

EMPEROR TANG TAIZONG'S PLAYBOOK:
JIN SHU AND HOW TO USE STANDARD HISTORIES

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation explores what the content and structure of the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of Western and Eastern Jin Dynasties, 265–420) compilation revealed about political choices and self-representation of Tang Taizong (r. 626–649), the second emperor of the Tang dynasty (618–907). Emperor Taizong, himself of non-Chinese origins, was concerned with the question of legitimacy and future of his rule. By scrutinizing and closely interacting with the textual tradition, Taizong had sought to justify his right to rule and project an idealized image of himself as a righteous ruler. He standardized the methodical history writing and initiated a massive compilation project of the earlier dynastic histories. For one of them, the *Jin shu*, he personally wrote critical evaluations in the end of several chapters. Imperial participation in a scholarly compilation implied the importance and specific purpose attached to the work and the role of historiography in the political establishment.

The newly-established regimes, Jin and Tang, shared a number of similarities: a violent power takeover, unification of the empire, difficulties with the neighboring non-Han population, and problematic choice of an heir. The *Jin shu* provided the emperor with an advantageous, comparative framework between the two regimes in dealing with identical sensitive issues; where the mistakes of the Jin government led to its fall, Taizong's decisions, albeit problematic, resulted in a peaceful reign. The *Jin shu* narrative of imperial failure corroborated the Tang emperor's self-attribution as a perfect ruler who chose the right course of action for the sake of the country's stability. The dissertation discusses how the similarities reflected main issues of concern of a newly founded Tang dynasty and revealed inconsistencies in Tang's rhetoric of rationalization that challenged the uniformity of a purported portrait of Taizong and his reign. I argue that Tang

Taizong's continuous efforts to represent the idealized picture of his own rule and defend his choices essentially reflected his insecurities about his political legitimacy and self-identity.

To my parents and grandparents

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“It should have been finished long ago, but in public life I have no leisure, so it is dragged on until now.”¹

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¹ 久應竟，在公無暇，故至今日。SSXY 25.25. Translation from Mather, p. 444.

two-hour debates on one phrase or word. I would also like to thank Jakob Pöllath and his mother, Raimunda, who generously let me stay in her house during my time in Munich and was happy to talk to me about anything. Support and comments from the colleagues from the European group on Early Medieval China helped me to greatly improve the quality of this project as well as the future projects. Becoming part of the European I largely owe to my fortuitous encounter with Jakub Hruby whose energy in organizing the events and interest in finding new people is never abating. Without him I would never meet Mark Strange whose encouragement and never-ending ideas I treasure very much. I am also immensely grateful for Keith Knapp, never tiring organizer of the Early Medieval China group in the USA, who was kind enough to invite me to present at the EMC annual meetings. His and other EMC group members' provided valuable comments and suggestions for my work and research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- JS* Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648) *et al.* *Jin shu* 晉書, 10 v. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974.
- JSCD* Liu Naihe 劉乃和 (1918-1998), ed. *Jin shu cidian* 晉書辭典. Jinan: Shangdong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001.
- Mather Mather, Richard B., trans. *A New Account of Tale of the World by Liu I-Ch'ing with Commentary by Liu Chiün*, 2nd ed., rev. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002.
- SSXY* Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫. *Shishuo xinyu jianshu* 世說新語箋疏. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2015.

For cited translations I have changed the Romanization style from Wade-Giles to *pinyin*.

INTRODUCTION: TAIZONG'S *STAATSRÖMAN*

The success will be his who follows the changing times.¹
 — *Wenxin diaolong*

The reign of the Tang Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (598-649, r. 626-649), given name Li Shiming 李世民, is considered a paragon age in the Chinese historical tradition. Upon ascending the throne, Taizong proclaimed his reign as Zhenguan 貞觀 era (627-650), during which he achieved success in political and economic spheres, vastly expanded the territory, and made Tang a dominant power in East and Central Asia. He implemented administrative and military reforms and made changes in law. The Tang dynasty was regarded as a golden age in Chinese history with successive dynasties striving to imitate its success and, particularly, of the emperor Taizong. His image of a powerful political leader was also strongly associated with a patronage of literature and writing. He was famous for his interaction with the textual tradition in a variety of its manifestations.²

Taizong carefully scrutinized the written tradition of his predecessors, and made use of the written word in his unification and rule legitimization efforts, in comparative framework with his own rule, and in an attempt to reflect upon and form a specific view of his own legacy.³ In the formative years of the Tang dynasty, Emperor Taizong established the first historiographical office, the Shiguan 史館, to ensure bureaucratic control of historical records of his reign and to compile

¹ Translation by Vincent Shih, *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1983), p. 325. 趨時必果, Liu Xie's 劉勰 (465-522), *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2015), 29.186.

² Taizong's posthumous name was Emperor Wen 文皇帝. Taizong's official biography is in Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) and Song Qi (998-1062), eds., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 2.23-50.

³ The importance of the use of writing for the purpose of state propaganda and unified government-sanctioned perspective were identified in many dictatorships, and Stalin, for example, had noted himself that the writers were engineers of the human soul.

and standardize histories of pre-Tang dynasties. Three years after Taizong's ascent to the rule, as early as 629, concurrently with the foundation of the historiographical office, the emperor commissioned a compilation of five dynastic histories (*zhengshi* 正史).⁴ Not only did his reign witness the highest number of the dynastic histories compiled but Taizong's reading and commenting on earlier histories and canonical works was also well-documented. In addition, he was an avid supporter of court poetry and composed himself.⁵

Establishment of the historiographic office was part of the active efforts towards standardization and consolidation that were evident in historiography, commentarial tradition, and even calligraphic styles. The idea of *zheng* 正 (standard, correct or standardized) signified the overall tendency. Martin Hanke in his work on Western and Eastern Jin historiography explores the flourishing of regional biographies commissioned by wealthy families during the time. The sheer number of private historical compilations produced a variety of perspectives by the time of Tang. The abundance of perspectives prompted the newly formed dynasty to pursue a unified state-sanctioned viewpoint in any kind of manifestation by trimming down the ones that did not fit the state ideal. For example, the discussions of legitimacy in Jin histories compiled earlier were not centrally controlled, and potentially might have undermined the Tang unified rhetoric and accepted

⁴ Text of the edict is in Wang Pu 王溥 (922-982), comp., *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), j. 63, p. 1288. Five dynastic histories were published in 636 and included *Liang shu* 梁書 (History of Liang, 502-587), *Bei Qi shu* 北齊書 (History of Northern Qi, 550-577), *Chen shu* 陳書 (History of Chen, 557-589), *Zhou shu* 周書 (History of Zhou, 557-581), and *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of Sui, 581-618). Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois Royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au III^e siècle* (Paris: Belles lettres, 2010), p. 82. On the establishment of historiographical office in Tang see Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 13-20.

