providing food and clothing. This notion is far different from the legalistic view which prevailed during the Qin period. Han Feizi (韓非子, ca. 280-233 BCE) clarified the Legalist opinion that government relief makes people lazy, and, therefore, the government should not have to look after the poor because poverty is caused by each individual's incapability or indolence.¹⁷⁶ The *Discourses on Salt and Iron* (*Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論) is another source that addresses the conflict between the legalistic ministers and Confucian scholars on the issue of welfare policy. Therefore, the Han welfare policies have been explained in the context of Confucian ideology, contrary to the Qin's legalistic policies.

¹⁷⁴ "Ci lü" slip no.286, Hao Peng, 二年律令與奏讞書: 張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋讀 *Er nian lü ling yu zhou yan shu: Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu chu tu fa lü wen xian shi du* (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2007), 209.

¹⁷⁵ Translation from Anthony Barbieri-Low and Robin D. S. Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China* (unpublished manuscript).

¹⁷⁶ Han Feizi 韓非子(juan 4.14).; Seok-woo Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State: A Study on Natural Disaster and "Famine-Relief Policy" in the Han Dynasty* (Seoul: Ilchokak, 2006), 133.

However, an examination of welfare food policies and their implementation during the Han period reveals that the Han welfare policies are hard to understand only within the framework of Confucianism versus Legalism. It is certain that the Confucian beliefs were widely employed to design the most ideal welfare policies as a means of effectively displaying the virtue of the ruler of Han. However, Legalist beliefs sometimes were accepted without hesitation in order to establish and conduct certain policies effectively for social stability. Ideal policies made with lofty ideology were also sometimes distorted or made invalid when the policies were implemented in reality. In this chapter, rather than focusing on the two different ideologies, I will examine the accord and discordance between ideology and regulation as well as between regulations and their implementation. In order to examine the accord and discordance among ideology, regulation, and implementation, I will analyze the welfare food distributions by categorizing the recipients into three groups: the aged (*gaonian* 高年), female heads-of-household (*nüzi baihu* 女子百户), and victims of natural disasters.

Food was often distributed to the aged in order to comfort them as well as to demonstrate the ruler's respect during the Han period. According to the *Liji* (*Book of Rites* 禮記), persons fifty years and older in ancient China were regarded as the elderly (*laoren* 老人): "At fifty, one began to decay, one kept his staff always in his hand in his family, and a common man was not employed in services requiring strength."¹⁷⁷ This classic also indicates that those over fifty should be supported with fine grain and meat according to their age. For example, for elders over fifty, fine grain distinguished from that of young people should be served; one should keep flesh in store for elders in their sixties; one should serve meat twice

¹⁷⁷ Legge, trans., *Li Chi, Book of Rites*, 241; *Liji zheng yi* (juan12.13, 1:1346) *Shi san jing zhushu*.

a day for those in their seventies; for elders eighty years and over, there should be a constant supply of delicacies, including meat; for those in their nineties, food, especially meat and wine, must always be in their chamber and must follow them wherever they go.¹⁷⁸

It seems that the Emperor's food distribution to the aged followed the idea of filial piety by feeding the elderly well. From the early Han period they already had rules for distributing grains to the aged in order to make gruel. However, the requirements for eligible recipients were not consistent throughout the Han period. The history of welfare food distribution to the aged and the reality of the regulation will be discussed in this chapter.

Another group to receive special care was a group of certain females, *nüzi bai hu* 女子百户, literally means “females of one hundred households.” The exact meaning of *nüzi bai hu* is still controversial, but historical records clearly confirm that Han emperors distributed meat and wine to this female group at the moment when they bestowed aristocratic ranks to the male subjects. In this chapter, after examining the definition and nature of *nüzi bai hu*, I will discuss the importance and meaning of supporting this group with providing meat and wine in Han society. This will show that food distribution to *nüzi bai hu* was an aspect of the Han welfare system put in place in order to maintain social stability and to display the virtue of the ruler at the same time.

In addition, there existed a relief food system for victims of natural disaster, who suffered from hunger, illness, and cold. Until the reign of Emperor Yuan (Yuandi 元帝, r. 48-33 BCE), the definition of “victims” was ambiguous, described in the *Han shu* simply as “those who are badly damaged by disaster” (被災甚者). Sometimes the victims were indicated as the poor and the weak (*pinzi* 貧者, *ruozi* 弱者, or *pinruozi* 貧弱者). In

¹⁷⁸ Legge, trans., *Li Chi, Book of Rites*, 240; *Liji zheng yi* (juan12.13, 1:1346) *Shi san jing zhushu*.

particular, *guan gua gu du* 鰥寡孤獨, which literally means “widowers, widows, childless, and orphans,” were considered the poorest groups: groups that needed special care not only after natural disasters, but also in normal situations. From the time of Emperor Cheng (成帝, r. 33-7 BCE), Han histories such as the *Han shu* and *Hou Han shu* begin to describe victims eligible for government assistance as those who have lost more than forty percent of their agricultural yield.¹⁷⁹ Victims of natural disasters and the poorest of the poor in Han society were the most vulnerable to becoming bandits unless they were cared for with government assistance. The written histories on natural disasters and the relief policies for victims will be analyzed below in order to examine the purpose of relief food distribution in the Han period.

1) Comfort food for the aged

老萊子楚人也: 事親至孝, 衣服斑連, 嬰兒之態, 令親有驩, 君子嘉之, 孝莫大焉。

Elder Laizi was a native Chu:

He served his parents with the ultimate filial piety.

Wearing multicolored clothes

And imitating an infant,

He made his parents happy.

Gentlemen praise him

Because his filial piety is greatest of all.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ “師古曰, 什四謂田畝所收十損其四。” *Han shu* (10.305). “More than 40% 什四以上” appears five times in *Han shu* and six times in *Hou Han shu*. This includes the record of the seventh year of *Yongchu* of emperor An (113 CE), which exceptionally mentions “more than 50% 十五以上.” *Hou Han shu* (5.220). Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State*, 225–229.

¹⁸⁰ Inscription of Wu Liang Ci wall carving, Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang Shrine: The Ideology of Early Chinese Pictorial Art* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 280.

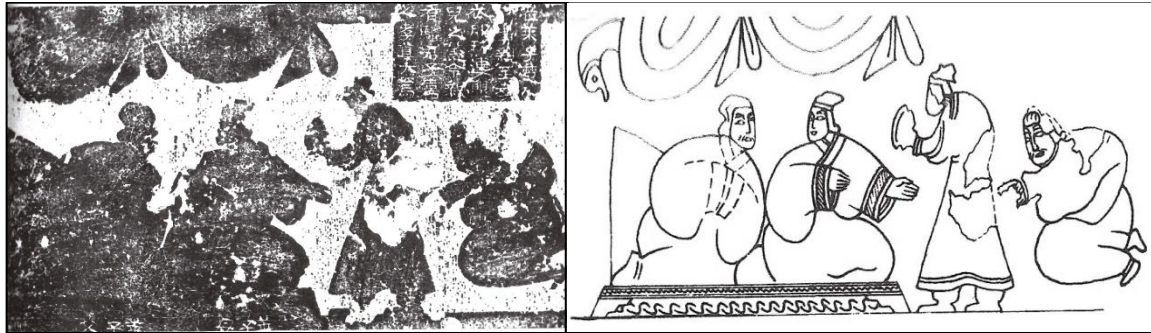


Figure 5. Story of Laizi from Wu Liang Ci wall carving¹⁸¹

During the Spring and Autumn period (春秋时代, 771-476 BCE), there lived a filial son whose name was Lao Laizi. The story of Lao Laizi, who served his parents sincerely, is depicted in the Han period stone relief of the Wu Liang 武梁 shrine in Shandong Province (ca.150 CE). In this stone relief, Laizi's wife serves food to the parents sitting on a platform as Laizi mimes the gestures of an infant kneeling in front of them. As this stone relief and his story imply, comforting one's parents by serving savory food is believed to be one of the fundamental duties of filial sons under Confucian belief.

In the same context, serving food to and clothing the aged was adopted as a means of realizing the Confucian lesson of "ruling the subject with filial virtue 以孝治天下," a topic mentioned in the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing* 孝经), as the edict of Emperor Wen implies:

老者非帛不煖，非肉不飽。今歲首，不時使人存問長老，又無布帛酒肉之賜，將何以佐天下子孫孝養其親？¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Xingzhen Liu and Fengxia Yue, *Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs: The Wu Family Shrines in Shandong Province* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 25.

Unless the aged have silk, they will not be warm; unless they have meat, they will not be well-nourished. Now at the beginning of the year, if we do not at the right moment send people to visit and ask about the health of the elders and aged, nor make grants of linen cloth, plain silk, wine, or meat to these people, in what way can we assist the children and grandchildren of the empire in filial piety to care of their relatives?¹⁸³

The practice of the emperor taking care of the aged with food began with the idea of filial piety and was apparently regulated by law during the Han period. The *Han Shu* describes that the Emperor Wen, therefore, proclaimed a special ordinance in 179 BCE as follows:

In the prefectures and marches persons of eighty years and older receive per person per month one bushel of threshed grain, twenty *jin* of meat, and five *dou* of wine. On those of ninety years and older there are bestowed two bolts of silk and three *jin* of silk floss. To persons who have suffered a mutilating punishment as well as to those condemned to the punishment of shaving off the beard or heavier this Ordinance does not apply.¹⁸⁴

This ordinance clarified that all subjects except criminals were able to be the recipient of government benefit of one *shi* of grain per month if they were over eighty years old.

However, the ordinance by Emperor Wen was not the first evidence of the establishment of the welfare food system for the aged of the Han period. The historical

¹⁸² *Han shu* (4.113)

¹⁸³ Dubs, *History*, vol. 1, 236-237.

¹⁸⁴ *Han shu bu zhu* (4.7a); Translation from A. F. P. Hulsewé, "Han China: A Proto 'Welfare State'?" *Fragments of Han Law Discovered in North-West China*, *T'oung Pao* 73, no. 4/5, Second Series (January 1, 1987): 271-272.

record during the reign of Emperor Wen mentions that before he proclaimed the new ordinance he was concerned with the corruption and misbehavior among officials who were in charge of “giving grain to those who should receive gruel.”¹⁸⁵ This indicates the system of giving grain to the aged had been already observed before the ordinance in 179 BCE.

It seems that the primitive form of the special care of the ruler for comforting the aged with food began with Liu Bang (劉邦, or Emperor Gaozu 高祖, r. 202-195 BCE) when he established *sanlao* (thrice venerable elders 三老) and bestowed upon them wine and meats in the tenth month of 205 BCE. However, this first record of food bestowals to the elders by Liu Bang was limited to a certain group of elders who were in charge of moral leadership.¹⁸⁶ Also, it seems that this event occurred irregularly.

Recently excavated Han laws among “The Statutes on Enrollment” (*Fu lü* 傅律) of the *Statutes and Ordinances of the Second Year* (*Ernian lüling* 二年律令) from Zhangjiashan, dated ca. 186 BCE confirms that there had been a tradition of distributing grain regularly to the aged for making gruel from the early Han period. It reads:

大夫以上[年]九十, 不更九十一, 簪褭九十二, 上造九十三, 公士九十四, 公卒, 士五(伍)九十五以上者, 稟鬻米月一石.¹⁸⁷

To those who are at least *dafu* of ninety years old, *bugeng* of ninety one, *zanniao* of ninety two, *shangzao* of ninety three, *gongshi* of ninety four, *gongzu* and *shiwu* of ninety five years old and above, one *shi* of grain for making gruel is given every month.

¹⁸⁵ *Han shu* (4.113); Dubs, 1938, vol.1, 236-237.

¹⁸⁶ *Han shu* (1.33-34)

¹⁸⁷ “Fu lü” slip no.354, Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 230.

According to the statutes, both aristocratic rank and age should be considered in order to be eligible recipients of grain for gruel. The recipient should be at least ninety years old if he holds the fifth aristocratic rank (*dafu*) or above. If he was of low rank (*gongzu*) or a commoner (*shiwu*) without any rank, he should be at least ninety-five years old to be a recipient.¹⁸⁸ (See Table 14 for aristocratic ranks.)

Table 14. Aristocratic ranks and titles of the Han period¹⁸⁹

Aristocratic Rank	Title
20	Che hou 徹候
19	Guan nei hou 關内候
18	Da shu zhang 大庶長
17	Si che shu zhang 駟車庶長
16	Das shang zao 大上造
15	Shao shang zao 少上造
14	You geng 右更
13	Zhong geng 中更
12	Zuo geng 左更
11	You shu zhang 右庶長
10	Zuo shu zhang 左庶長
9	Wu da fu 五大夫
8	Gong cheng 公乘
7	Gong da fu 公大夫
6	Guan da fu 官大夫

¹⁸⁸ *Gongzu* and *shiwu* both indicate those who do not have aristocratic rank. See Itaru Tomiya 富谷至, *Koryo Chokasan nihyakuyonjunana-go bo shutsudo Kan ritsuryo no kenkyu* 江陵張家山二四七號墓出土漢律令の研究 (Kyoto: Hoyu Shoten, 2006), 207, 230.

¹⁸⁹ M. Loewe, "The Orders of Aristocratic Rank of Han China," *T'oung Pao* 48, no. 1/3 (January 1, 1960): 99. Lowe takes *gongzu* as indicating commoners without rank just as *shiwu*, but *gongzu* was a low rank of minor status and privilege.

5	Dafu 大夫
4	Bugeng 不更
3	Zanniao 簪袅
2	Shang zao 上造
1	Gongshi 公士
0.5	Gongzu 公卒
None	Shiwu 十五

If we compare the statute from Zhangjiashan to the ordinance of the Emperor Wen, we can notice that there were huge changes in the welfare food system for the aged as Emperor Wen proclaimed a new ordinance. First, the minimum age of eligible recipients was lowered from ninety to eighty years old. Second, food was given to all elders, except criminals, based on age only, regardless of aristocratic rank. Third, they were given not only one *shi* of husked grain for gruel as in the previous law, but also twenty *jin* of meat and five *dou* of wine monthly. These changes successfully highlighted and manifested the virtue of the Emperor as full of filial piety, but at the same time resulted in a financial burden for the government and the impracticality of the law.

Even though we do not have a census record by age at the time the edict was ordered, we can assume that lowering the minimum age requirement from ninety to eighty resulted in a significantly increased number of recipients, as shown by a population record of Donghai Commandery 東海郡 discovered in Yinwan 尹灣 that records the number of

people over ninety years old as 11,670 (0.837% of the population) and the number over eighty years old as 33,871 (2.429% of the population) around the year of 10 or 9 BCE.¹⁹⁰

Abolishing distribution by rank seems not to have brought much change other than amplifying the symbolic meaning of benefitting the aged regardless of aristocratic status, because older males generally had higher ranks due to the frequent rank bestowals in the early Han period. For example, in addition to Liu Bang's first bestowal of rank to the people in the year of 201 BCE, for the ten years from the enthronement of Emperor Hui in 195 BCE to the second year of Empress Lü in 186 BCE, there were four instances of rank bestowals to every male subject or to the male head-of-household. If the head-of-household had not changed for those sixteen years, commoner head-of-households became at least *dafu*, the 5th rank. Since the males who were over eighty years old generally had higher ranks in the early Han period, there was little difference in the number of male recipients when they abolished the rank requirement.

However, there is a possibility that removing conditions based on rank might have enlarged eligible recipients to include women. Received texts as well as documents discovered about the statutes on welfare food for the aged do not mention specifically the rules for aged women. If eligibility is based on aristocratic rank and age, women would seem to be excluded from food bestowals because aristocratic ranks were only for male subjects. But, some statutes and records on received texts can be interpreted as admitting females as legal recipients of food bestowal. According to “The Statutes on Establishment of Heirs” (*Zhihou lü* 置後律) of the *Er nian lü ling*, married women may “be comparable to her

¹⁹⁰ Lianyun'gang shi bo wu guan, *Zhongguo wen wu yan jiu suo*, ed., 尹湾汉墓简牍综论 *Yinwan han mu jian du zong lun* (Beijing: Ke xue chu ban she, 1999), 146. However, it has been argued that there is possibility of this census figure was fraudulent.

husband's rank.” (女子比其夫爵)¹⁹¹ In fact, this rule of being equivalent to one's husband's rank had already been mentioned in one of the Confucian classics, *Li ji*:

凡婦人，從其夫之爵位。¹⁹²

(For the mourning rite) all wives were ranked according to the rank of their husband.

故婦人無爵，從夫之爵，坐以夫齒。¹⁹³

Hence, while the wife had no rank, she was held to be of the rank of her husband, and she took her seat according to the position belonging to him.

These directions are reflected in Han legal cases, in which it appears that “the wife holding the Sovereign's Accomplished rank” (*shangzao qi* 上造妻) and “the wife holding the Knight of the Realm rank” (*gongshi qi* 公士妻) were treated as having the same status as their husbands for sentencing in “The Statutes on Composition of Judgments” (*Ju lü* 具律) from Zhangjiashan.¹⁹⁴ The same manuscript mentions that the wife cannot use her husband's rank, to which she holds a comparable level, in order to mitigate her sentencing if she wounds or murders her husband. (“妻殺傷其夫，不得以夫爵論”)¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ “Zhihou lü” slip no.372, Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 236.