⁵ In Jack Chen's interpretation, conscious efforts of court poetry writing served as yet another way of constructing Taizong's self-image. This dissertation follows similar approach of equating emperor's interaction with the historical narrative tradition to efforts in building a specific image of one's rule. Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

and promulgated perspective.⁶ The newly-compiled standard histories were the only ones to be considered correct and, thus, consulted, as they were sanctioned by the state.

The standardization (正) of commentary to the Five Classics underwent similar process. Tang Taizong's project on publishing the official standard commentaries on the Five Classics 五經正義 picked the representative commentators for each work and, based on them, assigned essentially a single authoritative reading for each work.⁷ Other commentarial traditions could be considered problematic due to their number and alternative interpretations they presented, which could potentially contradict and undermine the view accepted and sanctioned by the state.⁸ Writing itself was unified and standardized. Tang *kai* 唐楷 or the standard script of the Tang dynasty was largely developed from the famous Eastern Jin calligrapher Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303-361), the most beloved calligrapher of Tang Taizong, style of standard script (*kaifa* 楷法). Tang *kai* was a model script for government documents, inscriptions on epitaphs or steles, and manuscripts.⁹ Emperor Taizong was not an innovator in recognizing the importance of imperial patronage over the written word.¹⁰ However, he pioneered the practice of consciously interacting with the textual tradition as the ruler in China.

⁶ Martin Hanke, *Geschichtsschreibung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Zentrale und Region am Beispiel der Jin-Zeit (265-420)* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2002), p. 339.

⁷ Yan Shigu established the standardized texts of the canonical books and Kong Yingda with other scholars wrote commentary and completed first draft in 642. Chaussende, p. 81.

⁸ Pauli Tashima in her article "Fragments Speak: Reexamining the Rejected Pre-Du Yu Commentaries on the *Zuozhuan*" *CLEAR* 39 (2018): 1-39 discussed the approach on the example of the standardized *Zuozhuan* 左傳. William Nienhauser also pointed out that Tang was against Western and Eastern Jin versions of classics and histories and wanted to move away from the commentaries written during the Six Dynasties by "correcting" 正 them and compiling their own official versions of the texts.

⁹ Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (596-658), a court calligrapher 侍書, was the only one in charge to identify Wang Xizhi's forgeries and discern "genuine" pieces. Later, he was involved in compiling historical records and rose to the position of a chancellor. Ruth Sheng, "The Development of Chinese Calligraphy in Relation to Buddhism and Politics during the Early Tang Era" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2011), p. 67-72.

¹⁰ There are numerous examples of world leaders taking upon the art of writing. The art was not accessible to everyone but the written word was widely recognized as one of the powerful instruments in the successful

Tang Taizong had achieved a reunification of China and consolidation of rule after years of turmoil and disunion. It came with a high price and questionable legitimacy of the regime: instigating rebellion against the Sui 隋 dynasty (581-618), murdering his two elder brothers, one of whom was a designated heir apparent, to get the position of crown prince, and forcing his father to yield the throne to him. The assassination of Taizong's brothers in 626 became known as the Xuanwu Gate 玄武門 incident.¹¹ The violent rise to power as well as mixed Sino-Turkish origins of the family were matters of concern that Taizong was well aware of. No wonder many associate Taizong's rule with the constant effort to justify the newly founded Tang dynasty and his right to rule. Many also point out the important role of Taizong's reforms and rule legitimization efforts in alleviation of his questionable ascent to power in the early years of his reign.

The positive changes and stability of the regime contributed to the creation of a particular image of Taizong: the emperor with the ideal ruler-minister relationship, extolled by the government officials and future generations of scholar-officials. *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (hereafter, *ZZTJ*) reflected the harmonious union of emperor and his ministers in the entry under year 628, in which Taizong was portrayed as humble and attentive ruler. [Tang Taizong]: "People say that the Son of Heaven is the highest sovereign and is thus afraid of nothing. I disagree. I fear

political regime. Leonid Brezhnev, a Soviet leader for almost twenty years, even got a prestigious Lenin prize for literature for the three volumes of memoirs he never wrote. A joke went like this, Brezhnev: "If they [his memoirs] are so popular, maybe I should read them, too." More examples of the twentieth century tyrants and their literary attempts are from Daniel Kalder, "Tradition and the individual tyrant. On the writing of dictators: the 'strange literary detritus of the twentieth century,'" *Times Literary Supplement*, May 18 2018, pp. 14-15.

¹¹ This gate was at a strategic location at the center of the north wall of Chang'an and opened the way to the Palace City. Future emperor Taizong spread a false rumor about his brother who, in order to defend himself, proceeded to the court. With twelve of his most trusted followers Li Shimin waited in ambush and killed his elder brother. Both of his brothers' sons and the sons' descent lines were all consequently executed as well. Howard J. Wechsler, "The Founding of the T'ang Dynasty: Kao-tsu (reign 618-626)" in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 182-7.

Heaven who supervises me, and the ministers who look up to me. Cautious and attentive [in discharging my duties], I am still afraid of my failing to act on Heaven's will and to live up to people's expectations." Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643),¹² rejoiced at his master's thoughts: "This is indeed the gist of achieving good governance. I wish your majesty could always think so."¹³

Just two years after coming to power Taizong also described his idealistic views on the proper governing in *Jin jing* 金鏡 (Golden Mirror). The work was directed at his ministers and structured for the purpose of promoting Taizong's image as a benevolent and magnanimous ruler. While it was written directly to describe what it meant to rule the empire, *Jin jing* was very impersonal and far from the actual implemented policies during the reign of Taizong. Similar to propaganda, a work such as *Jin jing*, was part of legitimization efforts as the country was still stabilizing and not yet in peace.

However, Taizong's efforts in maintaining an image of an ideal ruler were only valid for a certain time. After some time, when the rule stabilized and country achieved peace and order, Taizong started to deviate from the name and fame he established to be known to future generations.¹⁴ Because of that, Taizong's rule is often divided into two distinct periods: before and after mid 630-s. The first period is associated with the monarch's inexperience and motivation to make things right: achieve stability in administration and consolidate his rule. Therefore, he carefully listened to his closest ministers and strove for frugality and modesty in his personal

¹² Wei Zheng used to serve as the adviser for Li Jiancheng 李建成 (589-626), one of Taizong's murdered brothers. He was involved in a number of scholarly projects and was one of the editors for the first group of dynastic histories. For one the most comprehensive study on Wei Zheng and his dealings with Taizong see Howard J. Wechsler, *Mirror to the Son of Heaven* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

¹³ Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), 192.6048. Translation from Wang Zhenping, "Ideas concerning Diplomacy and Foreign Policy under the Tang Emperors Gaozu and Taizong," *Asia Major* 22 (2009): 278.