¹⁹² *Li ji zheng yi* (juan 41.8, 2:1556) *Shi san jing zhu shu*.

¹⁹³ *Li ji zheng yi* (juan 26.14, 2:1456) *Shi san jing zhu shu*.

¹⁹⁴ “Ju lü” slip no.82 and no.83, Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 123–124; Tomiya, *Koryo Chokasan*, 59–60.

¹⁹⁵ “Ju lü” slip no.82, Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 125; Tomiya, *Koryo Chokasan*, 60.

For food bestowals, however, there is no evidence as yet showing whether the early Han emperors also treated wives as holding the equivalent of their husbands' ranks when they bestowed the aged with grain for gruel. Regardless, Emperor Wen's new ordinance abolishing rank as a condition for food bestowals to the aged significantly increases the possibility of including old women as recipients during the Han period. Even though the ordinance did not indicate the eligibility of females, as Zhao Kai mentions, there seems no reason to exclude "mothers," considering that the emperor intended to realize the virtue of filial piety by enacting Confucian virtues.¹⁹⁶ Therefore, abolishing rank as a condition for regular food distribution to the aged might be understood as a merciful and innovative policy of Han expanding the scope of recipients to include elderly women.

Because of the imperfectness of excavated document, it is hard to determine that the *Er nian lü ling* from Zhangjiashan regulated one *shi* of grain only whereas Emperor Wen gave meat and wine in addition. However, so far, we cannot find any evidence that indicates there existed monthly distribution of meat and wine before the ordinance of Emperor Wen. Apart from this issue, let me examine the amount of distributed food to the aged to see if the regulation of the food distribution to the aged was established considering reality or just for symbolical value.

The distributed grain amount declared by Emperor Wen, one *shi* per month, seems to be a reasonable amount for the aged to live on when compared to the grain ration for soldiers and their family members as discovered on Juyan 居延 bamboo slips (see Table 11 in Chapter 2). The distributed grain amount for the aged was about one third of the ration for soldiers and adult males (3-3.3 *shi*) and less than the ration for females of two to six years

¹⁹⁶ Zhao Kai 赵凯, "西汉 '受鬻法' 探论 Xi Han 'Shou Yu Fa' Tan Lun", 中国史研究 *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* no. 4 (2007): 25.

old (1.16 *shi*), but one *shi* of grain was enough for a month to make soft gruel, which can be two to four or more times the serving amount than normally cooked grain, depending on the amount of added water. The monthly amount of wine (5 *dou*) and meat (20 *jin*) was about 10 liters and 4.9 kg, respectively, which comes to about 333ml (11.3 ounces) and 163g (5.75 ounces) per day.¹⁹⁷ These are almost comparable to the standard size of today's canned beer (12 ounces) and three and a half McDonald's "Big Mac" burger patties (1.6 oz, or 45g, approx. uncooked weight).¹⁹⁸ This means the aged in the Han society, at least during the Emperor Wen's reign, people over eighty years old would have been able to survive with the food from the government only if they actually received it. This means, the amount of distributed food was regulated considering daily consumption.

However, there have been doubts about the reliability of monthly food bestowals to the aged due to the huge amount of governmental expenditure required and the frequency of distribution, which covered a vast area.¹⁹⁹ For example, according to a record on households found in Yinwan, among the 1,394,196 people of the whole population of Donghai Commandery during the Yuanyan era (元延, 12-9 BCE) of Emperor Cheng, the number of individuals eighty years and older was 33,871, or 2.429% of the population.²⁰⁰ If the government bestowed on them one *shi* of grain per month, Donghai Commandery would spend 406,452 *shi* of grain on welfare food for the aged yearly. This amount is about 97.7% of the total annual expenditure of grain in Donghai.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ 1*dou*= 1.9968 liters, 1*jin*=245g.

¹⁹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_McDonald's_products (4/27/2013)

¹⁹⁹ Hulsewé, "Han China,"; Bodde, *Festivals*.

²⁰⁰ Lianyun'gang shi bo wu guan, *Yinwan*, 146.

²⁰¹ According to the document from Yinwan, the *Donghai jun* spent 415,811 *shi* of grain out of an income of 566,337 *shi* in one year.

According to a record of kitchen expenditures from Xuanquan 悬泉, Dunhuang 敦煌, meat cost six *qian* 钱 per *jin*.²⁰² The *Jiuzhang Suanshu* 九章算数 mentions that wine cost ten to fifty *qian* per *dou*, probably depending on its quality, and one hundred *qian* per *shi* of grain (millet). This means that monthly costs ranged from about 270 to 470 *qian* to provide food to one old person. This was about a half the salary of the lowest two officials, *doushi* and *zuoshi* (see Han salary list in Table 10).

It seems that the financial conditions under Emperor Wen were not so abundant as to be able to feed all the aged people in the empire once a month, even though significant economic growth occurred during his reign and that of his son Emperor Jing (景帝, r. 157-141 BCE), due to keeping the *heqin* 和亲 policy with the Xiongnu and avoiding wasteful expenditure. Historical records show that under the reign of Emperor Wen, when the new welfare policy was proclaimed, there was not enough grain stocked in the granaries to feed even the soldiers in frontier areas, so assistance from the rich was solicited in exchange for granting aristocratic ranks:

匈奴數侵盜北邊，屯戍者多，邊粟不足給食當食者。於是募民能輸及轉粟於邊者拜爵，爵得至大庶長。²⁰³

At this time (of Emperor Wen) the Xiongnu were making frequent raids across the northern border, and farming garrisons had to be set up along the frontier to stop them. The grain produced by these garrisons alone, however, was not sufficient to feed all the border troops. The government then called upon the people to supply grain, offering honorary ranks to those who were prepared to send grain to the frontier. The rank varied

²⁰² Pingsheng Hu and Defang Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui* (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2001), 171.

²⁰³ *Shiji* (30:1419)

with the amount of grain but reached as high as the eighteenth rank, called *dashuzhang*.²⁰⁴

This evidence means that the ordinance on giving grain, meat, and wine monthly to the aged over eighty years old was probably difficult to observe. It is certain that this unprecedented ordinance of Emperor Wen's was not executed even at the beginning of Emperor Wu's reign when the financial and economic condition was good, as "in the central granary of the government, new grain overflowed and piled up outside, where it spoiled and became unfit to eat."²⁰⁵ From a speech in the first year of Emperor Wu that "for those of the [common] people who are in their ninetieth year and over, there is already a law that they should receive gruel,"²⁰⁶ it is apparent that the government granted grains for making gruel to those who were ninety years old and over regardless of their rank. This indicates that since before Emperor Wu's enthronement, the new ordinances proclaimed by Emperor Wen were ignored, and instead, the previously regulated policy of limited grain distribution for gruel with some revision on age and rank conditions were observed. However, the reliability of even this revised grain distribution for people over ninety years old is also doubtful because frequent wars led to subsequent financial deficiencies during the reign of Emperor Wu. Zhao Kai argues that Donghai commandery could not afford to distribute grains to those over ninety years old as the population of ninety years old and over was 11,670

²⁰⁴ Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian: Han Dynasty II*, trans. Burton Watson (Hong Kong: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong and Columbia University Press, 1993), 62.

²⁰⁵ “太倉之粟陳陳相因，充溢露積於外，至腐敗不可食。”*Shiji* (30.1420), Qian, *Han Dynasty II*, 63.

²⁰⁶ “民年九十以上，已有受鬻法。”*Han shu* (6.156), Dubs, *History*, vol. 1, 29.

(0.837% of the population), which would require 140,040 *shi* of grain (33.7% of annual expenditure of the province) around 12-9 BCE.²⁰⁷

Regardless of whether the policy of grain distribution to the aged was effective or not, the ordinance regarding the monthly food distribution declared by Emperor Wen helped demonstrate the ruler's filial piety and mercy by expanding the scope of beneficiaries and attempting to serve them savory food. Maintaining the tradition of giving grain for gruel to the aged also held the symbolic meaning of showing the emperor's respect for the aged. These policies, however, were not applied perfectly in reality, nor were they abolished during the Han period, either. Even though rulers already recognized the impracticality of the policy as they discontinued obeying Emperor Wen's ordinance, they could not admit the ineffectiveness of food bestowal to the aged because of the symbolic importance of the welfare food policy for the aged in a society where the Confucian virtue of feeding the elderly with good food was required of a sage ruler. After Emperor Wen's edict of generous bestowal, it is hard to find any additional orders about regular or irregular food distribution to the aged. Also, whereas there are some records about silk or clothing bestowals to the aged during the Eastern Han period in the official histories, it is hard to find any mention of the grain distribution since Emperor Wu proclaimed that "there is already a law that they should receive gruel." It seems that Han emperors pretended the grain distribution for the aged was an actual policy. They still had the policy of grain distribution to the aged and tacitly treated it as an ongoing tradition even though the government could not afford to realize the existing policy.

²⁰⁷ Zhao Kai, "Xi Han 'Shou Yu Fa' Tan Lun," 26.

2) Food for female heads-of-household

Females who were registered as head-of-households (*nüzi baihu* 女子百户, literally “women in one hundred households”) were also recipients of the irregularly distributed welfare food of ox and wine (牛酒) during the Han period. Food bestowals to *nüzi baihu* were recorded twenty-one times during the Western Han period, once under Wang Mang’s rule, and once in the Eastern Han period. It is generally recorded that the rulers distributed *nüzi baihu* an ox and wine (牛酒).²⁰⁸ Even though there have been various interpretations on the meaning of *nüzi baihu* due to the lack of detailed information on this practice as well as differing opinions in commentaries made by scholars in received texts such as the *Shiji* and the *Han shu*, the phrase *ci nüzi baihu niujiu* (賜女子百户牛酒, literally, “give women in one hundred households ox and wine”) was generally understood to indicate “giving an ox and ten *shi* of wine per one hundred female head-of-households.”²⁰⁹

Legal documents of the early Han period imply that there were times when women could become the head-of-household. According to “The Statutes on Establishment of Heirs” (*Zhihou lü* 置後律) from Zhangjiashan script, females, such as the deceased head-of-household’s mother, wife, daughter, granddaughter, great granddaughter, grandmother, and even step sister, were able to succeed the deceased’s position as head-of-household, if appropriate male heirs did not exist:

²⁰⁸ Wang Mang distributed lamb and wine (羊酒), not ox. See *Han Shu* (99B.4114).

²⁰⁹ *Han shu* (4.108), *Shiji* (10.417), Sulin 蘇林 commented that this phrase means giving every female beef and wine when males are given ranks. An Shigu explained that a little amount of beef and wine were given to the wives of male head-of-households who received aristocratic ranks. Lechan 樂產 commented that beef and wine were distributed to women who do not have a husband or son. For brief descriptions of the arguments, see Yu Kunji 于琨奇, “賜女子百户牛酒’ 解——兼论秦汉时期 妇女的社会地位,” *中国历史文物 Zhongguo lishi wenwu* (*Journal of The National Museum of Chinese History*) no. 1 (1990): 37–45.

死毋子男代戶, 令父若母, 毋父母令寡, 毋寡令女, 毋女令孫, 毋孫令耳孫,
毋耳孫令大父母, 毋大父母令同產, 子代戶.....²¹⁰

When a person dies without a male offspring to substitute [as the legal head of] the household, order the father or the mother [to substitute as head of household]; when the person has no [surviving] father or mother, order the surviving spouse [to substitute as head of household]; when there is no surviving spouse, order a daughter [to substitute as head of household]; when there is no daughter, order a grandchild; when there is no grandchild, order a great-grandchild; when there is no great-grandchild, order the paternal grandfather or grandmother; when there is no paternal grandfather or grandmother, order a child of a [sibling] born of the same [mother] to substitute [as the legal head of] the household....²¹¹

In fact, the existence of the female head-of-household can be observed even from Qin administrative documents recently discovered on-site at Liye, Hunan Province. According to the inscribed slips on household registers, the households registered under female adults (*da nüzi* 大女子) or underage males (*xiao nanzi* 小男子) were eight among a total of twenty-five households.²¹² This indicates that a female head-of-household must have not been rare during the Han period, either.

According to historical records, giving beef and wine was not the only event for these *nüzi baihu* during the Han period. The aged were occasionally given one ox and ten *shi* of wine per unit of one hundred households. It is also written that a certain amount of beef

²¹⁰ “Zhihou lü” slip no.329-380, Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 238.

²¹¹ Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State and Society*.

²¹² Slip no.19, Hunan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Liye Qin Jian Shiwen*, 11.

and wine were given to people of fifty households, one hundred households, or one district at special occasions such as imperial celebrations or an emperor's visit in the early Han period.²¹³ However, since the reign of Emperor Wu, historical records show that beef and wine were more likely to be given mostly to women.²¹⁴ Notably, the bestowal of beef and wine to the *nüzi baihu* always coincided with the bestowal of aristocratic ranks on registered male head-of-households.

Granting beef and wine to the female head-of-households also served to symbolically highlight the ruler's Confucian virtue. Since the first bestowal recorded at the enthronement of Emperor Wen in the year of 180 BCE, it is recorded that emperors gave the food to the females when they wanted to show themselves renewed with full Confucian virtue. The food was given at momentous times such as enthronement, the beginning of a new era, sacrificial rituals, imperial tours, and the appearance of auspicious natural phenomena or animal prodigies, most of which required symbolic actions from a sage ruler to impress his subjects and harmonize with the cosmological order (see Table 15). Therefore, unlike the staple food for relief distribution, at these times distributed food itself was lofty ritual food – meat and wine. By distributing these symbolic foods to female head-of-households who could not be the recipients of aristocratic ranks, the emperor aimed to extend his mercy to every household in the empire when he needed to show his Confucian virtue.

²¹³ *Han shu* (4.119, 6.193, 7.219, 7.229, 9.279, 9.285, 10.303, 10.316, 10.328, 11.334, 15B.1253)

²¹⁴ Yu, “‘賜女子百戶牛酒’,” 40.

Table 15. Food Bestowals to the female head-of-household

No.	Emperor	Year	Reason	Reference
1	Wendi	180BCE	Enthronement	HS 4.108 SJ 10.417
2	Wudi	113 BCE	Sacrifice	HS 6.183
3		110 BCE	Start new name of an era	HS 6.192
4	Xuandi	73 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.242
5		72 BCE	Made temple for emperor Wu	HS 8.243
6		65 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon (super natural bird)	HS 8.254
7		64 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.255
8		63 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.257
9		62 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.259
10		61 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.259
11		58 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.263
12		55 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.267
13		52 BCE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HS 8.269
14		Yuandi	47 BCE	Visiting, sacrifice
15	45 BCE		Visiting, sacrifice	HS 9.285
16	43 BCE (1 st month)		Visiting, sacrifice	HS 9.287
17	43 BCE (3rd month)		General amnesty	HS 9.287
18	42 BCE		General amnesty	HS 9.288
19	34 BCE		General amnesty	HS 9.296
20	Chengdi	20 BCE		HS 10.315
21		13 BCE	Visiting, sacrifice	HS 10.24
22	Wang Mang	9 CE	New era (lamb and wine)	HS 99B.4114
23	Zhangdi	85 CE	Auspicious natural phenomenon	HHS 3.152

The gift of food to these women was designed not only to express symbolic meaning, but also to fulfill a practical role toward social stability. As seen in the family registration of female heads-of-households as well as in the statutes on female heirs from the Qin and early Han period, families with female heads seem not to have been rare. This might be related to the frequent conscriptions for warfare and for construction work, which resulted in a high mortality rate of male adults. It seems that the frequent civil wars and uprisings at the end of

the Qin period produced a number of female-headed households. Also, tension with the Xiongnu along the northern frontier must have caused many occasions in which families lost adult males who were the head-of-household or heirs of priority in their families. By examining the Juyan bamboo slips, which consider the environment, climate, dietetic conditions, and labor intensity of the northwestern garrison, Gao Kai shows that the female-headed household of the Han Dynasty was largely caused by the high disease and mortality rate of garrison soldiers in the Juyan area.²¹⁵ Therefore, it can be said that the occasional distribution of special food to the female heads was also for comforting the families who had lost the male head-of-household. Although women were registered as the head of a family, they were excluded from the benefit of general imperial gifts such as the rank bestowals that economically benefitted other families. Food bestowals exclusive to the female head-of-household aimed to comfort the families in distress economically and mentally for the loss of their men, who sacrificed themselves for the state. Not only symbolically, but also practically, this policy that took care of the families left behind and possibly resulted in raising the morale of the army as well.

The symbolic as well as practical design of the ox and wine distribution to the female heads can also be seen from the amount of food offered. If one ox and ten *shi* of wine were distributed per one hundred households, it can be estimated that each household was given one *dou* 斗 (0.1 *shi* or 1.996 liters) of wine and one one-hundredth of an ox. According to contemporary research on beef grading, the range of weight of beef cattle is 950 to 1500 pounds (about 430-680 kg) with an average weight of 1150 pounds (522 kg). The dressing

²¹⁵ Gao Kai 高凯, "从居延汉简看汉代的‘女户’问题 Cong Juyan han jian kan han dai 'nü hu' wenti (Study on the Female-headed Households of the Han Dynasty from the Juyan Bamboo Slips)," 史学月刊 *Shi xue yue kan* no. 9 (2008): 82–92.

percent, which means the meat and skeletal portion of an animal compared to its live weight, of steers and heifers is 55-67 percent with an average of 62%.²¹⁶ If we assume the average weight of an ox was 950 pounds (430 kg) with a dressing percent of 55, considering the ancient ox's nutrient condition, the edible part of an ox was about 237 kg. This means each household of female heads was supposed to receive about 2.37 kg of meat, which is about 9.7 *jin* of meat in Han measure.²¹⁷ According to the "Statutes of Bestowals" from Zhangjiashan (strip no. 297), *zuoshi* and *doushi* (or *lingshi*), officials of the two lowest bureaucratic ranks, were supposed to receive eight and ten *jin* of meat respectively, and one *dou* of wine at the emperor's food bestowal. The calculated amount of beef and wine to one female head-of-household was about the same as the regulated amount of meat and wine given as an imperial gift to lower officials. Being treated like lower officials on the occasion of special distributions seems reasonable in terms of the symbolic meaning of comforting the families of veterans. This shows that food distribution to the female head-of-households was designed to coincide with the social ranking system and regulations on food distribution to officials. Even though the food amount and the recipients are expressed in symbolic and obscure terms in the records without specific numbers or units of measure, the actual amount to be distributed to the female heads accords well with the hierarchical scale of food distribution discovered in the early Han statutes of Zhangjiashan.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of data on the number of female head-of-households during the Han period, it is hard to estimate how many cows and how much wine in total they needed for this special food distribution. A calculation can be inferred from the

²¹⁶ Data from the Department of Animal Science, South Dakota State University, <http://www.sdstate.edu/ars/students/activities/judging/evaluation/beef-grading.cfm>, accessed June 10, 2013. Cattle on a high roughage diet, such as hay, silage, or pasture, have a lower dressing percentage.

²¹⁷ 1 *jin*=245 g.

numbers on record for a similar custom of giving beef and wine to general subjects and households that occasionally occurred during the Han period. For example, each one hundred households was bestowed ox and wine (百戶牛酒) in 7 BCE when the Empress Dowager was enthroned after Emperor Cheng died.²¹⁸ Using the census of registered households in 2 CE, which numbered 12,366,470,²¹⁹ we can say that more or less 123,000 cows and 1,230,000 *shi* of wine would be needed when they made the special bestowal in 7 BCE. Slaughtering 123,000 cows and providing 1,230,000 *shi* of wine for a one-time bestowal, however, seems like it could not possibly have been implemented in the Han society, where cows were generally used for agriculture and grain was the main staple.

Considering the total amounts of beef and wine for distribution, Yu Kunji argues that the gifts of beef and wine to the female head-of-households would also be impossible to implement as recorded because of the presumed large number of recipients covering a vast area. Instead of giving food, he proposes that cash could have been used as an alternative method. By converting the ox and wine into the contemporary price, he suggests that each female head might have been given 100 *qian* in cash, which had one tenth to one twentieth the value of the rank bestowal.²²⁰ According to him, the unit of “one hundred households” was used as a unit of distribution instead of a specific amount for each household in order to

²¹⁸ *Han shu* (11.334)

²¹⁹ Nishijima Sadao, “The Economic and Social History of Former Han,” in *Cambridge History of China: Volume I: The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.-A.D. 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 595–6.

²²⁰ One aristocratic rank cost one to two thousand *qian* during the Western Han period. Yu, “‘賜女子百戶牛酒’,” 41.

simplify statistics, since they could record in the account ten thousand *qian* (萬錢) per unit of one hundred households was paid.²²¹

In fact, newly discovered statutes from Zhangjiashan on the alternative payment of cash for imperial bestowals support Yu's theory:

諸當賜, 官毋其物者, 以平賈(價) 予錢.²²²

For every bestowal, if the government does not have the item, give cash according to its value.

There are also statutes mentioning that the government gave cash to households preparing coffins for the dead with different amounts of money according to the aristocratic ranks of the dead.²²³ These indicate that cash was widely used as an alternative to gifted items due to easy supply.

With insufficient information, however, it is difficult to conclude that the beef and wine were replaced by cash in actuality. Whether the imperial order to distribute meat and wine to the female head-of-households was replaced by cash payments or not, it is certain that the emperor intended to comfort these women by treating them the same as lower officials of the first to third aristocratic ranks when he bestowed ranks to males. This welfare food distribution seems to have been designed to highlight the symbolic meaning of the Confucian virtue of the ruler as well as to pursue social stability by supporting the women who had lost a husband or sons.

²²¹ Ibid., 42.

²²² “Ci lü” slip no.290, Peng, *Er nian lü ling*, 211.

²²³ “Ci lü” slip no.289, Ibid. This statute seems to have been designed for special occasions such as natural disaster, not for ordinary situations.

Food distribution to the female heads mostly occurred during the Western Han period; the only event of the Eastern Han for which Emperor Zhang bestowed gifts was in 85 CE when he also gave three ranks to males and silk to the aged and *guan gua gu du* when auspicious animals appeared in the empire. After this, no record of food bestowal for female heads-of-household exists in the Han history. This is probably related to the decreased number of female head-of-households, due to less warfare, as well as the decline of the social status of women as the Confucian order was consolidated in the society. During the Western Han period, especially in early Han, the rulers needed to show their respect to the families who had sacrificed their men for the state, and to compensate them with special care. Like the welfare food for the aged and the victims of disaster, the distribution of meat and wine to the female head-of-households was designed with the purpose of maintaining social and political stability and displaying Confucian ideals at the same time.

3) Food for famine relief

Providing food to those in distress after a natural disaster was one of the main welfare food policies in Han China. Records on famine relief activities during the Qin and Han periods can be observed in descriptions of the events of natural disasters in historical literature. Therefore, before examining the relief activities and food distribution for the victims, it is necessary to understand the ancient Chinese notion of *zaiyi* (災異), “disaster” and the meaning of it in the received texts.

In Chinese, *zaiyi* indicates a natural disaster or unusual natural phenomena.²²⁴ According to *Hanyu da cidian* 汉语大词典, the contemporary meaning of *zai* 災 is “naturally caused fire” or “general disasters.”²²⁵ However, among the various original forms of *zai* from the bone inscriptions of the Shang 商 (c. 1600-1046 BCE) periods, the plural wavy lines, which indicate flood, constitute the most common form of *zai*.²²⁶ In *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字, the early pictograms of *zai* indicate not only flood, but also barren lands and fire caused by thunder and lightning. In addition to these natural disasters, it is believed that *zai* also includes harm by warfare.²²⁷ These show that the ancient Chinese concept of *zai* was deeply related to the concern of both natural and man-made disorders caused by water and fire, which could destroy a person’s life as well as their lands for dwellings and agriculture. Following these concepts, a Confucian scholar of the Han period, He Xiu 何休 (129-182), developed the details in his commentaries on the meaning of *zai* as “to harm people or objects” and “to incur damage to more than two kinds of grain.”²²⁸

On the other hand, the character *yi* 異 was not originally related to any natural phenomena. The basic meanings of *yi* are “to divide,” “to apportion” (*Shu wen jie zi*),²²⁹

²²⁴ *HYDCD* 7.34A, “指自然灾害或某些异常的自然现象。”

²²⁵ *HYDCD* 7.32A, “自然发生的火灾”, “泛指灾害, 祸患。”

²²⁶ Chen Yexin 陈业新, “Zaihai Yu Liang Han Shihui Yanjiu 灾害与两汉社会研究” (Huazhong Normal University 华中师范大学, 2001), 64.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 64–5.

²²⁸ Xu Yan 徐彦, *Chun Qiu Gongyang Zhuan Zhu Shu* 春秋公羊傳注疏, *Shi San Jing Zhu Shu Zheng Li Ben* 十三经注疏 整理本 20 (Beijing Shi: Beijing da xue chu ban she, 2000), 61, 81.

²²⁹ 《說文解字·异部》“异, 分也。从?, 从畀, 予也。”

“strange,” or “not usual.”²³⁰ It was the *Gongyang Commentary* (*Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳), a commentary on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu* 春秋), that first used the word *yi* for natural phenomena during the Warring States period (403-221 BCE). The *Gongyang Commentary* called unusual natural phenomena, such as a solar eclipse, lunar eclipse, sleet, intense thunder and lightning, warm winter, dry weather, earthquakes, landslides, roaches, and so on as *yi*, while flood, drought, insect pests, and fire are considered *zai*.²³¹ It seems that from the *Gongyang* perspective, *zai* was a term indicating severe natural phenomena that brought disaster in their wake, while *yi* was the word of choice to describe unusual natural phenomena that imparted less physical harm.²³² This interpretation can be extended to say that *zai* was used for both natural and man-made disasters that would cause a year of bad harvest, while *yi* indicated unusual natural phenomena that rarely impacted the agricultural yield.

In addition to the term *zaiyi*, which broadly indicated natural disaster and famine, historical texts of the Han used various words to describe the kinds of disaster, such as flood (大水 *da shui*), drought (旱 *han*), wind (風 *feng*), locusts (蝗 *huang*), epidemics (疫 *yi*, 疾 *ji*), earthquakes (震 *zhen*), fire (火 *huo*), and bad harvest (凶作 *xiong zuo*). The research on disasters and climate conditions in ancient China has depended on the analysis of these words in historical literature. In the 1930s, Deng Ta concluded that there were eighty-one instances of drought and seventy-six of flood that occurred during the Qin and Han

²³⁰ HYDCD 7.1341B, 1342A.

²³¹ Huang Zhaoji 黄肇基, 汉代公羊学灾异理论研究 *Han Dai Gongyang Xue Zaiyi Lilun Yanjiu* (Taiwan: Wenjin chu ban she, 1998), 82–88; Chen, “Zaihai Yu Liang Han Shihui Yanjiu”, 66.

²³² Chen, 66–67.

periods.²³³ Yang Zhenhong argues that there were ninety-one cases of drought: thirty-two years and fifty-nine years in Western and Eastern Han periods, respectively, and seventy-nine years with floods: twenty-six during Western Han and fifty-three during Eastern Han.²³⁴ Chen Yexin, in his doctoral dissertation of 2001, suggests that one hundred and eleven droughts occurred during the Han period, which would mean that Han China had a year of drought every four years.²³⁵ He also calculates that the Han Empire had one hundred and five years of floods.²³⁶ Furthermore, Chen demonstrates the different frequencies and patterns of disasters between northern and southern China based on these historical documents.²³⁷

The previous research by several scholars contributes to the discovery that droughts and floods were the most serious and frequent natural disasters during the Qin and Han dynasties. However, the discussion on the exact number of years of drought and floods or generalizations of disaster patterns according to region based on the written histories are of questionable reliability because, as Robin D. S. Yates points out, the received texts and documents researchers have used as records of disaster are incomplete and superficial.²³⁸ Nevertheless, these quantitative data are crucial for research on disaster as well as relief activities due to the lack of research methods and sources on ancient China. In this section,

²³³ Deng Ta 邓拓, *中国救荒史 Zhongguo Jiu Huang Shi* (Shangwu yin shu guan, 1993), 11.

²³⁴ Yang Zhenhong 杨振红, “Han Dai Ziran Zaihai Chu Tan 汉代自然灾害初探,” *中国史研究 Zhongguo Shi Yanjiu* no. 4 (1999); Chen, “Zaihai Yu Liang Han Shihui Yanjiu,” 6, 9.

²³⁵ Chen, “Zaihai Yu Liang Han Shihui Yanjiu,” 6.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

²³⁸ Robin D. S. Yates, “War, Food Shortage, and Relief Measures in Early China,” in *Hunger in History: Food Shortage, Poverty, and Deprivation* (Cambridge, MA: B. Blackwell, 1990), 148.

in order to make up for weak points in the quantitative research, I will also examine the context of the written record on disasters and relief activities.

It has been observed that there are two different patterns of writing on disaster and famine in the *Shiji*, *Hanshu*, and *Hou Hanshu*. One is that disaster is mentioned in conjunction with political events to highlight social and political disorder. For example, in the chapter “Basic Annals of the First Emperor of the Qin” in the *Shiji*, when the Prefect of the Capital, Teng 騰, attacked Han 韓 and seized King An 安 of the Han in the year 231 BCE, it is written that “there was an earthquake” and “the people suffered from severe famine.”²³⁹ Also, in 228 BCE, when the king of Qin put to death all the persons who had been enemies of his mother’s family, “there was severe famine.”²⁴⁰ In addition, the first year to the ninth year of the Annals of the First Emperor are full of records on *zaiyi*, such as severe famine, swarms of locusts, pestilence, winter thunder, comets, floods, and severe cold, along with the records of disorder created by the First Emperor of Qin. There are also numerous records on *yi* from the Han dynasty, particularly under Empress Lü’s (d.180 BCE) rule. In this pattern, the records on natural disaster always accompany social and political chaos. Also, it is rare to find any mention of relief activities in the aftermath of the recorded disaster.

Another pattern of record into disasters in historical literature is to give detailed information on the ensuing damage and on relief policies. Rather than simply mentioning the disaster itself and political events, this is usually accompanied by a report on the cause of disaster, the damaged area, and the degree of damage. Mostly, relief activities proclaimed by

²³⁹ *Shiji* (6.232)

²⁴⁰ *Shiji* (6.233), Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian: Qin Dynasty*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Research Centre for Translation, Chinese University of Hong Kong and Renditions-Columbia University Press, 1993), 40.

the ruler in order to help the victims are recorded. These records focus on the efforts of rulers who tried to restore universal order by relieving their subjects in distress after a disaster. For example, the record during the second year of Emperor Ping (平帝, r. 1-6 CE) describes in detail what the emperor did after the disaster:

郡國大旱，蝗，青州尤甚，民流亡。安漢公、四輔、三公、卿大夫、吏民為百（姓）困乏獻其田宅者二百三十人，以口賦貧民。遣使者捕蝗，民捕蝗詣吏，以石斛受錢。天下民貲不滿二萬，及被災之郡不滿十萬，勿租稅。民疾疫者，舍空邸第，為置醫藥。賜死者一家六尸以上葬錢五千，四尸以上三千，二尸以上二千。罷安定呼池苑，以為安民縣，起官寺市里，募徙貧民，縣次給食。至徙所，賜田宅什器，假與犁、牛、種、食。又起五里於長安城中，宅二百區，以居貧民。²⁴¹

In the commanderies and kingdoms there was a great drought and plague of locusts in Qing Province it was especially severe, so that its common people became vagrants. The high ministers, grandees, officials and common people, 230 persons in all, presented their fields and residences on behalf of suffering and indigent people in accordance with their number. Messengers were sent to catch the locusts; the common people who caught locusts and brought them to the officials received cash in accordance with the weight or number. The common people of the empire whose property was not as much as 20,000 cash, together with those in the commanderies which suffered from the visitation whose property was not as much as 100,000 cash were not to pay the land tax or poll taxes. The common people who suffered from the epidemic were lodged in the empty lodges and residences and physicians and medicines were provided for them.

²⁴¹ *Han shu* (12.353).

Grants were made for the dead; for six corpses or over in one family. Five thousand cash for burial; for four corpses or over, three thousand; and for two corpses or over, two thousand cash....In the counties where they lodged as they were moving, they were given food, and when they reached the places to which they were removed, they were granted fields, residences, productive instruments, and were made loan of oxen for plowing, and of seed and food. Five hamlets were also built within the city of Chang'an with two hundred residences, for the poor people to dwell in.²⁴²

The frequency of the second pattern of disaster, which was recorded with related policies, increased towards the end of Western Han and during the Eastern Han period. Also, the *Han shu* and the *Hou Hanshu* tend to contain more relief records with detailed information on disasters, while *Shiji* contains more descriptions of related political events that occurred with a given disaster. It could be said that the increase of reporting on damage and relief activities in histories indicates an increased number of disasters in various regions as well as the development of administrative procedures for the investigation of disasters and relief activities during the Han dynasty.²⁴³ However, in addition to examining the information as it is written in the histories, these two different patterns of writing on famine should be analyzed in the context of the ideologies that influenced the writing of history in this period.

Writing about disaster with political criticism seems to be related to the tradition of Confucianism, which views natural disasters as deeply related to political events and the

²⁴² Ban Gu, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1955), 72–74.

²⁴³ Kim, *Natural Disaster*, 77–108, 181–250.

virtue of rulers. The connection between natural disaster and politics was addressed by Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, 179-104 BCE) during the early Han period. According to Dong, historical literature records the phenomena of natural disasters in order to show the intimate relationship between heaven and the court:

故春秋之所譏，災害之所加也；春秋之所惡，怪異之所施也。書邦家之過，兼災異之變，以此見人之所為，其美惡之極，乃與天地流通而往來相應，此亦言天之一端也。²⁴⁴

Therefore, it has been emphasized that the event criticized in the *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*) was accompanied by disaster, and the event disliked by *Chunqiu* occurred in conjunction with a strange phenomenon. The misbehavior of the state is recorded along with natural disasters to show that the extremes of good and bad things done by people have direct intercourse with Heaven and influence each other; this is one aspect of Heaven.