¹⁴ Denis Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor: T'ang T'ai-Tsung's Vision of His Role," *Asia Major*, 9, (1996): p. 5.

undertakings. During the second period, the emperor gained confidence from the success in his political decisions and economic policies. The empire was growing. At that point, there was a change in Taizong's behavior. Much to the ministers' disapproval, he was described as indulging in imperial hunts, being away from the palace for a long time and commissioning large-scale construction projects.¹⁵ But whether or not Taizong had obediently followed the guidance of his ministers and listened to the advice of scholar-officials, his close interaction with them and allowing them to some extent to remonstrate with the Son of Heaven helped to propel a majority of the decisions on Taizong's behalf.

Towards the end of his reign and ten years later after the publication of the first group of the dynastic histories and, in 646, Tang Taizong issued the imperial edict calling for the compilation of the *Jin shu* 晉書 (History of Western and Eastern Jin, 265-420).¹⁶ The call for compilation coincided with a number of critical moments in Taizong's reign and situation at the court. Just three years earlier Taizong had faced a succession crisis and had his younger son replace his eldest as crown prince.¹⁷ The order also came right after the failed military campaign to Goguryeo 高句麗.¹⁸ At that time emperor was at an advanced age and he also probably felt that his reign was coming to an end.¹⁹ Given the circumstances, it is reasonable to assume that the emperor started

¹⁵ Wechsler, "The Founding of the T'ang Dynasty," pp. 190-2.

¹⁶ As my base edition, I will use Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648) *et al.*, *Jin shu* 晉書, 10 v. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974). Hereafter, *JS*. There is a forthcoming Zhonghua edition of the *Jin shu* that will be published in their newly edited and annotated dynastic-history series.

¹⁷ The final decision was very much the result of one of Taizong's closest associate and brother-in-law, Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659). More in Chapter Two.

¹⁸ Taizong was adamant in proceeding with the campaign despite his advisors' attempts to dissuade. More in Chapters Three and Four.

¹⁹ Wechsler, "The Founding of the T'ang Dynasty," p. 239: in his last years Taizong "contracted an incapacitating disease which exhausted his strength."

to become anxious about the stability of his rule: emperor's legacy and the future of Tang dynasty.²⁰

At about the same time of *JS* compilation, Taizong also wrote *Difan* 帝範 (Model for an Emperor). The *Difan*, addressed to the future emperor, was used by Taizong to reflect on his reign. But, once again, due to the nature and imagined audience of the work, *Difan* was idealist and impersonal, very similar to the structure and content of *Jin jing*, that Taizong wrote in the beginning of his rule. Unlike the two works, the original purpose of the compilation of the *JS* was different, and, therefore, while Taizong was not intending to reflect directly on his rule or himself; it is easier to decipher Taizong's own voice and realities of being an emperor. In comparing his views and ideas as expounded in the two purportedly self-reflecting works and the *JS*, one can distinguish slight inconsistencies of his views on rulership and his less successful predecessors that reflected more closely the reality of being the Chinese emperor.²¹

The peculiar timing and circumstances of the *JS* compilation point to the special relationship the emperor had with the *Jin shu* project. The *Jin shu*, ordered separately from the first group of the dynastic histories, was the first dynastic historical compilation done by a group of scholars. The scholars were also part of Taizong's coterie and responsible for advising the emperor on a majority of political decisions. Emperor Taizong did not only instigate the project by issuing the edict "Xiu *Jin shu* zhao" 修晉書詔 (The Edict on *Jin shu*'s Compilation) but was also personally

²⁰ In 646, he officially denounced Buddhism and called it "a vulgar and futile faith which had misled emperors in the past, and held out false hopes for the people." Before he was tolerating it and not attacking directly. Howard Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator" in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 219.

²¹ In either *Difan* or *Jinjing* or any other written works by Taizong there is no mention of the period of disunion directly preceding Taizong's reign, Sui dynasty or fall of Western Jin. Twitchett (1996), p. 93

invested in it by writing four commentarial essays or *zhi* 制 (imperial pronouncements)²² that were written at the end of four chapters in the *JS*.²³ Two of them were evaluations of the two emperors of Western Jin, Sima Yi 司馬懿²⁴ (179-251) and Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236-290, r. 266-290) in the “Imperial Annals” 帝紀 section.²⁵ Two were in “Biographies” 列傳 section. One in the end of the account on poet Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303) and his brother Lu Yun 陸雲 (262-303).²⁶ And the other one on the famous Eastern Jin calligrapher Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361).²⁷ Based on these four essays, *JS* was the only Chinese dynastic history to receive the designation of “imperial compilation” (*yuzhuan* 御撰).²⁸

By drawing analogies with the Western Jin and by analyzing the content and mood of the essays Taizong had written for the *Jin shu* as well as the political climate at the time, modern scholars came up with a number of theories for the emperor’s reasons and motivations to not only write these particular essays, but also to start off the entire project of the Jin history compilation.²⁹ The dissertation will attempt to address potential reasons or motivation for compiling *JS* based on the similarities and critical moments in the Tang Taizong era. Generally speaking, there are four

²² Translation used by Anthony Fairbank in his dissertation “Ssu-Ma I (179-251) Wei Statesman and Chin Founder. An Historiographical Inquiry” (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1994).

²³ Most of the chapters in the *JS* each had a summarizing comment written by one of the editorial staff of the *JS* (“Official Historian remarks:” *shichen yue* 史臣曰) and encomium (*zan* 贊) in the end. The ones with the evaluations written by Taizong did not have them. More on the *JS* structure and composition in Chapter 1.

²⁴ Posthumously honored as the Emperor Xuan of Jin 晉宣帝 by his grandson, Sima Yan, Emperor Wu of Jin 晉武帝.

²⁵ *JS* 1.20-22 and *JS* 3.81-82.

²⁶ Taizong comments mostly focused on Lu Ji though *JS*.54.1487-88.

²⁷ *JS* 80.2107-8.

²⁸ *JS*, p. 1. *JS*’s later editions would be accompanied by an epigraph: “The imperial compilation of Emperor Wen Tang Taizong” 唐太宗文皇帝御撰.