By pointing out that in the *Spring and Autumn Annals* the misdeed of the Duchess of Qi (齊, 1046-221 BCE) had disturbed cosmic harmonies and incited a major disaster in the year 674 BCE, Dong makes the claim that the ruler's lewd behavior caused the natural disaster.²⁴⁵ Around 128 BCE, Dong was sentenced to death (he was later pardoned) because of his *Zaiyi zhi ji* 災異之記, *Record on Disasters and Anomalies*, a text that interpreted natural disasters as indications of disorder in Emperor Wu's court and government. Even

²⁴⁴ *Han shu* (8.2515).

²⁴⁵ Anne Kinney, *Representations of Childhood and Youth in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 143.

though Dong no longer dared to express his views about the meaning of portents after this event, his theory on the connection between disasters and the court (*zaiyi lun* 災異論) was reflected in other historical literature, too. It seems that Sima Qian (司馬遷, ca. 145 or 135-86 BCE) followed Dong's interpretation of the reason for natural disasters and he used signs in the heavens to criticize the misbehavior of rulers who did not follow Confucian virtue. The fact that his father, Sima Tan (司馬談, ca. 165-110 BCE), who was an official in charge of astronomy and the calendar (*taishi ling* 太史令), began the writing of the history implies that he must have intended to relate the natural phenomena to political events when explaining the patterns of Chinese history.

While some records on disaster reflect the Confucian notion of *zaiyi lun*, connecting natural disasters with political criticism, the other pattern of informative reports seems to have been largely influenced by Legalist-leaning Confucian Xunzi's (荀子, ca. 312-230 BCE) view on disaster, which sees the course of nature as irrelevant to government practices:

The course of nature is constant: it does not survive because of the action of the King Yao; it does not perish because of the actions of the King Jie. If you respond to the constancy of Nature's course with good government, there will be good fortune....If you conform to the Way and are not of two minds, then Nature cannot bring about calamity. Accordingly, flood and drought cannot cause famine, cold and heat cannot cause sickness, an inauspicious and freak event cannot cause misfortune.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ *Xunzi* 17:1, John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, vol. I, Books 1-6 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 14.

Xunzi's view on nature was followed by early Han political advisors such as Jia Yi (賈誼, 200-169 BCE) and Chao Cuo (晁錯, 200-154 BCE), who insisted on the importance of the administration's role in preventing calamity by encouraging agriculture. Chao Cuo further suggested detailed relief policies, such as local amnesty, rank bestowal, farmer's tax exemption for offering of grains, an immigration policy of sending the poor to the frontier, and a grain circulation system from surplus areas to insufficient areas.²⁴⁷ His proposals are clearly reflected in the relief policies recorded in historical documents such as the following:

孝景二年，令民半出田租，三十而稅一也。其後，上郡以西旱，復修賣爵令，而裁其賈以招民；及徒復作，得輸粟於縣官以除罪。²⁴⁸

In the second year of the reign of the emperor Jing (156/155 BCE), [by imperial edict] it was ordered that the people pay half of their [former] produce tax *zu* on their fields, [that is] one-thirtieth [of their crops; but at the same time the size of the acre was legally recognized to be two and four-tenths larger than the Zhou acre]. When sometime afterwards, in the province of Shang and to the westward, there was a drought, the ordinance for sale of rank was again revised, its cost, however, being cut in order to attract the people; while exiles condemned to guard duty on the frontiers for one year, together with the women of their families sentenced to menial service in government building for the year, were allowed to transport grain *su* to the central government *xianguan* in order to be pardoned for their crimes.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Swann, *Food and Money*, 158–170.

²⁴⁸ *Han shu* (24A.1135).

²⁴⁹ Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China*, 172.

Relief policies based on Xunzi's view of disasters and the importance of agriculture developed through the Han period with the adoption of various policies. According to the records, Han emperors tried to aid disaster victims and the hungry by opening granaries, mountains, marshes, and sometimes imperial parks, reducing taxes, moving people to other places, allowing the selling of ranks, prohibiting brewing, and distributing or lending relief food and seeds.²⁵⁰

In addition to these realistic relief policies that were directly related to the people's survival, Han emperors tried to select new officials with Confucian virtue after major natural disasters in order to correct the disorder.²⁵¹ During the reign of Emperor Xuan (宣帝, r. 74-49 BCE), frequent natural disasters induced the emperor to order the selection of new officials full of Confucian virtue to solve the problem. This tradition of seeking new officials of Confucian virtue after disasters continued to the end of the Han period.²⁵² This proves that Han emperors still believed that the disorder following a disaster could be reversed by hiring officials who had the Confucian virtue of obeying the heavenly order.

In the same context, it seems that relief policies which accorded to Confucian lessons were believed to be one of the solutions for repairing the distorted harmony between the heavens and the court. Therefore, the recorded famines and relief policies focus on demonstrating the efforts of rulers to reestablish harmony by expanding their mercy and soothing the people's suffering. This may be another case of the influence of *zaiyi lun* in history. Even though historians no longer used the famine itself as a means of political

²⁵⁰ Liu Xinfang 刘信芳, "Xihan Yiqian de Jinyuan Ji Qi Guanli 西汉以前的禁苑及其管理" (Forbidden Parks Before the Western Han Dynasty and Their Administration), *Jiangnan Luntan* 江汉论坛 no. 4 (1992): 50.

²⁵¹ Chen, "Zaihai," 103-6.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 104-5.

criticism, they introduced and propagandized the merciful relief policies of sage rulers after natural disasters. For example, the record on the mercifulness of Emperor Wen after the drought and famine of 158 BCE emphasizes the emperor's intention to restore cosmological order by conducting merciful policies:

天下旱，蝗，帝加惠：令諸侯毋入貢，弛山澤，減諸服御狗馬，損郎吏員，發倉庾以振貧民，民得賣爵。²⁵³

The empire was afflicted by drought and locusts. The emperor (Emperor Wen) **showed his mercy** by ordering the feudal lords not to send their usual offerings of tribute, relaxing the laws which prohibited the use of the natural resources of mountains and lakes, economizing on the imperial robes, carriages, dogs, and horses, reducing the number of palace attendants and officials, and opening the store houses and granaries **in order to relieve the suffering of the poor**. He also allowed the people to buy and sell noble ranks.²⁵⁴

Even though it seems that Xunzi's realistic view on natural disaster is strongly reflected in the Han relief policies, Han emperors seem to have believed that showing the emperor's mercy in caring for the people with relief policies in itself was effective in restoring cosmological balance after a disaster. Also, Han historians mentioned the event of relief not only to record what happened but also for demonstrating the Confucian virtues of the emperor. No merciful activity is mentioned during the Qin period or the period of Wang

²⁵³ *Shiji* (2.432)

²⁵⁴ Watson, *Record of the Grand Historian, Han Dynasty I*, 305.

Mang's rule (AD 6-23) in historical literature, while a series of relief policies for comforting and relieving people in distress as recorded in each reign of the Han period.

The symbolic importance of relief activities in governance and the role of writing on relief policies are enough to raise doubts on the implementation and the effectiveness of the relief policies during the Han period. Hiranaka Reiji 平中苓次 and Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生 argue that Han relief policies after disasters were not for benefiting the poor victims but for displaying the emperor's virtue. According to them, the most frequently proclaimed relief policy of land-tax reduction to each household, in particular, was not beneficial to tenants, the most vulnerable farmers who do not have their own land.²⁵⁵ Even though A.F.P. Hulsewé sees the exemption from taxation and statutory services as much easier to realize, he also doubts the implementation of the distribution of relief food during the Han period because of the frequent occurrences and the large number of eligible recipients across such a huge territory.²⁵⁶

However, if the government relief system was not as effective during the Han period as some scholars argue, it would have brought large numbers of refugees every few years across a vast area, since there were frequent and severe disasters during the Han period. This would have directly influenced the security of the empire with an increased number of bandits as well as a decreased population. In fact, emperors and politicians were always worried about the problem of bandits when they encountered disaster and famine. With such

²⁵⁵ Nishijima Sadao 西嶋定生, 中國古代の社会と経済 *Chūgoku kodai no shakai to keizai* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1981); Hiranaka Reiji 平中苓次, 中國古代の田制と税法: 秦漢經濟史研究 *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zeihō: Shin kan keizaishi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Tōyōshi Kenkyūkai, 1967); Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State*, 228–229.

²⁵⁶ Hulsewé, "Han China," 273.

frequent disasters, it is hard to imagine that Han China was able to exist over four hundred years without an effective system of famine relief.

Among the various relief policies which were designed to rescue starving people both directly and indirectly, I argue that grain distribution, one of the frequently appearing relief policies in written histories, was the most effective method that was actually installed and practiced in order to save the able-bodied peasants and prevent them from becoming bandits. In order to support this argument, it should be followed by an examination of the development of disaster reporting and the relief system during the Qin and Han dynasties.

The regulations on famine investigations and relief processes described in bamboo manuscripts as well as in the received texts suggest that a solid system of famine relief had been established since the Qin period. According to “The Statutes on Agriculture” (*Tian li* 田律) from *Shuihudi*, each county (*xian*) was required to report in writing the size of damaged fields and deliver this to the central government using light-footed runners or courier service by the eighth month.²⁵⁷ According to this statute, each county was in charge of reporting the damage to the central government. This statute was originally established for taxation during the Qin period, but it seems that this reporting system was also observed as the first step of relief procedures until the reign of Emperor Jing (景帝, r. 157-141 BCE) of the Han.

From the reign of Emperor Wu, information on disasters and damaged areas was collected by commissioners dispatched from the central government. The commissioners were in charge of reporting the situation as well as distributing the relief grain:

²⁵⁷ Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 21; *Shuihudi Qin mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu*, *Shuihudi Qin Mu Zhu Jian*, 19–20.

河內失火，延燒千餘家，上使黯往視之。還報曰：「家人失火，屋比延燒，不足憂也。臣過河南，河南貧人傷水旱萬餘家，或父子相食，臣謹以便宜，持節發河南倉粟以振貧民。臣請歸節，伏矯制之罪。」上賢而釋之，遷為滎陽令。²⁵⁸

(138 BCE) When a great fire broke out in Henei and destroyed over 1,000 houses, the emperor (Wu) once more sent Ji An to observe the situation. On his return he reported, “The roofs of the houses were so close together that the fire spread from one to another; that is why so many homes were burned. It is nothing to worry about. As I passed through Henan on my way, however, I noted that the inhabitants were very poor, and over 10,000 families had suffered so greatly from floods and droughts that fathers and sons were reduced to eating each other. I therefore took it upon myself to use the imperial seals to open the granaries of Henan and relieve the distress of the people. I herewith return the seals and await punishment for overstepping my authority in this fashion.” The emperor, impressed with the wisdom he had shown, overlooked the irregularity of his action and transferred him to the post of governor of Xingyang.²⁵⁹

其明年，山東被水災，民多飢乏，於是天子遣使虛郡國倉廩以振貧。²⁶⁰

The following year (120 BCE) the land lying east of the mountain (Hua) suffered floods and calamities, when the greater part of inhabitants became destitute and starving for lack of food. Thereupon, the Son of Heaven sent

²⁵⁸ *Shiji* (10.3105)

²⁵⁹ Watson, *Han Dynasty I*, 307-308.

²⁶⁰ *Han shu* (24.1162)

commissioners to empty government granaries and roofed depots in the provinces and fiefs for relief of the poor.²⁶¹

By the reign of Emperor Cheng (r. 33-7 BCE), the relief system by commissioners changed into a system of cooperation between the commissioners and the commanderies. The dispatched commissioners were responsible for the investigation of the damaged area in order to determine whether the commanderies had reported the situation correctly. The commissioners also supervised the relief activities performed by commanderies, and sometimes they worked together to distribute relief grain to the victims.²⁶²

The practice of distributing relief grains to people in damaged areas as well as tax remission frequently appears as one of the main relief policies. Even though there is a phrase in the records that Emperor Wen “opened the granaries” to feed the victims in 163 BCE, it was during the reign of Emperor Cheng that food distribution began to be adopted as a general relief policy after disasters.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to calculate the total amount of grain used for relief in a certain area at a certain time because historical records rarely mention the number of recipients precisely. With the fragmentary documents, it appears that victims were given two or three *hu* of grain,²⁶³ an amount that would allow a person to survive up to several months by consuming it in the form of porridge. Even though we do not know how much grain the government expended to relieve the victims, it is not difficult to imagine that not a little

²⁶¹ Swann, *Food and Money*, 263.

²⁶² Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State*, 235–250.

²⁶³ *Hou Hanshu* (4.187, 7.301, 319)

amount would be needed to feed hundreds or thousands of starving people for several months.

According to historical literature, grain distribution to the starving people after a major disaster was generally executed by “opening the granary (開倉).” The granary system was well established by the Qin and Han periods, as we can see from legal documents regulating the procedure of deposit, storage, and delivery of grain from the granary. Also, the “ever-normal granaries” (*chang ping cang* 常平倉) were established in the first century BCE in order to prepare for bad harvests and famine (see Chapter 1 for granary system and legal documents). The responsibility of opening the granary was laid only on the emperor and commissioners who were given the authority to relieve the people. As it was believed that sage rulers should save extra grain in the granaries to prepare for a year of bad harvest, the description of “opening the granaries” by emperors frequently appears in the history as highlighting the emperor’s virtue of benevolence.

However, it seems that the grain in the granaries was not always enough to feed the people in distress. Sometimes, the government called upon the very rich to make loans when the government did not have enough grain to feed the starving people after a disaster:

其明年，山東被水災，民多飢乏，於是天子遣使虛郡國倉廩以振貧。猶不足，又募豪富人相假貸。²⁶⁴

The following year (120BCE) the land lying east of the mountain (Hua) suffered floods and calamities, when the greater part of inhabitants became destitute and starving for lack of food. Thereupon, the Son of Heaven sent commissioners to empty government granaries and roofed depots in the

²⁶⁴ *Han shu* (24.1162)

provinces and fiefs for relief of the poor. Still there was not enough. Furthermore, the government called upon the very rich to make loans.²⁶⁵

Historical records show that the rich, commoners as well as officials, were expected to contribute with cash or grain to assist the government in helping and succoring the poor, “following moral principles.”

關東比歲不登，吏民以義收食貧民、入穀物助縣官振贍者，已賜直。²⁶⁶

East of Pass for successive years there has not been a harvest. To those officials and common people who, **spurred by moral principles**, have gathered and fed poverty-stricken people or have contributed grain or goods to assist the imperial government in helping and succoring the poor, they have already been granted the value of their contributions.²⁶⁷

This tradition must have been adapted in order to solve the problem of lack of grain in the granaries. Even though the historical record describes the contributors as those who “follow moral principles,” the Han government already had a generous compensation system. When people donated money and goods, they were granted aristocratic ranks, official positions, promotions, or tax remission for one to three years according to the value of their contribution. For example, in 15 BCE, Emperor Cheng ordered that commoners who donated from ten thousand to a million in cash be given aristocratic ranks, official positions, and tax remission according to the amount of contribution. If they were officials, they were

²⁶⁵Swann, *Food and Money*, 263.

²⁶⁶*Han shu* (10.321)

²⁶⁷Ban Gu, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, 403.

promoted two steps in addition to the grant of aristocratic rank when they contributed more than three hundred thousand in cash.²⁶⁸ It seems that commissioners were in charge of reporting to the central government the name of contributors who voluntarily helped the victims so that the government could grant them gifts commensurate with the value of their contribution.²⁶⁹

Except the information about contributions by the rich, there is not enough on record about how the imperial government and each commandery acquired grain when they did not have enough in the granaries. The historical records frequently mention the distribution of relief food by loan or for free by opening the granaries, but they do not specify how much grain they distributed or if the opened granaries had enough grain to feed the victims for several months. It seems that the emperor's order to open the granary was declared under the assumption that there would be enough grain in the granaries whenever the emperor or the commissioners wanted to open them for relief. However, excluding the period from Emperor Wen's reign to the early days of Emperor Wu, when granaries overflowed, there seems to have been no such period when they had abundant grain in the granaries in Han times. Moreover, according to the received texts, when the emperor or the commissioners opened the granaries in the commanderies and distributed the relief grain, there was no practical assistance from the central government to commanderies that might have needed extra support with grains and goods from the capital. Except the policy of tax remission, there is little record regarding the mechanism of providing grain, such as transferring grains from the central to the provincial granaries to assist relief activities. This is why the frequent benevolent gesture of "opening granaries" has been seen as merely a symbolic policy

²⁶⁸ *Han shu* (10.321); *Ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *Han shu* (6.182)

providing a Confucian lesson, one which was not able to be implemented effectively enough to save the people.