²⁹ The list of the following reasons is based on Cang Xiuliang 倉修良, ed., *Zhongguo shixue mingzhu pingjie* 中國史學名著評介, v. 1 (Jinan: Shandong jiaoyu chubanshe, 2006), p. 494-496. Some of the reasons also discussed and summarized by Yue Chunzhi 岳純之, “Tang Taizong yu *Jin shu*” 唐太宗與晉書, *Lishi jiaoxue* 4 (2003): 30-33.

major groups of reasoning discussed. This dissertation would use the basic ideas in each of the group as organizing principle for the chapters.

1. Improvement

The first group of reasons had to do directly with the text of the edict itself and reiterated what Taizong wrote himself about not being satisfied with the previous versions of Jin history.³⁰ When one looks at Taizong's edict ordering the *JS* compilation "Xiu *Jin shu* zhao," there is a sense of heightened historiographical awareness. Taizong brings to attention a number of factors of a well-written history: content, style, angle of view, selection of historical sources, etc. Ironically, while Taizong's self-proclaimed motivation to revise Jin history was based on his dissatisfaction with the existing versions, the Tang version of the *Jin shu* did not receive a positive feedback either, even until today, partly reiterating similar issues that Taizong listed in his edict.

Chapter One will analyze the edict calling for the *JS* compilation and the list of aspects for proper historical work to address the features of early Tang historiography thought and the circumstances of the *Jin shu*. It will particularly focus on how Taizong's claimed perspective on what history should be, his view and treatment of historical events as well as contemporary political situation reflected in the structure and composition of the *JS*. Taizong's reforms and reevaluation of historical records brought about the formation of conscious knowledge on the workings of the Chinese historical tradition and interpretation of history. The first critical works on historiography in China, which were written in Tang, debated what proper written history ought to be using *JS*, among other examples, as a failed experiment. The chapter will evaluate the reception history of the *JS* compilation that pointed out a number of problems and shortcomings

³⁰ More on this and reception of the *JS* in Chapter One.

of the final *JS* compilation. *JS*'s compilatory nature and variability of its perspectives as well as how much of the text was copied and simply stitched together by the editors revealed that Taizong's call for turning it into a work of a "fine historian" (*liang shi* 良史) was barely addressed.³¹ While Taizong might have valued specific features of the historical work and had a view on what the standard history ought to be, Taizong's standards did not seem to materialize in the final compilation.

2. Legitimization

The second group of comments, and prominent scholars, such as Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890-1969), focused on imperial intention to prove and solidify the dynasty's origins through the *JS* compilation.³² As mentioned above, Taizong invested a lot of effort to standardize the textual tradition in the beginning of his reign. Compilation of the standard imperially-sanctioned version of Western and Eastern Jin history could have been part of the unification, standardization, and rule legitimization tendencies. Compiling and incorporating records of the south was to unite the country not only in a geographic sense but also in cultural and textual traditions; it was an attempt to appeal to the southern elites. Similarly, since the *JS* was the only standard history to include a separate section on the records of the foreign regimes, it also reflected the same tendency of appropriating the history of the ones to make claims on their territory and cultural belonging. In

³¹ The patterns of usage in *Jin shu* are much more similar to the texts compiled in the third and fourth centuries, such as *San guozhi* 三國志 (The Records of the Three Kingdoms) or *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語. It suggests that the final version of the *JS* relied on much earlier texts where the content was not significantly altered compared to the earlier versions of the Jin history that served as *JS* source material. Evan Vincent Nicoll-Johnson, "Fridges and Seams: Boundaries of Erudition in Early Medieval China" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2017), p. 343.

³² Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, "Tongzhi jieji zhi shizu ji qi shengqian 統治階級之氏族及其升遷" in *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulungao* 唐代政治史述論稿 (Shanghai, 1947), 1-49.

this case, such legitimizing maneuvers were expressed in Taizong's universalizing claims of love and care for everyone in his domain ("Chinese and Yi are one family" 華夷一家).

Chapter Two will investigate the act of writing history as a strategy of dynastic legitimization and use of the *JS* as an alternate medium for the emperor to leave his legacy. It will address Taizong's analysis of the factors that contributed to the fall of once-unified Jin empire and focus on Taizong's evaluation of Sima Yi and Sima Yan. *JS* provided a comparative framework for Taizong's justification of his actions but also reflected the anxiety for his legacy as he was seeking confirmation of the strategies he undertook in the questionable choices of the past.

Being keenly aware of the historical precedents, Tang Taizong, the second emperor of Tang, could not help but compare his takeover from the Sui dynasty to that of Western Jin taking over its precedent, Cao-Wei 曹魏 (220-266), and the political decisions of the first ruler of a unified regime, Sima Yan, to his own. Taizong never mentioned the similarities with his own forced rule takeover and the parallel mechanisms of legitimization in case of Sima Yi.³³ Taizong criticized Sima Yi who, in Taizong's evaluation, was a disloyal subject and overthrew a previous regime. At the same time, Taizong absolved himself from blame by implying that, unlike in the case of Sima Yi overthrowing Cao-Wei, it was time for Sui to be replaced by Tang. Similarly, in case of Xuanwu Gate incident, Taizong was righteous in his decision to disqualify the unfit ruler (despite the fact that it was his own brother).

The dilemma of justifying the choice of heir was relevant in Taizong's evaluation of Sima Yan, not only in claiming to be the right candidate in case of Xuanwu Gate but also in justifying the change for his successor. While both of the states had achieved a reunification of the country,

³³ One of the mechanisms, establishing links to the ancestry in the Han dynasty, Taizong appropriated for himself, and this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

Taizong identified aspects of Sima Yan's rule after Jin unification that were detrimental to the country's unity and peace leading to the country's demise. In Taizong's analysis, Sima Yan focused on peaceful domestic policy rather than active preparedness, and his wrong choice of heir led to having wrong people around Sima Yan and the next emperor, which led to internecine wars and final defeat by foreign invaders. The analysis of Sima Yan's poor choices, with a focus on the wrong choice of successor, amplified Taizong's achievements in the similar situations. Tang Taizong took advantage of the negative example, now of Sima Yan, whose choice of crown prince, while following the succession rules, was one of the reasons for the fall of Western Jin. In comparison, Taizong's decision, done for the government's sake and future of the dynasty, while not following the rules of succession, had saved the country.

Overall, through his depiction of Sima Yi and Sima Yan, Taizong implied an image of himself as an exemplar ruler, who did not make the same choices under similar circumstances. By listing their mistakes, Taizong highlighted his own achievements that contributed to the solidification of his rule. Taizong's attention to the specific aspects of Sima Yan and Sima Yi's strategies and decisions, however, identified the areas of concern for himself and unexpressed search of approval for his rule.

3. Edification

The third group of comments stressed the purpose of the *JS* compilation, as a standard history, to teach moral lessons from the past reflecting a general trend in traditional historical writing: function of history as "praise or blame" (*baobian* 褒貶). By highlighting good deeds and disparaging unwanted behavior, histories were thought of a moral compass for its readers, namely, rulers and ministers. In the edict on *JS* compilation, Taizong pointed out how well the ideals of

“praise and blame” were conveyed in the five standard histories compiled in the beginning of the Tang dynasty:

As for the Liang, the Chen and the house of Gao, I ordered that their histories be brought to completion; the Zhou and the Sui too now have a clear account. None of these works fails to display the good, and malign the bad, for they bring about a pristine redolence of the age. In praising good, and reprimanding evil, they demonstrate the exemplary institutes of the Hundred Kings.³⁴

至若梁陳高氏。朕命勒成，惟周及隋，亦同甄錄。莫不彰善癉惡，振一代之清芬；褒德懲凶，備百王之令典。³⁵

Therefore, the Jin history was analyzed as an edifying text in light of the contemporary events.

The reason why Taizong ordered the compilation was to use the examples in the *JS* to warn and educate his ministers and future rulers: emperor’s subjects should be loyal to the emperor and not plot against one’s ruler. Similarly, Michael Rogers and some other scholars also argued that Taizong’s ministers and editors of *JS* used the compilation to caution Tang Taizong against military expansionism and provide other indirect criticism of Taizong’s policies in the second half of Taizong’s rule.³⁶

Chapter Three will explore how the closest ministers of Taizong and, concurrently, *JS* editorial staff made use of the *JS* compilation to express more freely their views on contemporaneous regime by their reading of and comparison to the Jin history. As Taizong was personally invested

³⁴ Translation from Fairbank, “Ssu-Ma I (179-251) Wei Statesman and Chin Founder. An Historiographical Inquiry,” p. 257.

³⁵ Song Minqiu 宋敏求, comp., *Tang dazhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 81.467. It was written in third intercalary month of the twentieth year of the Zhenguan era (April 646). The text of this edict is also preserved in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 and as an appendix in *Jin shu: JS*, pp. 3305-06. Fairbank, p. 257, n. 61.

³⁶ Rogers went as far as to claim that the decisive Battle of Fei River in 383 between Eastern Jin and Fu Jian’s 苻堅 Former Qin was purposely exaggerated and reconstructed by *JS* editors to prevent Taizong from further military campaigns to Korean peninsula. Michael Rogers, *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 40-41.

in writing the four commentarial essays in the *JS*, his ministers similarly used section of “Official Historian remarks” 史臣曰 as a safe space to remonstrate with Taizong and his policies and views.

Taizong’s interactions with his famous ministers, Wei Zheng, Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579-648) and Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659), are well documented. Zhangsun Wuji³⁷ was influential in Taizong’s final choice of the heir. Wei Zheng, influential in the first half of Taizong’s reign, and Fang Xuanling, the main editor of the *Jin shu*, and Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (596-658),³⁸ a court diarist and imperial counselor, both influential at the end of Taizong’s rule, tried to contain Taizong’s military aspirations.³⁹ Towards the end of Taizong’s rule, the dynamics between Taizong and his advisers had changed. While Tang Taizong valued the importance of the advice of his coterie, propagating himself the importance of listening to a wise minister, in reality, he did not follow the idea entirely.

In the *JS* narrative of the events, the minister’s voice and judgement becomes essential in critical situations and either contributes to prosperity of the Jin dynasty or leads to its demise. The *JS* editors, who wrote summarizing comments in the end of the chapters, picked up on the importance of advice of the high official in governing the country. They switch the focus from the emperor bearing responsibility for key decisions (Taizong’s perspective) to the ministers who not only played a crucial role in the final choice of a crown prince but also in a number of critical political decisions. In commenting on the *JS* narrative, Taizong’s ministers make use of the edifying function of the historical work and elevate their status and significance in regime’s

³⁷ His sister was Taizong’s wife, Empress Zhangsun. Zhangsun Wuji was one of the Taizong’s closest associates in the Xuanwu Gate incident and later one of the major advisors to Taizong.

³⁸ He resisted Taizong’s influence in Tang imperial court records. Wechsler “T’ ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator,” p. 198.

³⁹ They also supported Taizong’s son, future emperor, Gaozong 高宗 (r. 649-683), who was also against expansionism.

success. Similarly, while Taizong extolled the ruler-subject relationship and warned against the disloyal subjects, the edification purpose was merely a veil to express more individual sentiments. As the emperor would never admit to weakness and being afraid, likewise, the ministers would not dare to explicitly express their criticism of the Son of Heaven.

The *JS* narrative actually presented a much complex choice-making strategies in the world of uncertainty and danger. But the commentarial layer from early Tang revealed simplistic and standardized understanding of the situation. By reflecting on the reasons for the fall of Jin dynasty and interpretation of the relevant accounts in the past, Taizong and his ministers-historians used the reading of *JS* as an indirect expression and justification of their own actions and behavior. Their comments revealed their ideas on ideal government style and aspects that are advantageous to the flourishing of Tang. The end-of-chapter comments urged for attention to domestic affairs, in contrast to Taizong (see Chapter Two), who was criticizing the passive efforts of Sima Yan.

4. Ancestry

Lastly, it was suggested that Taizong used the *JS* project to trace his lineage to the Han dynasty and prominent Li clans to prove his origins and Han ancestry.⁴⁰ Taizong's origins were a matter of principle as he was establishing his prominence and the prominence of his family versus the great families from north-eastern China, so-called four surnames (*sixing* 四姓). They obtained their status during the fifth century competing with the north-western families of the sixth century

⁴⁰ Chen Yinke was also an avid supporter of the links of Taizong's ancestry to Li clan in the Han dynasty, and argued for Han origins of the paternal line of Taizong's Li clan. He wrote a total of four articles to prove it. For example, Chen Yinke 陳寅恪, "Li-Tang shizu zhi tuice 李唐氏族之推測," *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology Academia Sinica* 3 (1931): 39-48. More detailed analysis in Sanping Chen, "Succession Struggle and the Ethnic Identity of the Tan Imperial House," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6 (1996): 379-405.

from which Taizong originated.⁴¹ The *Jin shu* presented a discursive ground and unofficial genealogy to trace the origins of the four prominent clans along with establishing Taizong's progeniture. The actual competition was mirrored in the *Jin shu* and used to justify central position of the Taizong's family. The chief ministers, such as Fang Xuanling and Wei Zheng, however, still did not recognize the preeminence of Li clan and married into members of four surnames families.⁴²