However, a new interpretation on the recipients of tax remission raises the possibility of an effectively implemented relief policy of grain distribution during the Han period. In order to distribute and lend the relief grain, it is necessary to define the recipients clearly. According to historical documents, until the reign of Emperor Yuan (49-33 BCE) the eligible recipients of assistance were indicated as “those who are badly damaged by disaster 被災甚者.” From the period of Emperor Cheng, when the tax remission policy was frequently employed, the definition of recipients as “more than four out of ten 什四以上” significantly increased in the historical literature.²⁷⁰ The commentaries by Yan Shigu explain the meaning of “more than four out of ten” as “damaged more than 40% of the agricultural yield”²⁷¹ or “lost four out of ten.”²⁷² As we can see from Hiranaka, the eligibility of “more than four out of ten” has been believed to apply to each household when the government investigated the damage done after a disaster in order to decide which households would be eligible to receive the benefit of tax remission, a policy he believed to have been ineffective.²⁷³

However, Seok-Woo Kim sees that “four out of ten” was applied to the whole commandery under disaster, not each household. According to him, “four out of ten” or “not full 不滿,” expressions indicating the degree of damage, were to measure the damage of the

²⁷⁰ This term appears five times during the Western Han period and six times during the Eastern Han period, which includes “more than 50% 十五以上” in the 7th year of emperor An.

²⁷¹ *Han shu* (10.305)

²⁷² *Han shu* (11.337)

²⁷³ Hiranka Reiji, *Chūgoku kodai no densei to zaihō*, 174.

whole commandery, which had a duty to send taxes collected in the form of grain and hay to the central government annually. Therefore, according to his interpretation, those commanderies which were estimated to have incurred damage to more than 40% of annual yield were discharged from the duty of sending the collected land or poll taxes to the central government.²⁷⁴ This could result in the damaged commanderies saving grain in their provincial granaries, which is where commissioners sent from the central government obtained the grain for relief. From this perspective, the tax remission policies, which were frequently executed during the Han period, could have been implemented very effectively as a means of providing resources for distributing grain to victims in each commandery suffering from famine. Also, with this mechanism of providing grain for the provincial granaries, the relief policy of grain distribution could prevent victims from turning to banditry, which might lead to dynastic change.

According to the received texts, it is likely that there was no discrimination by rank or age when conducting relief activities. Commissioner Ji An's report in the year of 138 BCE under Emperor Wu (see above) asserts that all victims in a damaged area were considered in need of assistance, regardless of their political or social status. Generally, historical texts indicated food recipients as the poor, the starving, or victims of disaster, without mention of rank or age.

[和帝 十二年] 六月舞陽大水，賜被水尤貧者穀，人三斛。²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State*, 229–231.

²⁷⁵ Kim, *Natural Disaster and the Confucian State*, 437.

The sixth month of the twelfth year of Hedi (100 CE) there was flood in Wuyang commandery, and three *hu* of grain each was bestowed **on poor flood victims.**

[獻帝興平元年七月]帝使侍御史侯汶出太倉米豆，為飢人作糜粥...²⁷⁶

[On the seventh month of the first year of Xingping of Xiandi (194 CE)]
The emperor had the Assistant to the Imperial Oversight Advisor Houwen **draw rice and soybeans from the imperial granary and make porridge for the starving people...**

In terms of food distribution, it appears that there was no favoritism toward those who held aristocratic ranks.²⁷⁷ Rather, a few records show that Han rulers seemed to give special care to the poorest social groups, such as *guan gua gu du* 鰥寡孤獨, or widowers, widows, the childless, and orphans. In the Han histories, the group *guan gua gu du*, usually along with the aged, frequently appear as recipients of the emperors' irregular bestowals of silk or clothes since they were the most vulnerable people even during non-emergency situations in the Han society. In particular, widows, the childless (actually, those with no sons), and orphans were excluded from the emperor's benefits and gifts to the head-of-household unless they inherited the rank from husbands or fathers. In Confucian Han society, just as feeding the aged shows the emperor's filial piety, taking care of these poorest

²⁷⁶ Xu Tianlin 徐天麟, *東漢會要 Dong han hui yao*, Di 1 ban (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she: Xin hua shu dian Shanghai fa xing suo fa xing, 1978), 443.

²⁷⁷ There were several occasions in which all the male subjects were bestowed with one or two ranks after a natural disaster. This rank bestowal seems to have been aimed at helping the victims by allowing them to sell the ranks during a famine.

groups represents the virtue of the sage ruler. Therefore, mention of the poorest groups in the emperor's edict on food bestowal during a famine was possibly intended to represent the poor in general rather than to delimit the recipients of relief food to those specific groups only. This from the imperial edict proclaimed in the year 55:

[建武]三十一年夏五月，大水。戊辰，賜天下男子爵，人二級，鰥，寡，孤，獨，篤癯，貧不能自存者粟，人六斛。²⁷⁸

Summer of the fifth month of the thirty-first year of Jianwu, flood. On the day of *wuchen*, bestowed all males under heaven two ranks each, and **gave widows, widowers, orphans, the childless, the sick, and the poor** who cannot sustain themselves six *hu* of millet each.

Meanwhile, in spite of the emperor's efforts to display his Confucian virtue through relief policies, ancient Chinese rulers were more worried about population decline and loss of a work force than realizing Confucian ideals during an emergency situation. From the Han histories it is hard to find a record that mentions feeding the aged first during an emergency situation even though it had been somewhat conventional to give silk or clothing to the aged as well as to the *guan gua gu du* group when Han emperors made irregular bestowals to celebrate imperial events or to comfort them in normal situations. Considering how sincerely the rulers tried to take care of the aged during ordinary situations, it is surprising that special care for the aged rarely appears in times of disaster. Even though it was believed that the sage ruler should show his filial piety according to Confucian teachings, the aged were rarely mentioned as the main recipients in the records on relief

²⁷⁸ Xu, *Dong han hui yao*, 436.

food distribution during a famine. This indicates that the rulers were more interested in saving able-bodied peasants than in demonstrating filial piety when confronted with an emergency situation. This could be related to realistic demands for workers in agricultural and industrial production as well as to prevent large groups of healthy persons from turning into potential flashpoints for riot. There is a similar case in the relief policies of India, where it was traditionally the able-bodied young adults of both sexes who were favored in times of famine so that they might survive to reproduce another generation.²⁷⁹ Therefore, it can be said that the Han relief food policies that seemed to be manipulated and recorded in order to highlight the Confucian virtue of rulers were actually aimed to pursue social stability by preventing social mobility and unrest.

Welfare food policies during the Han period were designed to achieve two purposes: to display the ideal virtue of the rulers and to maintain social stability. However, both goals were not always able to be fulfilled perfectly. It seems that sometimes the declared ordinances were overly idealistic, so that they could not be implemented properly. At times, rulers pursued their social and political needs rather than an ideological direction, but even in these cases, they tried to disguise their mundane purposes with ideological principals. Too, historical records tended to emphasize a ruler's Confucian virtue whenever relief policies were mentioned. Food distribution as a form of welfare was systemically designed in order to achieve ideological goals as well as fulfill realistic needs in Han China.

²⁷⁹ Paul Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: the Famine of 1943-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

IV. Feasting for Redistribution

Feasts are generally defined as “a form of public ritual activity centered around the communal consumption of food and drink.”²⁸⁰ Under this definition of feasts, studies on ancient feasting and feasting behavior are highly dependent on discoveries from archaeological sites. Brian Hayden suggests that there are fifteen signatures of feasts from archaeological remains: food, preparation vessels, serving vessels, food preparation facilities, special food-disposal features, feasting facilities, special locations, associated prestige items, ritualized items of etiquette, paraphernalia for public rituals, existence of an aggrandizer, recordkeeping devices, pictorial and written records of feasts, food-storage facilities, and resource characteristics.²⁸¹ These material indicators help us to identify feasting events from the past. As we can see from the suggested signatures, feasting is related not only to food itself but also to a certain form of ritual that followed food sharing. This is the reason feasting has often been discussed in the context of the nature and ideology of the ritual rather than the impact of the feast itself on the people in and out of the banquet place.

For example, ancient Chinese feasting during the Shang and Zhou eras has been studied with a focus on food sharing in a mortuary context due to the fact that archaeological evidence has been limited to bronze vessels and oracle bones discovered in and around graves. Due to the significance of ancestral worship and the existence of bronze vessels used

²⁸⁰ Michael Dietler, *Feasts : Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 3, 67.

²⁸¹ Brian Hayden, “Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting,” in *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 40–41.

for food and beer offered to the dead, Chinese feasts from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age have been generally considered rituals for the dead.²⁸² According to current evidence, it is believed that feasting during the Shang and Zhou periods was conducted by the living in above-ground temples, and by the deceased in their below-ground tombs, both directed at providing nourishment to the ancestral spirits. On the contrary, feasts among the living, which possibly occurred after offerings to ancestors and spirits, have not received much academic attention, despite the fact that, as Dietler points out, the religious ritual for communicating with gods, ancestors, and spirits was also simultaneously directed toward an audience of living humans through the form of a feast.²⁸³ It is certain that ancient Shang and Zhou Chinese frequently enjoyed feasts among the living, as *Shijing* (詩經, *The Book of Songs*) and *Chu ci* (楚辭, *The Songs of the South*) describe banquets among imperial families, nobles, friends, clans, and community members; but due to the lack of archaeological evidence, less is known about feasting outside of grave sites. Without further study, it has generally been assumed that Shang and Zhou secular feasts, such as palace feasts, would have been similar to the mortuary practices of these periods.

Despite limited information, however, the nature of ancient Chinese feasts has been widely discussed, from the physical setup and procedures to the cultural and sociopolitical impact on society in the context of Confucianism. As the *Liji*, a Confucian ritual canon of the late Zhou describes, there were directions for dining etiquette ranging from basic table manners to the welcoming of visitors and guests, the spatial distribution of dishes, the order and sequence in which dishes were to be served and eaten, to close-up descriptions of

²⁸² Sarah Milledge Nelson, "Feasting the Ancestors in Early China," in *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2003), 65–89.

²⁸³ Dietler, *Feasts*, 78.

drinking, toasting, and even methods of chewing.²⁸⁴ The specific guidelines in the literature imply that Zhou feasts (as possibly Shang feasts as well if we can extend the Zhou evidence back in time) were serious social business governed by strict rules. As a Zhou poet said of an ancestral sacrifice-feast, “every custom and rite is observed, every smile, every word is in place.”²⁸⁵

In many societies feasts occur throughout the year for various reasons and purposes under very complicated economic and sociopolitical mechanisms. For the past couple of decades, scholars have tried to establish models and theories of feasting which can generally apply to various forms of feasting, from ancient to contemporary and from historical, anthropological, and ethnographical perspectives in order to analyze the importance of commensal politics in various societies.²⁸⁶ For example, the role of feasting in Mycenae, Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt, and the Inca, Maya and Aztec states has been reexamined as a political tool in the emergence and expansion of early states.²⁸⁷

Like the recent studies on feasts in other early states and civilizations, Chinese mortuary feasts and offerings have also been discussed in the context of commensal politics as a means of reconfirming discriminative status and the ties between the ruler and the elite

²⁸⁴ Liji (juan 2, 1:1238-1244), Shi san jing zhu shu; Legge, *Li Chi*, 71–2, 79–82; Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 36; Kwang-chih Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture : Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 38–9.

²⁸⁵ Arthur Waley, trans., *The Book of Songs*. (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 195. Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 36.

²⁸⁶ Dietler focuses on the particular form of ritual activity that is distinguished from everyday meals in African contexts. Feasts in Papua New Guinea, Polynesia, the Amazon, North America, South Asia, and the Near East are also discussed in Dietler, *Feasts*.

²⁸⁷ James Wright, *The Mycenaean Feast* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2004). Tamara Bray, *The Archaeology and Politics of Food and Feasting in Early States and Empires* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum, 2003).

group.²⁸⁸ However, this sociopolitical and anthropological approach also has strong ties with the concept of Confucian ideology. The Chinese sacrificial banquet feast is regarded as one of the public instruments of ostentation that demonstrates the emperor's virtue and ability. A passage in the *Guoyu* (國語, *Discourses of the States*) declares:

When kings, dukes and feudal lords set up a banquet it was in order to discuss of affairs (of state) and perfect their eminence. It was to establish great virtue and to display grand ritual vessels. In this way they set up and complete their sacrificial offerings. They banqueted to display their ritual vessels and feasted in order to promote harmony and friendship.²⁸⁹

Due to the ritualized procedure and the manner of the feasts, which were established to demonstrate the virtue and righteousness of the host and the guests and to reconfirm the hierarchical order, it has been conventional to examine ancient Chinese feasts through the lens of the Confucian ideal and rarely to consider them beyond that ideological frame.

This research trend focusing on feasts for ancestors in the ideological context continues and has been further highlighted in the context of Han feasting due to the excitement surrounding the archaeological discoveries of food from tomb no. 1 at Mawangdui and enhanced by research on feasting scenes depicted in Han tombs and shrines. Historical literature from the Han also stresses Confucian virtue and Daoist conventions when it describe the events of court banquets, domestic feasts, and afterlife feasts. These

²⁸⁸ Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 34-42; Nelson, "Feasting the Ancestors in Early China."

²⁸⁹ *Guoyu* (2.64), trans. Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China*, 34-5.

conditions have led researchers to focus on the ideological significance of Han feasts in highlighting the uniqueness of Chinese culture under the strong influence of Confucianism and Daoism.²⁹⁰

However, it seems that the attempt to achieve and display ideal virtue and order was not the only purpose of the Qin and Han feasts. Feasts were veiled in the guise of religious ceremony and ideological virtue; but practical benefits, economic, political, and symbolic, were also pursued through feasting. In particular, in addition to highlighting the political and social power of the host, feasting itself also worked as a supplementary method for feeding people of inferior status during the Qin and the Han periods. In this chapter, I would like to reexamine the nature of Qin and Han feasts, focusing on their role as a supplementary feeding method for convicted criminals who were supposed to survive with regulated rations.

As Dietler points out, when we talk about feasts, the first question must be whether we are “all talking about the same thing when we use the word *feast*.”²⁹¹ Therefore, before examining the role of feasts for convicted laborers, I will discuss the general features of Qin and Han feasts and then analyze them by applying currently-established theories and models. This will clarify the significance of feasting in the food redistribution system during the Qin and Han periods.

²⁹⁰ See Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China*.

²⁹¹ Dietler, *Feasts*, 3.

1) Han Court Feasts: Exclusive and Inclusive

Ancient Chinese practices of food and drink sharing that are often mentioned in historical literature can be also explained by the general concept of feast conceiving the nature of “communal consumption” (Dietler) and “unusual occasion accompanied by an unusual shared meal” (Hayden).²⁹² There were two different types of communal food sharing in ancient China: the *yan* 宴 feast, more ritualistic exclusive feast among guests who are invited to a prepared banquet, and the *pu* 酺 feast, inclusive, often state-wide, unusual communal consumption of distributed food and drink for up to several days among all the subjects of the empire.

a. Ritualistic Banquet among Exclusive Guests: The *Yan* Feast

Accompanying the grand music produced by percussion and wind instruments, balls, knives, dishes, and wheels are being spun in the air by acrobats such as a “ball-playing” man (*Nongwan ren* 弄丸人) and a “knife-playing” (man) (*Nongjian(ren)* 弄劍(人)). A giant (*Chang ren* 長人), a dwarf (*Hui ren* 僇人, or broom man), a child (*Xiao er* 小兒), a female warrior (*Wu nü* 武女), and other people wearing turtle and monkey costumes are dancing and parading. Three acrobats are performing on the top of a cross-like pole as a man holds it. Four females are bending their bodies on the mat like snakes.

A male and a female on duty (*zhi men ren* 值門人, *nü zhi shi* 女值使) are standing by the Gate of the Grand Provisioner (*Taiguan men* 太官門), and two men are carrying a

²⁹² Dietler, *Feasts*, 3-4.

table through this gate with dishes in special utensils (*taiguan shi ju*, 太官食具). The imperial guards, called Feathered Forest soldiers (*Yulin lang* 羽林郎), are lined up in a row, holding bows and arrows in the corner.

Under the wondrous canopy, the drunken Emperor is hugging two concubines, one in each arm, as one female servant attends them. Outside of the canopy, the Empress is about to rush to the Emperor and the concubines, and her son Prince Ben (子本) is trying to stop her by pulling her arms. The Empress, the son, and several couples, including the Marquis of Pingle (平樂侯) and his wife, the Marquis of Dunting (都亭侯) and his wife, and the Marquis of Changsha (長沙侯) and his wife, are sitting on the mat with their own short-legged, round trays laden with dishes in front of them. One of these couples is fighting and another is kissing.



Figure 6. Narrow Table from Zhu Ran Tomb at Yushan Ma'anshan²⁹³

This vivid, riotous, and sometimes bawdy scene is depicted on a painted lacquer narrow table unearthed in 1984 from Zhu Ran tomb at Yushan 雨山 district in Ma'anshan 馬鞍山 city, located on the south bend of the Yangzi River, east of Anhui Province,

²⁹³ Jun Wang and Ma'anshan Shi bo wu guan, 马鞍山文物聚珍 *Ma'anshan Wen Wu Ju Zhen (Treasure Collection of Cultural Relics of Ma'anshan)* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2006), 70.

bordering on Nanjing.²⁹⁴ The scene of an imperial feast painted on the table portrays a vivid picture of the excitement found in this party with its fifty-five drunken people, myriad performers, and food arrangements. Historical literature generally named this kind of court banquet among the imperial family, nobles, ministers, or elders of society in a palace, courtyard or yamen as a “yan 宴.” A yan feast can be defined as a splendid ritualized banquet with guests who were invited to a certain place where they were served with food and entertainment for a relatively short time, such as for a meal or two. This highly ritualized yan feast seems to have been open exclusively to certain elite groups.