Chapter Four will continue to explore the dynamic between the emperor and his officials but with a focus on Taizong's view on foreigners and how it was embodied in the *JS* narrative. The chancellor and main editor of the *Jin shu*, Fang Xuanling, was against Taizong's military expansionism and tried to dissuade him from taking on the campaign against Goguryeo.⁴³ Wei Zheng was against the resettlement of the Eastern Turks in the Chinese territory south of the Yellow River, and used examples from Western Jin history (before the final version of *JS* was completed) to remind Taizong of potential disastrous consequences. The chapter will survey the significance of the *Jin shu* compilation to emperor Taizong based on the emperor's mixed ethnic descent and his anxiety about the legitimacy of his rule and its future. The *Jin shu* could have served both as a proof of lineage and as a connection to prominent northern Li clans.⁴⁴ The chapter will infer Taizong's conflicted views on foreigners, compare them to his own foreign policy, and connect them to the crisis of self-identity.

⁴¹ Twitchett, "The Composition of the T'ang ruling class" in A.F. Wright and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Perspectives on the T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 47-85. Wechsler "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator," p. 212.

⁴² Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator," p. 213.

⁴³ Zhangsun Wuji and Chu Suiliang were also against.

⁴⁴ Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty*, p. 14.

As much as history is considered as edification and education, the conscious efforts of Taizong and his coterie and specific circumstances of *Jin shu*'s final production remind us that the history is created.⁴⁵ And through the commentarial and editing activity of the *JS* committee, including emperor Taizong, one learns more about practices and political ideals of early Tang rather than Western and Eastern Jin.⁴⁶ While it was easy for Taizong to criticize the shortcomings of the previous rules, specifically Western Jin, reading of the *JS* revealed that he was also keenly aware of the potential dangers for his own. While many of Taizong's policies did contribute to a stable growth, it was the lack of extreme events that did not bring his state down. For example, failure of his fiscal policy that was carried out went unnoticeable because of relative success in other areas.⁴⁷

In his writings, Taizong had promoted the idea of the power of human: the emperor bears responsibility in his choices in regard to the future of its empire. He denied portents and symbols any role in successfully governing the country. One of the big factors that helped his empire survive and prosper, unlike the Jin dynasty, was adherence to decisions of practical value and not a prescribed solution. Taizong and his ministers adjusted to the circumstances and made timely decisions based on the situation. Taizong's overcoming of Eastern Turks was partly due to the internal strife within their state and natural disasters.

Jin history and *JS* version of it provided a potential scenario on how the events could unwrap for the Tang rule: a once finally unified regime could fall apart after a sequence of wrong decisions. Taizong was evaluating current political climate and looking in the future. All potential things that could be deemed wrong in the period of Taizong's reign, such as his violent takeover and decisions

⁴⁵ Hayden White (1928-2018), *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1975).

⁴⁶ "JS agenda of seventh century political agenda than history of the fourth century." *Oxford History of Historical Writing Volume 1: Beginnings to AD 600*, ed. Andrew Feldherr and Grant Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 21.

⁴⁷ Wechsler "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator," p. 209.

on heir dilemma, turned out not to bring the collapse of the dynasty but, on the contrary, led to a flourishing and harmonious reign. The major problematic trends of the rulership in Chinese history were explicitly laid out in the *JS* and, framed by commentary of Taizong and his coterie, further emphasized. Taizong and the *JS* editorial staff reacting to them in a certain way, revealed self-awareness of the newly-founded regime and sensitivity of the issues for it. There was a need to provide explanation, reconfirm and justify the choices.

It is hard to ignore how similar the contemporary Tang political situation was to that of the Western Jin. The newly-established Western Jin and the early Tang dynasty shared a number of similarities in their historical developments: violent power takeover, country's unification, issues with the neighboring non-Han population, and the difficult choice of an heir. The *Jin shu* provided Taizong with an advantageous comparative framework between the two regimes in dealing with identical sensitive issues; where the mistakes of the Jin government led to its fall, and Taizong's decisions, albeit problematic, resulted in a peaceful reign. At the same time, Taizong's turn to history, recording of history, and reevaluation of history allowed him to self-reflect and examine his own reign. Perhaps, the emperor's writing of four essays in the *Jin shu* provided a needed ground for justification for his own actions as well an opportunity to seek peace with himself. It might as well have also reflected his own personal interests and hobbies.

The *Jin shu* narrative of imperial failure corroborated the Tang emperor's self-attribution as a perfect ruler who chose the right course of action for the sake of the country's stability.⁴⁸ Similarly, the *JS* provided its editorial staff, who were Taizong's close ministers and associates, an unintentional ground to voice their unobstructed opinions on Taizong's way of governing and reflect on contemporary situation. The similarities reflected the main issues of concern of a newly

⁴⁸ Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty*, pp. 149-153.

founded Tang dynasty and revealed inconsistencies in Tang's rhetoric of rationalization that challenged the uniformity of a purported portrait of Taizong and his reign.

CHAPTER ONE: COMPILATION OF THE *JIN SHU*

Confucius said: “Dong Hu was a fine scribe of antiquity,
his method of writing was not to conceal”¹

— *Zuo zhuan*

The *Jin shu* is one of the official Twenty-Four dynastic histories spanning a period of Western and Eastern Jin dynasties (265-420). It is a work of a peculiar nature both because of the period it covers and the conditions under which it was compiled. Official compilation of *Jin shu* (hereafter, *JS*) took place, in the Tang dynasty, three hundred years later after the events it described. It was an important work for the Tang Emperor who purportedly wanted to rectify and consolidate the earlier versions of the Jin history but, more possibly, wanted to gain lessons from a knowledge of an era of great turmoil, since the Tang was emerging from such an era. The regime symbolized for the early Tang the last time both north and south had been reunited under one rule and also the dynasty in which the Tang imperial clan Li 李 rose to prominence.² It was the first dynastic history to be officially compiled by a group of scholars. And while the earlier histories took much longer, the committee histories were hurried out under imperial impatience, and *JS* was completed in just two years in 648.³

¹ 孔子曰：董狐，古之良史也，書法不隱。Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed., *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), Xuan 2, p. 663. Translation from Stephen Durrant, Wai-ye Li and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the “Spring and Autumn Annals.”* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), p.887.

² See David McMullen, *State and Scholars in T'ang China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 169 and On-cho Ng and Edward Q. Wang, eds., *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005), p. 120.

³ The date of the beginning of the compilation is somewhat debated, since *Jiu Tang shu* (j. 66, p.2462) in the biography on Fang Xuanling records the date of the imperial edict to begin the compilation the eighteenth year of the Zhenguan period or 644. Most people though still support 646-648 as the compilation dates, following *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集, 81.467, and *Yuhai* 玉海, j. 46.

Ironically, while Taizong in his edict on the *JS* compilation had claimed to correct the imperfections of its previous versions, the resulting product was not at all satisfactory for the next generations of scholarly readers. And the scholars from the Tang dynasty to the Qing 清 (1636-1912) period *kaozheng* 考證 scholars had rarely failed to find faults with this particular standard history.⁴ Main source of discontent was deviation of the *JS*'s text from the perceived standards of what standard history ought to be. As will be explored below, the sources and style of narration as well as the summarizing comments at the end of each chapter constituted major criticism of *JS*'s content. Currently, research on the *Jin shu* can be broken down into three major groups. One of them still focuses on the examination of content: many include discussion of numerous mistakes in factual information, place and people names, official titles and chronology.⁵ There are also studies on literary value of *JS* and its style.⁶ Second group of research focuses on circumstances of *Jin shu* compilation, which includes examination of its sources and earlier versions, people and

⁴ These works that mentioned and analyzed circumstances of the *Jin shu* compilation included Liu Zhiji and Pu Qilong 蒲起龍 (1679-ca. 1761), annot., *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009); Liu Xu 劉昫 (887-946) *et al.*, eds., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975); Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805), *et al.*, ed. *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965); Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814) and Wang Shumin 王樹民 (1911-2004), annot., *Nian er shi zhaji jiaozheng* 廿二史劄記校證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), pp. 151-156; Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722-1797), *Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商榷 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2016); Ye Shi 葉適 (1150-1223), *Xixue jiyan yumu* 習學記言序目 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977); Li Ciming 李慈銘 (1830-1894), “*Jinshu zhaji* 晉書劄記” in *Yueman tang dushu ji* 越縕堂讀書記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963), pp. 208-26.

⁵ Qing scholar Zhang Zeng 張增 (1705-1750) found 450 erroneous places in the *JS* in his *Du shi juzheng* 讀史舉證 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2005). Liu Zhiji also discussed some of them in his chapter “Ignorance and Uncertainty” 暗惑. Cang Xiuliang, *Zhongguo shixue mingzhu pingjie*, p. 504.

⁶ For example, Li Peidong 李培棟, “*Jin shu de wenxue xing*” 晉書的文學性, *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao* 4 (1985): 63-65 and Li Shaoyong 李少雍, “*Shizhuan li de suoshi jizai: Jin shu wenxue tese cuoshuo*” 史傳里的瑣事記載：晉書文學特色臆說, *Wenxue yichan* 1 (2008): 28-38.

number of people involved,⁷ swiftness of the compilation,⁸ etc. Last group, to which this dissertation mainly belongs, explores reasons for *JS* compilation.⁹ Let us briefly discuss below some of the features of the *JS*, such as its content and sources to identify the historical standard that Taizong might have been referring to in his calling for the *JS* compilation. Furthermore, this chapter will compare Taizong's ideals of historical work to the reception of *JS* later in the Tang dynasty and onwards strongly influenced by the first theoretician of historiography, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721).

Content

At the time of compilation there were numerous existing texts that purported to record the history of the Jin. They were compiled during and after the Jin period by various people and some

⁷ According to most of the sources, there were twenty-one scholars working on the *JS*. The three main editors were Fang Xuanling, Chu Suiliang and Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592-672). The rest of the eighteen editors included Li Chunfeng 李淳風 (602-670), Jing Bo 敬播, Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583-666), Lai Ji 來濟 (610-662), Lu Yuanshi 陸元仕, Liu Ziyi 劉子翼, Lu Chengji 盧承基, Li Yifu 李義府 (614-666), Xue Yuanchao 薛元超 (621/22-683), Shangguan Yi 上官儀 (608-665), Cui Xinggong 崔行功 (?-684), Xin Qiuyu 辛丘馭, Liu Yinshi 劉胤之, Yang Renqing 楊仁卿, Li Yanshou 李延壽, Zhang Wengong 張文恭, Li Anqi 李安期 (?-670), and Li Huaiyan 李懷儼. *Junzhai dushi zhi* 郡齋讀書志 records only twenty scholars. *Xin Tang shu* and *Tang huiyao* both record twenty-one scholars except that in the former Zhao Hongzhi 趙弘智 (572-653) is listed instead of Lu Chengji as in the latter case. The more detailed discussion of the differences, accompanied by a table, could be found in Zhou Wenjiu 周文玖, ed., *Jin shu, Bashu, Ershi yanjiu* 晉書八書二史研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabiak quanshu Chubanshe, 2009), pp. 24-27.

⁸ For example, Yue Chunzhi 岳純之, "Lun Jin shu de sucheng jiqi cunzai de wenti" 論晉書的速成及其存在的問題, *Yantai daxue xuebao* 16 (2003): 89-94.

⁹ For basic information on compilation of the *JS*, brief textual history, editions, and important studies see Howard L. Goodman, "Jin shu" in Cynthia L. Chennault, et al., eds., *Early Medieval Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California Press, 2015), pp. 136-145. Plus modern researchers like Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890-1969), 白壽彝, Qu Lindong 瞿林東, Song Dingli 宋鼎立, Zhao Lisheng 趙儼生, Zhu Dawei 朱大渭. The most detailed work on *JS*'s editions is in Japanese by Yasushi Ozaki 尾崎康, *Seishi sōgenban no kenkyū* 正史宋元版の研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko Shoin, 1989), pp. 350-365.

of them were preserved by the time at the *Jin shu* compilation in the Tang archives.¹⁰ The emperor did not consider them as satisfactory and ordered a new compilation, though still based on the existing texts. The *Jin shu* 晉書 written by Southern Qi 南齊 (479-502) scholar Zang Rongxu 臧榮緒 (415-488), was chosen to be the base text as the most complete account.¹¹ Generally speaking, much of the final edition of the *Jin shu*, being based on the materials compiled during the Southern Dynasties, very much reflected the mood and ideas of the south during the 4-5th centuries. Zang Rongxu's *Jin shu* was the only version of the Jin history that recorded the history of both Western and Eastern Jins from Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179-251)¹² till the beginning of the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty (420-479). In order to distinguish itself from Zang Rongxu's text, *Jin shu* was originally titled *Xin Jin shu* 新晉書 (The New History of Jin),¹³ but after Zang Rongxu's as well as the other older editions were lost in transmission,¹⁴ in the later records it appeared as *Jin shu*. *JS* included three standard sections: "Annals" (*ji* 紀, *juan* 1-10), "Treatises" (*zhi* 志, *juan* 11-30), and "Biographies" (*liezhuan* 列傳, *juan* 31-100),¹⁵ and one more, "Chronological Records" (*zaiji* 載記, *juan* 101-

¹⁰ The recovered parts of other older editions can be found in Tang Qiu 湯球 (1804-1881), comp., *Jiujia jiu Jin shu* 九家舊晉書 [The Nine Old Histories of the Jin Dynasty] (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1964).