The lacquer table just described was discovered in the tomb of Zhu Ran, a general of Wu 吳 in Three Kingdoms period (*Sanguo* 三國 222-263 A.D.), and the depicted image and official titles next to the personae can be possibly interpreted as those of the Wei Dynasty that often used the same official titles at court as the Han Dynasty. However, the scene of this feast is very similar to descriptions of feasts found in *Han guan yi* 宦官儀 (Han Official Observances), a monograph on official posts during the Eastern Han period.²⁹⁵ In the passage below, a New Year banquet at the De Yang hall during the Eastern Han period is described:

正月旦，天子幸德陽殿，臨軒。公、卿、將、大夫、百官各陪朝賀。蠻、貊、胡、羌朝貢畢，見屬郡計吏，皆陞觀，庭燎。宗室諸劉雜會，萬人以上，立西面。位定，公納荐，太官賜食酒，西入東出。既定，上壽。計吏中庭北面立，太官上食，賜群臣酒食。貢事御史四人執法殿下，虎賁、羽林弧弓撮矢。陛戟左右，戎頭逼脛啟前向後，左、右中郎將住東西。羽林、虎賁將住東北，五官將住中央，悉坐就賜。作九賓徹樂。從西方來，戲于庭極，乃畢入殿前，激水化爲比目魚，跳躍就水。障日。畢，化成黃龍，長八丈，出水游戲于庭。炫耀日光。以兩大絲繩系兩柱中頭闕，相去數丈，兩倡女對舞，行于繩上，對

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 16, 70.

²⁹⁵ *Han guan yi* 宦官儀 written by Yingshao 應劭 is one of the six monographs in *Han guan liu zhong* 宦官六種 which is a Qing compilation of surviving Han texts on Eastern Han government organizations and officials.

面道逢，切肩不傾，又躡局出身。藏形于斗中。鐘磬并作，樂畢，作魚龍曼延。小黃門吹三通。謁者引公卿群臣以次拜，微行出，罷。卑官在前，尊官在後。²⁹⁶

On the morning of the first day of the first month, the Son of Heaven favors the De Yang palace with a visit. The Three Lords, the Nine Ministers, the generals, grandees, and officials in general all attend the audience to offer their felicitations. After the presentation of tribute by Man (southern barbarians), Mo (northern barbarians), Hu (northern and western barbarians), and Qiang (western barbarians), the Accounts Officials of the dependent commaderies are received. Everyone enters the imperial presence amidst the courtyard torches. The various members of the Imperial House of Liu, and the other miscellaneous members of the assembly, amounting to more than ten thousand persons, stand facing the west. When they have assumed their positions, the Three Lords submit offerings, and the Grand Provisioner bestows on them food and wine. They enter by the west and depart by the east. On the conclusion of this, offers wishes for long life to the Emperor. The Accounts Officials stand in the center of the court, facing north. The Grand Provisioner offers food and wine to the Emperor and food and wine are bestowed upon the host of subjects. The four Imperial Clerks for Tribute Affairs maintain order in the lower part of the hall. Brave warriors and imperial guards carried bows and arrows. To the right and left of the steps to the emperor's hall, they carried weapons. The Left and Right Generals of the Palace Gentlemen are posted on the east and west sides, the Generals of the As-Rapid-As-Tigers Guards (Hufen Jiang) and Feathered Forest Guards (Yulin) on the south and north, and the Generals of All Purpose (Wuguan Jiang) in the center. Everyone sits down and proceeds to the food and drink which has been bestowed, and music is performed for the hierarchy of guests. The Han-li beast comes from the west. It besports itself in the courtyard, where, having extended itself to the utmost, it desists. Then it

²⁹⁶ Sun Xingyan, ed., *Han Guan Liu Zhong* 宦官六種 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju chu ban, 1990), 210.

enters the coursing water in front of the hall, where it transforms itself into a “fish with mutual eyes.” This jumps and leaps about in the coursing water, thereby making vapor that obscures the sun. When this is over, it transforms itself into a yellow dragon, eight feet long, which emerges from the water and amuses itself in the courtyard, where it gleams and scintillates in the light of the sun. Two large ropes suspended between two pillars several tens of feet apart. On them two singing girls walk and dance facing each other. Meeting one another in their course, they rub shoulders without falling off. Or again, by crooking their steps and contracting their bodies, they hide themselves within a bushel measure, while bells and stone chimes are played. At the conclusion of the music, a procession of fish and dragons is formed. But when the Attendance of the Lesser Yellow Gates blow three round on their trumpets, the Three Lords, Nine Ministers, and assembled subjects successively bow and little by little file out, the lesser officials in front, the more important ones behind.²⁹⁷

According to this description, the court banquet was conducted exclusively among an elite group and some of the invited non-elite guests, such as clerks and barbarian chiefs, following a complicated protocol of specific partakers, presenting order, facing direction, and performance procedure. By going through this symbolic, ritualistic ceremony at the banquet, the emperor and guests were able to confirm the hierarchy of their relationships. Derk Bodde points out that the New Year court ceremony in early Chinese civilization was “to reinforce the ties of loyalty on the one hand and benevolence on the other between the emperor and his subjects, and to symbolize his position at the center of the civilized universe.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷ Bodde, *Festivals*, 151-3.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 139.

The ritualized protocol at a banquet was not a new invention for Han court feasts. Guidelines for proper manners as host and guests at both ritual and secular banquets already existed before the Han period, as described in the *Liji*, which was compiled during the first century BCE from various documents of different periods as early as Western Zhou. Among the detailed dining rules, in particular, the manner of greeting of the guests and entering to the banquet are described in great detail, like a play script:

Whenever a host has received and is entering with a guest, at every door he should give place to him. When the guest arrives at the innermost door, the host will ask to be allowed to enter first and arrange the mats. Having done this, he will come out to receive the guest, who will refuse firmly to enter first. The host having made a low bow to him, they will enter together. When they have entered the door, the host moves to the right, and the guest to the left, the former going to the steps on the east, and the latter to those on the west. If the guest be of the lower rank, he goes to the steps of the host. The host firmly declines this, and he returned to the other steps on the west. They then offer to each other the precedence in going up, but the host commences first, followed immediately by the other. They bring their feet together on every step, thus ascending by successive paces. He who ascends by the steps on the east should move his right foot first, and the other at the western steps his left foot....²⁹⁹

Also, the *Liji* offers detailed directions on dining etiquette according to status, as in the following for young attendants and lower-ranking guests:

²⁹⁹ *Liji* (juan 2, 1:1238-40) *Shi san jing zhu shu*; Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 1, 71–2.

If a guest be of lower rank (than his entertainer), he should take up the rice, rise and decline (the honor he is receiving). The host then rises and refuses to allow the guest to retire. After this the guest will resume his seat... When a youth is in attendance on an elder at a meal, if the host gives anything to him with his own hand, he should bow to him and eat it. If he does not so give him anything, he should eat without bowing.³⁰⁰

These rules for feasting found in the classic text as well as in the image and description of a Han court banquet indicate that all the participants were supposed to acknowledge the specific rules and etiquette when they dined together at such feasts. It shows that court banquets and elite feasts were exclusive dining among those who knew the rules or those who could quickly be instructed with them, and could thus confirm their status in society as well as the hierarchy among them.

b. Inclusive Feast: The *Pu* Feast and Food Distribution

While exclusive groups were invited to court banquets or elite feasts to celebrate imperial events and seasonal divisions, common people outside of the court also enjoyed these moments. During the Han period, there were *pu* 酺 feasts, or *puyan* 酺宴, a statewide drinking party inviting all the registered subjects of the empire. Recent research shows that a *puyan* was an administrative and political means for the emperor to show his kindness during the Northern Wei (386-535) and the Tang (618-907) periods.³⁰¹ However, it seems

³⁰⁰ Liji (*juan* 2, 1:1242) *Shi san jing zhu shu*; Legge, *Li Chi*, vol. 1, 79-80.

³⁰¹ Chen Wen 陈雯, “Lun tangdai dafu zhong de shehui dongyuan yiyi 论唐代大酺中的社会动员意义”; Zhang He-quan 张鹤泉, Wang Meng 王萌, “An Investigation on the Court Banquet in Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏皇帝赐宴考略,” *史学集刊/Collected Papers of History Studies* no. 1 (2011): 26–33.

that the *pu* had already been established as a form of imperial policy during the Han period, as it is written that a *pu* was “bestowed” (*cipu* 賜酺) by the emperor when he celebrated an imperial event like the beginning of a new era or an enthronement. In Han historical literature, it is usually written that “(The emperor) ordered a great *pu* feast throughout the empire (令天下大酺)” or “(The emperor) bestowed upon the people a five-day *pu* feast (賜民大酺五日).”³⁰² As the term *pu* indicates “a specially bestowed gathering of drinking for the subjects,”³⁰³ we can assume that when Han emperors allowed their subjects to “enjoy the moment,” they may have bestowed liquor and food, as the Northern Wei emperors did.³⁰⁴ Because in Han society a penalty of four coins was imposed if people drank along with more than three other persons without any special reason,³⁰⁵ allowing people to drink together for several days while providing food and liquor for the feast was perceived as an especially merciful policy that could effectively display the emperor’s virtue and reconfirm the loyalty of society members.

In addition to the *pu* feast, there are documents showing that Han emperors opened the great granaries and distributed stored wealth and foodstuffs to officials as well as commoners as they celebrated imperial events such as enthronements, weddings, emperors’ or heir’s coming-of-age, births, the completion of palaces, and so on. According to the *Eastern Metropolitan Rhapsody* (“Dongjing fu” 東京賦) written by Zhang Heng (張衡, 78-139), cooked meats and live sacrificial animals were distributed to family dependents of

³⁰² *Shiji* (6.234, 240, 10.417, 430, 11.447, 448, 28.1383, 43.1813, 89.2586. *Han shu* 4.108, 128, 5.150, 6.163, 171, 181, 200, 206, 7.229, 8.267, 25A.1214). *Hou Hanshu* (2.119, 2.152, 4.171, 24.860, 36.1242.)

³⁰³ “特賜臣民聚會飲酒。” *HYCD* 9:1407.

³⁰⁴ Zhang He-quan 張鶴泉, Wang Meng 王萌, “An Investigation on the Court Banquet in Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏皇帝賜宴考略,” 28.

³⁰⁵ “漢律三人以上無故羣飲酒，罰金四兩” *Shiji* (10.417) commentary.

officials on the occasion of imperial feasting.³⁰⁶ In addition, food such as meat and liquor were often bestowed “to each, proportionately (各有差)” at the moment of the imperial celebration.

四年春正月丁亥，帝加元服，見于高廟。賜諸侯王、丞相、大將軍、列侯、宗室下至吏民金帛牛酒各有差。³⁰⁷

In the fourth year, in the spring, the first month, on the dinghai day, the Emperor put on the bonnet of virility and was presented in the Temple of Emperor Gao. He granted to the vassal kings, to the Chancellor, to the General-in-chief, to the marquises, to the members of imperial house, on down to the officials and common people, money, silk, oxen, and beer, to each proportionately.³⁰⁸

As I mentioned in a previous chapter, the “Statutes on Bestowals,” *Cilü*, legal documents discovered in Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247, clearly demonstrate how food was distributed to each person proportionately, according to aristocratic rank as well as based on salary-grades from the highest rank, *lie hou*, or 2,000 *shi* salary-grade officials, to the lowest slaves and convicts (*sikou, tuli*). The “Statutes on Bestowals” from Zhangjiashan can also be interpreted as a guideline for food distribution during a statewide feast while there was exclusive banqueting at the court. According to the statutes, all the people of the empire, even convicts, were guaranteed to receive at least a certain amount of grain, meat, liquor and condiments. Details on this food distribution will be discussed in the next section.

³⁰⁶ *Wen xuan* 3:14a-17a, Bodde, *Festivals*, 143.

³⁰⁷ *Han shu* (7.229)

³⁰⁸ Ban Gu, *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, vol. 2, 169–170.

Considering the feasting forms of *yan* and *pu* as well as the imperial gift that occurred at the moment of palace feasting, the definition of feasting in the Qin and Han dynasties should include these events of statewide food distribution for celebration, which created for the subjects “a form of public ritual activity centered around the communal consumption of food and drink” while exclusive members were invited to banquet at the court. Spatiotemporal restrictions are not applicable in the discourse of Qin and Han feasting.

2) The Purpose and Role of Feasting: Three Modes of Commensal Politics

Scholars have discussed and analyzed feasts in various societies and cultures by categorizing the types of feasts in order to establish models and theories with cross-cultural perspectives. For example, focusing on the benefit and role of feasting, Brian Hayden suggests nine basic feast types: those held to 1) mobilize labor; 2) create cooperative relationships within groups or conversely, exclude different groups; 3) create cooperative alliance between social groups; 4) invest surpluses and generate profits; 5) attract desirable mates, labor, allies, or wealth exchanges by advertising the success of the group; 6) create political power through the creation of a network of reciprocal debts; 7) extract surplus produce from the general populace for elite use; 8) solicit favors; and 9) compensate for transgression.³⁰⁹ He further argues that except for work, solicitation, and penalty feasts, all other benefits of feasting revolve around “the creation or maintenance of important social

³⁰⁹ Brian Hayden, “Fabulous Feasts: A Prolegomenon to the Importance of Feasting,” 29–30.

relationships.³¹⁰ The significance of feasts in the context of the function of social relationships is reconfirmed as Dietler proposes three representative models of feasting that can be observed from anthropological, ethnographical, archaeological, and historical research. According to Dietler, the purpose or social function of feasts can be theoretically encapsulated within three groups: 1) “empowering feasts” or “competition” to acquire and maintain certain forms of symbolic and economic capital, 2) “diacritical feasts” or “hierarchy” to naturalize and reify ranked differences in the status of social orders of classes by using differentiated cuisine and styles of consumptions as a symbolic device, and 3) “patron-role feasts” or “redistribution” to symbolically reiterate and legitimize institutionalized relations of asymmetrical social power by using commensal hospitality.³¹¹

The three feasting modes indicate not a series of successive evolutionary stages, but an expansive repertoire of forms of political action through feasting with overlapping areas. Therefore, while some societies only show one mode of feasting, others can display two or three forms at the same time.³¹² Also, a certain feature of feasting can be analyzed with more than one model of feasting theory applied. The nature of ancient Chinese feasts can also be analyzed by applying these three models highlighting the features of social relationships. In particular, we can also interpret the imperial food distribution mentioned in the “Statutes on Bestowals” from the Zhangjiashan law using Dietler’s three models of feasting.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

³¹¹ Dietler, *Feasts*, 75–88.

³¹² Ibid., 93.

a. Empowering Feasts: “Displaying Power and Authority”

Hosting feasts generally works for confirming and acquiring high rank in societies. From the view of the nature of “empowering feasts,” feasting is a major means of imbuing moral authority, which enables a host to acquire and maintain the respect and prestige necessary to exercise leadership, acting also as a means of showing one’s ability to acquire the necessary symbolic and economic capital for the rank. This feature of “empowering feasts” is often mentioned in ethnographic research on African feasts. For example, among the Dorze of Ethiopia, there is a tradition that an elevated political status requires the hosting of lavish feasts. Becoming a member of high-ranking status in the society of the Koma of Cameroon also requires the sponsorship of a special feast with a great deal of millet and sorghum beer and beef.³¹³ This feature can be found in Chinese court feasting as well when emperors hosted a luxurious court banquet to celebrate their enthronement. Feasting was a means of displaying the symbolic and economic power of the new emperor.

In Han China, the amount and type of food distributed to those of high aristocratic and bureaucratic rank implies that one of the ways the emperor supported them was by providing food enough for them to host a feast that would confirm and display their abilities and high positions in society, thus creating a mutually reinforcing hierarchy of power by allowing them to do on a smaller scale what the emperor does by providing a feast for their underlings. According to the “*Ci lü*,” those who were in the highest bureaucratic rank of 2,000 *shi*, or comparable aristocratic ranks (*Lie hou*, *Guanneihou*, and *Gongzhu*), were given 240 *jin* (approx. 58.56 kg) of meat and 20 *dou* of beer that could be used for feasts hosted by them in their places. It can be estimated that 240 *jin* of meat make approximately 200 to 300

³¹³ Ibid., 78–9.

dishes, assuming that one serving has about 200g (7.1 oz) to 250g (8.8 oz) of meat. (see Table 16) With this distributed food, officials and aristocrats of the highest rank were able to host a banquet not only for their families, clans, and friends, but also for community members. One *sheng* of mustard, which was bestowed exclusively to the highest two ranks, indicates that a communal feast hosted by officials and aristocrats possibly continued for several days, as mustard sauce was used to preserve food for several days.

The size of the banquet officials and aristocrats could host would have been proportional to the amount of food they were bestowed, which then demonstrated the power they could display. For example, 1,000 *shi* officials or those of 10th aristocratic ranks were bestowed 120 *jin* of meat and 10 *dou* of beer, a half of what 2,000 *shi* officials and comparable aristocrats were given. The lowest official, *zuoshi*, was to be bestowed 8 *jin* (approx. 2 kg or 4.3 lb.) of meat and 0.7 *dou* (approx. 1.4 L) of beer with which they could enjoy feasting probably just with their family, since they had no subordinates to bestow food upon, thus no power to display with/from food.

Table 16. Food distribution amount according to bureaucratic rank

Aristocratic rank	Salary Grade	Grain	Meat	Liquor
20 19	2000 <i>shi</i>	3 <i>cheng</i> (4.5 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	240 <i>jin</i> ³¹⁴ (58.56 kg)	20 <i>dou</i> ³¹⁵ (40 liters)
10	1000 <i>shi</i>	2 <i>cheng</i> (3 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	120 <i>jin</i> (29.28 kg)	10 <i>dou</i> (20 L)
9	800 <i>shi</i>		96 <i>jin</i> (23.424 kg)	8 <i>dou</i> (16 L)
8	600 <i>shi</i>		72 <i>jin</i> (12.568 kg)	6 <i>dou</i> (12L)
7 6	500 <i>shi</i>	1 <i>cheng</i> (1.5 <i>dou</i> unhusked)	60 <i>jin</i> (14.64 kg)	5 <i>dou</i> (10 L)
5	300 <i>shi</i>		36 <i>jin</i> (8.784 kg)	3 <i>dou</i> (6 L)
3	Officials whose salaries are in terms of <i>dou</i>		10 <i>jin</i> (2.44 kg)	-
2 1	Accessory Clerks		8 <i>jin</i> (1.952 kg)	0.7 <i>dou</i> (1.4L)

b. The Diacritical Feast: “Confirm Social Relationships and Hierarchies”

As we can read from the etiquette and protocol of an ancient Chinese banquet, ritualized conventions such as seating location, presenting order, and eating order according to the ranks, position and age at court feasts as well as elite feasts worked to demonstrate social relationships and hierarchies. In this way, the use of differentiated cuisine and style of consumption at feasts works to naturalize and reify concepts of ranked differences in the social order of classes. Feasts which involve this feature are called by Dietler “diacritical

³¹⁴ One *jin* is about 244 or 245 grams, which is about 8.6 ounces. Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, xxxviii.; Swann, *Food and Money*, 364.

³¹⁵ One *dou* is about 1.996 liters. Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China*, 1:xxxviii.

feasts.”³¹⁶ In this mode of commensal politics, the symbolic force for demonstrating the social hierarchy occurs from the *style and taste* of served food, rather than the difference of *food quantity*. Diacritical stylistic distinctions can be found in the imperial food distribution to bestow different styles of food and condiments according to social status. According to the “Statutes on Bestowals” from Zhangjiashan tomb no. 247, those of aristocratic rank were given grain in a different unit of measure, *cheng* (盛, “servings”), a term also indicating the vessels in which sacrificial offerings were served. Based on the discoveries from Mawangdui tomb no. 1, where the same measurement words were found on funerary inventory slips and corresponding cooked cuisine was presented in vessels, we can assume that the grain exclusively given to officials and aristocrats in the form of *cheng* was cooked grain.³¹⁷ The fact that at the same time commoners and people of inferior status were given cooked grain (*fan* 飯) supports this. Even though we do not know if the officials and aristocrats were given the cooked grain in vessels which had once been prepared for sacrificial offerings, the different unit of measure indicates a different style with the symbolic power of discrimination.

Not only the grain, but also the quality of distributed beer was different in the system of food bestowal. Officials who were above the salary grade 600 *shi* or aristocrats above the eighth rank were given *shangzun* (上尊, “upper quality”) beer, whereas officials below 500 *shi* and aristocrats below the seventh rank were given *xiazun* (下尊, “low quality”) beer. Commoners and convicts were bestowed *hejiu* (和酒, “flavored liquor”).

³¹⁶ Dietler, *Feasts*, 85.

³¹⁷ According to slip no. 301 of the Statutes on Bestowals, one *cheng* contains nine *sheng* 升 (approx. 1.8L) of treated grain. Hunan Sheng bowuguan, Zhongguo kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, *Changsha Mawangdui yi hao han mu* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1973), vol. 1, 141; Barbieri-Low and Yates, *Law, State, and Society in Early Imperial China*, n. 73, 74.

賜吏六百石以上以上尊，五百石以下以下尊，無爵以和酒。³¹⁸

For bestowals on officials: [for those with a] salary grade of six-hundred bushels on up, use the “upper quality;” [for those with a salary grade of] five-hundred bushels on down, use the “lower quality;” for those without rank use flavored liquor.³¹⁹

The interpretation of different grain liquor grades and terms is controversial. The grain liquor grade of *shangzun* “upper quality” appears in the *Han shu*. According to the commentary written by Ru Shun, the three quality levels of liquor were determined by the type of grain fermented: rice (*dao* 稻, *oryza sativa*) for upper quality, paniced millet (*ji* 稷, *panicum miliaceum*) for middle quality, and foxtail millet (*su* 粟, *setaria italica*) for lower quality.³²⁰ However, according to a commentary written by Yan Shigu, the quality depends on the process of manufacture and the level of thickness, not the kind of cereal with which it was made.³²¹ The meaning of *hejiu* is also controversial: Yates and Barbieri-Low follow Peng Hao, who sees it as an adulterated liquor, probably an unfiltered type with dregs, or one mixed with water,³²² while the preliminary report on Zhangjiashan strips glosses *hejiu* as “liquor with mixed-in additives” (*hunhe jiu* 混合酒).³²³ In spite of the various interpretations

³¹⁸ Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 214.

³¹⁹ Barbieri-Low and Yates, *ibid.*

³²⁰ Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu, *Zhangjiashan Han mu zhu jian (er si qi hao mu)* (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2001), 50; Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 214.

³²¹ *Han shu* (71.3051); Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 69; Barbieri-Low and Yates, *ibid.*, fn.85.

³²² Peng, *Zhangjiashan*, 214, n.2.; Barbieri-Low and Yates, *ibid.*

³²³ Zhangjiashan er si qi hao Han mu zhu jian zheng li xiao zu Zhangjiashan, 張家山漢墓竹簡二四七號墓 *Zhangjiashan Han Mu Zhu Jian : Er Si Qi Hao Mu*, Di 1 ban (Beijing: Wen wu chu ban she, 2006), 50.

on the terms and grades of liquor, it is certain that liquor of different quality and taste was bestowed according to status, again reconfirming the social hierarchy.

Condiments bestowed with discrimination imply the nature of the diacritical feast, too. Mustard was given only to officials at the highest level of salary grade, vinegar was for those above 600 *shi*, fermented sauce was for all grades of officials and commoners, and salt was for convicts. These different condiments resulted in differences in the taste and style of cuisine that could be enjoyed with the bestowed food.

Table 17. Difference of distributed food in kind and style according to status

Aristocratic rank	Bureaucratic rank	Grain	Liquor	Mustard	Vinegar	Fermented sauce	Salt
20 19	2,000 <i>shi</i>	3 <i>cheng</i>	High Quality	1 <i>sheng</i>	2 <i>sheng</i>	2 <i>sheng</i>	
10 9 8	1,000 <i>shi</i> 800 <i>shi</i> 600 <i>shi</i>	2 <i>cheng</i>					
7 6	500 <i>shi</i>	1 <i>cheng</i>	Low Quality			1/2 <i>sheng</i>	
5 4	300 <i>shi</i>						
3	Doushi						
2	Zuoshi						
1							
Commoners		1 <i>dou</i>	Flavored Liquor			1/3 <i>sheng</i>	
Convicts		1 <i>dou</i>					

c. Patron-role Feast: “Confirming Hierarchical Relationships”

Feasts and food gifts in Han China can also be analyzed in terms of a major mode of commensal politics known as “patron-role feasts,” a term indicating “the formalized use of

commensal hospitality to symbolically reiterate and legitimize institutionalized relations of asymmetrical social power.”³²⁴ Traditionally, this aspect of feast has been called “redistribution” in the literature of economic anthropology. According to this theoretical model, the expected generosity of feasts and gifts is regularly used for confirming the unequal relationship between patron and client, or ruler and subject. The custom of feeding all those who provided tribute work on *corvée* projects to the patron represents this model. For example, Dietler introduces a practice of the Bemba of Zambia where the chief was responsible for providing food and beer for at least one day for 561 men and 324 women who provided labor. Instead of laborers working for agricultural yield on construction projects, they are given food by their patron or ruler.³²⁵

This is also observed in the practice of feeding subjects, including officials, commoners, government slaves, and convict laborers, who provided their labor for the ruler and government in the Qin and Han period. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the salary system for officials and the ration system for those who served in the military and the labor camps could be administratively developed forms of redistribution originating from the same concept of the patron-role feast.

In this mode of redistribution, it seems that feasting or the practice of giving food is not necessarily an adaptive means to provide balanced food security for a population.³²⁶ Nourishing the laborers with a balanced diet is not the issue for the distributor. Apart from concern for the dietary condition and nutritional balance of the beneficiary, leaders use this

³²⁴ Dietler, *Feasts*, 82–3.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

practice as a politico-symbolic device for legitimizing status differences. During the Qin and Han period the feeding system for convicted criminals involved in labor clearly shows this feature. According to the Qin legal texts from Shuihudi, the government guaranteed a certain amount of food for the labor providers according to their workload, gender, and age, but they only provided grain, in the form of cooked grain or porridge, without any additional dishes of meat or vegetables. According to my previous research, the amount of the redistributed grain in the form of rations guaranteed by Qin law was enough for convict laborers to survive, but provided an unbalanced, high-carbohydrate diet.³²⁷ The Qin and Han policy of redistributing food to those who provided labor demonstrates the features of the patron-role model of feasting, but it does not fit the model perfectly, because the Qin and Han ration system for the convicted criminal did not seem to express the hospitality of the patron. However, if we consider the food gift as a macro form of feast, we find that commoners who were supposed to be regularly conscripted for *corvée* labor up to a certain age and convicted criminals who were sentenced to work for the government for a certain period were also treated with the favored symbolic food of cooked grain, meat, beer, and condiments in feasting mode.

The impact of the feast on laborers has been generally discussed in the context of labor mobilization. According to current scholarship, the practice of providing food to workers or *corvée* laborers in the mode of patron-role feast is analyzed as one of the methods for mobilizing labor. In this context, the ration system for *corvée* as well as convict laborers of the Qin and Han period can be understood as a developed form of the feast for

³²⁷ Moonsil Lee, "Dietary Conditions and Differential Access to Food Resources among the Various Classes during the Han Period" (University of Pittsburgh, 2004).

mobilization and redistribution. Also, the tradition of hosting feasts for workers might form the ideological foundation of the ration system.

3) The Impact of Leftovers on Convicted Criminals

“It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.”

“Yes, Lord.” She said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.”

(Matthew 15:26-27)

Feasts or ritual banquets required many laborers to prepare the banquet, serve the food, and clean up. Usually, under the management of the women of the host family or officials in charge, slaves and convicts who were to work as slaves prepared food for feasting and ritual banquets. A passage from the “Contract for a Slave” (*tongyue*, 僮约) dated 59 BCE by Wang Bao 王褒 (date unknown, late Western Han period)³²⁸ implies that slaves were expected to prepare feasts for guests in a household:

When there are guests in the house he shall carry a kettle and go after beer; draw water and prepare the evening meal; wash bowls and arrange food trays; pluck garlic from the garden; chop vegetables and slice meat; pound meat and make soup of tubers; stew fish and roast turtle; boil tea and fill the utensils. When the dinner is over he shall cover and put away leftovers.³²⁹

³²⁸ *Han shu* (64B.2821)

³²⁹ *Chu xue ji* 初學記 *Siku quanshu chongmu* 四庫全書鈔目 135, 2b-3a Trans. C. Martin Wilbur, *Slavery in China during the Former Han Dynasty, 206 B.C.-A.D. 25*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 385.

This description matches the pictorial evidence from tomb reliefs and paintings that show people of the lowest status working in the kitchen for butchering, brewing, and cooking in order to prepare for sacrificial rituals and feasts. Kitchen scenes from Han tombs show that people of inferior status, who wear tight pants and simple, short robes rather than the long robes with a wide hem and the long sleeves of the upper class, work in the process of food preparation (see figure 7-10). They might be butchers, slaves, or convicted criminals sentenced to work for local governments.



Figure 7. Kitchen Scene from a late Eastern Han Tomb at Pangtaizitun in Liaoyang, Liaoning³³⁰

³³⁰ Wenxin Lee, “Liaoyang Faxian de San Zuo Bi Hua Gu Mu 遼陽發現的三座壁畫古墓,” *Wen Wu Zhan Kao Zi Liao* 文物參考資料, no. 5 (1955): 27–8.



Figure 8. Han Brick Rubbing of Kitchen Scene from Chengdu, Sichuan³³¹



Figure 9. Brick Painting of Kitchen Scene at the Tomb from Jiayuguan, Gansu³³²

³³¹ Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*, 182.

³³² “Jiayuguan Han hua shang zhuan mu 嘉峪关汉画像砖墓,” *Wenwu* no. 12 (1972): 40.



Figure 10. Food Preparation Scene from Wuliang Shrine, Shandong³³³

Even though people of inferior status like convict laborers and slaves were involved in food preparation for offerings and feasts, scholars have held that they were not allowed to participate in the *fenzuo* 分胙, “parting of the sacrificial meat.”³³⁴ This would mean that those of inferior status in Qin and Han were not able to share the food after a sacrificial ritual.

However, recently discovered Qin texts from Liye concerning sacrifices to Xiannong (先農, Ancestral Agriculturalist) indicate that the Qin had a system for dealing with leftovers, from which convicted criminals could benefit. According to these texts, local officials sold the remaining food from a sacrificial ritual to Wall-Down Laborers or other convicted criminals for some cash on May 9th, 215 BCE, which seemed to be the day after a

³³³ Xingzhen Liu and Fengxia Yue, *Han Dynasty Stone Reliefs: The Wu Family Shrines in Shandong Province.*, 1st ed. (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1991), 74.

³³⁴ Anthony Barbieri-Low, “The Cult of Ancestral Agriculturalist during the Qin: New Insights from Liye and Zhoujiaitai,” unpublished manuscript, (2013).

sacrificial ritual to the Ancestral Agriculturalist.³³⁵ One and a half *dou* (about 3 liters) of remaining beer was sold to a convict laborer named Zui 馯 for one coin. One and a half *dou* (3 liter) of remaining piglet meat was sold to another convict laborer named He 赫 for four coins. The convict labor He also bought one head of lamb for two coins and four hooves of lamb for two coins. These transactions were executed, inspected, and recorded by local officials in charge.

卅二年三月丁丑朔丙申, 倉是佐狗出祠[先]農餘徹酒一斗半斗賣于城旦馯所, 取錢一, 率之一斗半斗一錢. 令史尚視平. 狗手. (1.14.650;1.14.652)

On the *bingshen* day of the third month, whose first day falls on a *dingchou* day, in the 32nd year [of the reign of Ying Zheng, King of Qin] (May 9th, 215 BCE), The Granary [Overseer], Shi, and his Assistant, Gou, disbursed one and one-half *dou* of remaining beer [3 liters] from a sacrifice to the Ancestral Agriculturalist, and sold it to the Wall-Dawn Laborer Zui's place, and took away one cash. Determining the unit price; each one and a half *dou* is one cash. The Foreman Clerk, Shang, inspected the fairness [of the transaction]. Gou wrote [this].

卅二年三月丁丑朔丙申, 倉是佐狗出祠[先]農餘徹豚肉一斗半斗賣于(於)城旦赫所, 取錢四. 令史尚視平. 狗手. (1.14.649;1.14.679)

On the *bingshen* day of the third month, whose first day falls on a *dingchou* day, in the 32nd year [of the reign of Ying Zheng, King of Qin] (May 9th, 215 BCE), The Granary [Overseer], Shi, and his Assistant, Gou, disbursed one and one-half *dou* of remaining piglet meat [3 liters] from a sacrifice to the Ancestral Agriculturalist, and sold it to the Wall-Dawn Laborer He's

³³⁵ Ibid.

place, and took away four cash. The Foreman Clerk, Shang, inspected the fairness [of the transaction]. Gou wrote [this].

卅二年三月丁丑朔丙申, 倉是佐狗雜出祠先農餘徹羊頭一足四賣于(於)城旦赫所, 取錢四◇(1.14.300;1.14.764)

On the *bingshen* day of the third month, whose first day falls on a *dingchou* day, in the 32nd year [of the reign of Ying Zheng, King of Qin] (May 9th, 215 BCE), The Granary [Overseer], Shi, and his Assistant, Gou, together, disbursed one head and four hooves of remaining lamb from a sacrifice to the Ancestral Agriculturalist, and sold it to the Wall-Dawn Laborer He's place, and took away four cash...

◇頭一足四賣于(於)城旦赫所, 取錢四. 率之頭一二錢四足□錢. 令史尚視平. (1.14.641)

...one head and four hooves [of a sheep], and sold it to the Wall-Dawn Laborer He's place, and took away four cash. Determining the unit price; each one head is two cash, and the four hooves are [two] cash. The Foreman Clerk, Shang, inspected the fairness [of the transaction].

卅二年三月丁丑朔丙申, 倉是佐狗出祠[先]農餘肉汁二斗賣于(於)城旦□所◇ (14.654)

On the *bingshen* day of the third month, whose first day falls on a *dingchou* day, in the 32nd year [of the reign of Ying Zheng, King of Qin] (May 9th, 215 BCE), The Granary [Overseer], Shi, and his Assistant, Gou, disbursed

two *dou* of remaining meat broth [4 liters] from a sacrifice to the [Ancestral] Agriculturalist, and sold it to the Wall-Dawn Laborer X's place....³³⁶

According to these strips, the food mentioned was from the altar, or from the sacrifice (*chuci* 出祠). However, it does not seem that the food was the meat or beer that was first offered to the god and later shared with the participants. According to the *Liji*, it seems that the sacrificial meats – beef, lamb, and pork – were shared with the guests, and the leftovers from the table of the banquet were supposed to be taken by or sent to the guests:

曾子曰. 吾子不見大饗乎. 夫大饗既饗. 卷三牲之俎. 歸于賓館.³³⁷

Zhengzi says “Have you not seen what is done at a great feast? At a great feast, given by a Great officer, after all have partaken, he rolls up what is left on the stands for the three animals (for offering), and sends it to the lodgings of his guest....”³³⁸

As Barbieri-Low argues, the *rou* 肉 (“pork”) or *tunrou* 豚肉 (“piglet meat”) being sold here did not include the whole hunks of meat which had been placed on the altar, but consisted of byproducts, like pork guts, fat, and blood from the piglet, which were not used

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ *Liji* (juan 42, 2:1562), *Shi san jing zhu shu*.

³³⁸ Legge, *Book of Rites*, vol. 2, 96.

in either sacrificial offerings or banquets.³³⁹ This can be supported by the fact that the piglet meat was sold by volume, *dou*, not by *jin*, the unit of weight generally used for meat. Moreover, the price, three liters (approx. 101oz) for four coins, was too cheap to be whole hunks of meat; the normal price of pork, as seen in an account from Xuanqian, Dunhuang, where one *jin* (245g, or 8.6oz) of pork cost six coins.³⁴⁰ The other items, such as lamb's head and hooves, were also far from the edible meats that could be offered and shared with the ritual participants for feasting after the offering. Also, the pork broth (*rouzhi* 肉汁) they sold was likely not the stew, but the byproduct water in which the pork meat had been boiled, which was supposed to be discarded. The *Meishifang*, the discovered bamboo strips of ancient food recipes, indicates as much:

…煮. 熟, 继出去其泊. 摇更以牛甘泊入酒, 盐, 肉酱汁, 姜, 木兰其中.
复煮之. 熟继出进之. 为马濡, 羊濡, 鹿濡方如此.
(fragment 3, slip *bing* 10)

...boil. When done, lift it out and **discard the broth**. Shake...take the fresh sweet beef broth and add beer, salt, meat sauce liquid, ginger, and magnolia. Boil it again. When done, **lift it out and serve**. The recipe for making boiled horse, boiled lamb, and boiled deer is like this.³⁴¹

According to this recipe, making boiled meat produced first a broth that was supposed to be discarded, and second a flavored broth in which a husk of meat had been boiled. The meat

³³⁹ Barbieri-Low, "The Cult of Ancestral Agriculturalist," 2013.

³⁴⁰ Pingsheng Hu and Defang Zhang, *Dunhuang Xuanquan Han jian shi cui* (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2001), 171.

³⁴¹ Donald Harper, "The Cookbook and Gastronomy in Ancient China: The Evidence from Huxishan and Mawangdui," *Hunansheng Bowuguan Guan'gan*, no. 1 (2004): 167.

and meat broth they sold to convicts at such a low price may have consisted of this byproduct, which was not used for offerings or feasts.

I further argue that the beer which was sold to convicts was liquor left over after the feast rather than that which was offered and then cleared from the altar (出祠先農餘徹酒), as the document literally reads. As *Qi min yao shu* 齊民要術, the earliest ancient Chinese agricultural text completed in the sixth century, indicates, no matter what the differences in the raw materials and fermentation process, once beer was fermented in a jar, the highest quality of clearest beer (*qingjiu* 清酒) was obtained by filtering the liquor from the uppermost portion of the jar.³⁴² For rituals, the clearest and purist liquor with the least dregs was certainly offered on the altar first, after which it would all be consumed by the ritual participants or guests, just as the sacrificial meat was shared with the participants after the offering. In addition to this highest quality beer, mid-quality liquor remained in the jar without dregs would be consumed by regular guests during the banquet. When this was all consumed, they would have brewed the lowest quality by adding water to the dregs (*zhuojiu* 濁酒). Considering the significance of alcohol in the nature of ritual and feasting, not only clear beer for the offering and banquet, but also plenty of lesser-quality beer must have been consumed during the feast. This custom is observed in the Korean traditional culture: when all the liquid was consumed during feast, they added water into the jar and mixed it with the dregs on the bottom to make more beer of lesser quality for inferiors. We might speculate that a similar practice was conducted during the Qin and Han periods. Therefore, the beer they sold the day after the sacrificial offering was probably not the liquor from the altar but the leftover liquor, the low-quality beer mixed with water and the remaining dregs.

³⁴² Seo-seok Yun, *Che min yo sul* (Seoul:Min-um sa,1993); Sungwu Lee, *Han-guk sikpum sahoe sa* 韓國食品社會史 (Seoul:Kyomun sa, 1984), 194.

According to the *Jiuzhang suanshu* (九章算術, *Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art*), the earliest specialized mathematical work, composed around 200 BCE, one *dou* of beer cost ten to fifty *qian* during the Han period.³⁴³ One and one-half *dou* of beer for one coin is too cheap to be believed for fine beer, even though it was believed to have been offered to the altar first. In ancient China, beer was generally made from barley, millet, wheat and rice. While rice beer prevailed in Southern China, beer made of millet, barley, and wheat was more common in northern China until the late Han period. According to the reconstruction of ancient liquor production, beer made with barley and wheat was difficult to store. While rice beer could be stored up to several years, beer of barley and wheat would keep only for a very short time, no longer than a week.³⁴⁴ The short shelf life of beer means that once they used the beer for the ritual and feast, they needed to dispose of the remaining liquor immediately because it could not be used for the next event. Furthermore, if the leftover beer was of a poor quality, made by adding water to the dregs, the preservation time would become even shorter. Therefore, it is reasonable that the day after the feast the beer leftover from the feast, which would be that of poor quality mixed with dregs and would have been thrown away in a few days, would be sold for a low price to people of inferior status.

According to these fragments from Liye, convicted criminals would have a chance to intake more food if they or maybe their family could afford to pay for the food. Considering that most convict laborers experienced malnutrition or at least an unbalanced diet from distributed rations, the food left over after ancestral offerings and feasts worked as a

³⁴³ Kang-shen Shen et al., “The nine chapters on the mathematical art companion and commentary.”

³⁴⁴ Justin Jennings et al., “Drinking Beer in a Blissful Mood: Alcohol Production, Operational Chains, and Feasting in the Ancient World,” *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 2 (April 2005): 281.

supplementary way to solve nutritional problems by providing protein, fat, and essential minerals such as iron. Considering that local officials of Qin and Han seem to have conducted sacrifices to Xiannong five or six times per year, and they were supposed to routinely make sacrifices to Fengbo 風伯 and Yushi 雨師 with sheep and pigs as often as to Xiannong,³⁴⁵ the convict laborers could have the chance at least once or twice a month to buy supplemental food from the local sacrificial rituals.

In this chapter, I examined the forms and the nature of feasting and the impact of food sharing related to feasts during the Qin and Han period, applying current theories of feasting in order to find whether ancient Chinese feasts could be discussed within the framework of anthropological models. Here, I would like to point out some theoretical issues on feasts we need to consider in order to understand ancient Chinese feasting within the framework of current models.

According to Dietler, a feast is a form of public ritual activity centered around the communal consumption of food and drink. However, if we see current scholars' analysis on the roles of feasts in various societies, we notice that they, consciously or unconsciously, confine the meaning of feast to having food and drink among living participants or between a living host and guests. They do not consider the "communal consumption of food and drink" among the physically invisible beings of the community: spirits and people outside the banquet place. It seems that most scholars consider food sharing with the deities and ancestors as a part of religious ritual, not as a form of feasting, even though religious offerings are followed by communal feasting. However, in ancient China, sharing food with ancestors and the deceased is viewed as feasting. As Denise Schmandt-Besserat, who

³⁴⁵ *Hou Hanshu* (9.3204); Barbieri-Low, "The Cult of Ancestral Agriculturalist," unpublished manuscript, 2013.

examines ancient Near Eastern feasts, argues that the delivery of the offering may be regarded as the most significant aspect of feasting,³⁴⁶ the practice of food sharing with gods, deities, ancestors and even people outside the banquet place can be considered in the context of feasting, and.

Another theoretical issue is the limitation of time and space for the feast.

Unconsciously, scholars assume that feasting is communal eating for a moment held in a certain place in the presence of the host. They assume that guests must gather in a certain place, mostly palaces and courts, for food sharing at a certain moment for it to be called feasting. I have called this kind of feasting an “exclusive feast,” which was enjoyed among elite groups and related people under strict rules of etiquette and protocol. However, the “inclusive feasting” of the general public happened state-wide, as the emperor distributed food for subjects to celebrate the moment together. I argue that the food distribution practice for those who do not participate in the physical setting in the court should be counted as an extended concept of the feast when we consider the purpose and the role of feasting. Subjects who were given food from the emperor were able to join the “communal food sharing” for the same purpose as the exclusive feasting at the court even though they were not in the same place.

In this chapter, I examined food redistribution in the form of a feast, focusing on the nature of feasts for laborers. I related the concept of feasts for labor mobilization to the nature of the food rationing system for convicted laborers during the Qin and Han period, and examined the impact of feasts on the nutritional and dietary conditions of convicted criminals. The management of food for offerings and the feasts that followed, both

³⁴⁶ Denise Schmandt-Besserat, “Feasting in the Ancient Near East,” in *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives*, ed. Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 391–403.

preparation and disposal, was systemically regulated in the laws. In particular, Qin legal documents from Liye indicate that they even controlled everything left from feasts, using the leftovers and byproducts efficiently to feed people of inferior status who were in a poor dietary condition.

Conclusion

During the Qin and Han periods, food was given by the emperor to his subjects through various redistribution systems: salaries, rations, relief, gifts, and feasts. Over the course of chapters one to four, I introduced each form of food redistribution that directly and indirectly influenced food consumption and the dietary conditions of people of various statuses and situations: officials, soldiers, elders, widows, victims of natural disaster, and convicts.

An examination of the food redistribution system that takes into consideration the prevailing political ideology, the established legal statement and ordinances and related to food redistribution, and the actual implementation of the policies reveals that the state's politics were not necessarily reflected in the laws, and that policies were not always observed when local officials redistributed resources. For example, the Confucian concept of propriety, or the Legalistic belief of discriminative awards according to one's contribution to the state, was certainly reflected in the salary and rationing system of the Qin and Han. Meanwhile, comfort food policies for elders based on Confucianism seem not to have been realized, since the proclaimed laws remained impractical. The fact that Han relief food policies for victims of natural disaster did not seem to prioritize elders as recipients of governmental assistance also supports the finding that there were discrepancies between ideal philosophies and actual policies. The discordance between ideology and policy seems to have been caused by the realistic need to maintain social stability rather than pursue ideal virtue.

The accordance and discordance between policies and their implementation was able to be analyzed due to recently discovered Qin and Han legal documents and administrative records. The examination of Qin and Han laws from Shuihudi and Zhangjiashan and the local administrative documents and accounts from Liye and Xuanquan proves that rules on the reporting process and responsibility system seem to have been observed well at the local government level as rules to follow, while the details of food distribution, in terms of the amount, kind, and recipients, were not in actuality executed according to the established rules. It may have been a challenge to observe the expected discrimination according to aristocratic rank and salary grade when the local government gave food to officials who visited the conveyance stations, even though the laws clearly stipulated different treatment with different amounts and kinds of food according to social status. Moreover, it is certain that the recorded amounts of rations given to convict laborers by local governments were generally much less than the regulated amount. It can be assumed that convicts laborers were not provided even as much as the amount on record as having been actually given, not only based on a comparison of the law and the accounts, but also from historical records containing statements of those who had worked as convicts and received rations from the government. Research on calories from the rations indicates that the issued amount of rations to a convict laborer, though less than the regulation, was still enough for a person engaged in hard work, but a source cited to relate the experience of being a convict laborer testified that they were fed poorly. Each chapter in this dissertation revealed details demonstrating the reality of the food redistribution system in the Qin and Han periods.

What, then, are the probable causes as to why there was a discrepancy between regulation and implementation on the ground? The reasons can be analyzed from three

angles: the nature and purpose of Qin and Han laws, corruption among officials, and the alternative method of cash payment. First, since the purpose of the laws on the granary and rationing system was to safeguard government property from abuse rather than to guarantee a certain amount of rations to the recipients, issuing smaller amounts seems not to have been illegal. Even though detailed records on food distribution written by local administrators and granary keepers were reported to the central government, it does not seem that they had any problem with the matter of issuing a smaller amount of rations than called for by regulation. Examination of the nature of the statutes on granaries, which aimed to prevent abuse of governmental property, shows that the regulated amount actually meant the maximum amount the local government was allowed to provide to recipients. Also, as we can see from the comparison between the Qin and the Han statutes on food rations at conveyance stations, the Han statutes became less discriminative than the Qin regulations in terms of the amount and kind given to the recipients of different social statuses. This tendency of less discrimination appeared in the records on actual food expense for visiting officials during the Han period, which shows that, without any legal problem, sometimes the same amount and kind of food was given to recipients regardless of their social or bureaucratic status. Provided it did not cause an abuse of government property or defamation of the purpose of the regulation, it seems that officials were allowed some flexibility in applying legal guidance to food distribution. In fact, the laws on the punishment of officials' malpractice of food distribution were only for cases of abuse of government property.

The second possible reason for discrepancies between the regulation and reality is corruption. As we can see from Emperor Wen's proclamation of a new ordinance on food distribution when officials distributed stale millet to the aged, the problem of official

corruption in the process of food distribution was already recognized by the Han emperors, and the rulers tried to prevent it by establishing strict laws regarding the procedure of distribution. Although Bielenstein argues that corruption was motivated more by greed than economic necessity,³⁴⁷ it is eminently plausible that the poor economic condition of low-ranking officials may have led them to be tempted to embezzle goods. Already in 59 BCE Emperor Xuan ordered an increase in salaries by 50% for those ranking 100 *shi* or less, as he worried about poor officials who could charge customary fees or increase tax quotas to squeeze more income out of the people.³⁴⁸ The salary increases that occurred in 7 BCE for officials ranking 300 *shi* or less and in 50 CE for officials ranking 600 *shi* or less would be related to concerns about corruption among poor officials.³⁴⁹ In light of the social status of convict laborers and the evidence from literature and bone analysis, it is not unlikely that officials involved in distributing rations to convicts embezzled goods easily and frequently. If convict laborers had been fed with the regulated amount of grain, they would have maintained a sound diet, even though they may have incurred some problems caused by nutritional imbalances.³⁵⁰ But the problem of dietary balance could be solved more or less by consuming leftover food from feasts and offerings. We can surmise that since corrupt officials gave stale millet to the aged, they probably gave convict laborers rations full of chaff and grit, which caused malnutrition, while the officials kept the grain for themselves.

The discordance between the regulations and actual practice could be also stem from the possible alternative method of cash payment, which was prescribed in the “Statutes on

³⁴⁷ Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 129.

³⁴⁸ *Han shu* (8.263)

³⁴⁹ Bielenstein, *Bureaucracy*, 125.

³⁵⁰ Moonsil Lee, “Dietary Conditions and Differential Access to Food Resources among the Various Classes During the Han Period,” Thesis (University of Pittsburgh, 2004), 51-54.

Bestowals” from Zhangjiashan. Slip number 290 clearly states, “In all cases that match a bestowal but the office does not possess the actual objects, give cash according to the fair market price.” With this statute, we can assume that not only gift food but also other forms of food redistribution were plausibly converted to cash, since not every county could access all the food resources it needed as stipulated in the statutes. In particular, the event of bestowing a cow per certain number of households seems to have been more likely converted to cash payment because of the scarcity and the significance of working cows in the agricultural society. Therefore, even though people were supposed to be given food by the regulations, they frequently received cash instead. However, since the value of “fair market price” was not fixed and determined by the local authorities, it can be assumed that there were possible manipulations in the process of estimating and matching market price, which resulted in distributing less than the regulation and leaving more for the court instead.

The examination of the food redistribution system in early imperial China shows that it was ideally designed to benefit all the people under heaven “equally” within the framework of the social hierarchy, as well as providing extra sources to those of lower status and to people in distress. However, it seems that the ideal and the effectiveness of the regulations were frequently out of sync, as the laws were applied flexibly, and human greed worked every possible step of food redistribution. Nevertheless, the food redistribution system established during the Qin and Han periods contributed to keeping Han society stable for more than four hundred years without major chaos caused by “unequal” redistribution, since rulers used food to control as well as comfort all the people in the empire.

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