¹¹ It originally consisted of 110 *juan*; now only 17 *juan* were recovered.

¹² After his grandson, Sima Yan 司馬炎, became the emperor of Jin, Sima Yi was posthumously titled as the Emperor Xuan of Jin 宣皇帝.

¹³ Jin Yufu 金毓黼 (1887-1962), *Zhongguo shixueshi* 中國史學史 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1989), p. 86.

¹⁴ Their preservation state was not so good in the beginning of the Tang and many most probably perished in the chaotic state during the An-Shi rebellion 安史之亂 (755-763).

¹⁵ The form and content of the "Biographies" closely resembled the ones in the previous histories, though with some minor modifications. For example, the chapter on "Empresses" (*houfei* 后妃) which in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han) was part of the "Basic Annals" (*benji* 本紀) became the first *juan* in the "Biographies" section in *Jin shu*. The new titles were also added, such as "Loyal and Righteous" 忠義傳 and "Filial Piety and Fraternal Love" 孝友傳.

130), a section unique to the *Jin shu*.¹⁶ Originally, *Jin shu* consisted of 132 *juan*,¹⁷ but the two *juan* (one was preface compiled by Jing Bo, describing the guiding principles of compilation, and the other table of contents) got lost in transmission before its first wood-block edition.

Many of the “Treatises” were written at the end of the Han dynasty and, for example, the mistakes in the in the treatises of the *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Liu-Song) were copied into the *Jin shu*. Overall, the content and format of the treatises is close to *Han shu* 漢書 [The History of the Han Dynasty]. For example, both *Han shu* and *Jin shu* include treatises on “Food and Commodities” 食貨志,¹⁸ “Punishments and Laws” 刑法, “Geography” 地理 and “Officials” 職官, but *Jin shu* lacks the important bibliographical section, “Literature and Arts” 藝文志¹⁹ and “Treatise on Rivers and Canals” 溝洫志. Treatises on “Astronomy” 天文志, “Rhythm and Harmony” 律歷志, and “Five Elements” 五行志, written by Li Chunfeng, comprise few authored chapters of the *Jin shu* and are considered an important contribution and the most well-written documents in *Jin shu*.²⁰ It could be surmised that Xu Jingzhong was responsible for the “Biographies” section due to his interest in the biographical writing.²¹

¹⁶ Resembling structure of Zang Rongxu’s *Jin shu* which also had four sections.

¹⁷ “Together with the preface and table of contents it was 132 *juan*” 並敘例、目錄合為百三十二卷 *Shitong tongshi*, 12.325.

¹⁸ “Food and Commodities” in the *JS* was largely based on the materials from the Three Kingdoms. The standard histories on the dynasties that followed chronologically after the Jin dynasty (except for the *Xin wudai shi* 新五代史 [The New History of the Five Dynasties]) all included treatise on “Food and Commodities.” The table demonstrating what treatises were included in which dynastic histories can be found in Han Yushan 韓玉珊 (1899-1983), *Elements of the Chinese Historiography* (Hollywood: W.M. Hawley, 1955), pp. 200-201.

¹⁹ This treatise was later on compiled as an appendix to *Jin shu* by various scholars in the Qing dynasty. The different versions of it are collected in Wu Shijian 吳士鑑 (1868-1933), comp., *Ershiwu shi bubian* 二十五史補編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998).

²⁰ He also wrote on the similar matters for the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui).

²¹ Howard L. Goodman, *Xun Xu and the Politics of Precision in Third-Century AD China* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 113, n. 49.

As mentioned above, the *JS* structure of annals-biographies (*jizhuan* 紀傳) was rather traditional in its genre. But it was unique in including this entirely new section, “Chronological Records,”²² distinguishing itself from the other dynastic histories. It was introduced for the first time in the historical work, with a few structural modifications from the Tang editors.²³ The name *zaiji* came from Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) who used it to refer to accounts of rebels, pretenders, and bandits in the contrast to the *Han shu*’s “Basic Annals” (*benji* 本紀). In the *Dongguan Han ji* 東觀漢記 (Records of Han from the Eastern Pavilion)²⁴ the term was used as a pejorative designation for the records of those “illegitimate” rulers who rose after the fall of Wang Mang 王莽 (r. 9-23) and did not give their allegiance to the restored Han under Emperor Guanwu of Han 漢光武帝 (r. 5-29). The *JS* compilers drew upon this term for the same reasons in their records of the so-called “Sixteen States.”²⁵ It also resembled the way Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145-86 BCE) handled the description of non-official rulers in the *Shi ji* 史記 (*Grand Scribe’s Records*) by including them in the section on “Hereditary Houses” (*shijia* 世家). “Chronological Records” recorded the histories of the Five Dynasties and Sixteen Kingdoms 五朝十六國 (304-439), tracing the records of the illegitimate states which existed contemporaneously with the legitimate regime of Jin. One of its main sources and structural inspiration was Cui Hong’s 崔鴻 (471-499) *Shiliuguo chunqiu* 十六國春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Sixteen States; hereafter *SLGCQ*) that consisted of one hundred *juan* and recorded each kingdoms’ *shiji* 史籍 (historical records) and court diaries. None

²² The term was used by the legitimate dynastic regime to designate independent political entities that adapted their own calendar system making them illegitimate. In the *Jin shu*’s *zaiji* section, however, the chronology followed the ruling dynasty’s calendar.

²³ More on the representation of foreigners in the “Chronological Records” and the role it played in the legitimization of the rule in Chapter 4.

²⁴ Most important source that Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445) used for his compilation of the *Hou Han shu*.

²⁵ Fairbank, “Ssu-Ma I (179-251) Wei Statesman and Chin Founder. An Historiographical Inquiry,” p. 263.

of the previous Jin histories included records on the Sixteen States, except maybe Zang Rongxu's version. Zang Rongxu's *Jin shu* had four sections (*ji* 紀, *lu* 錄, *zhi* 志, and *zhuan* 傳), and *lu* might have been referring to the records of foreigners like they were in Cui Hong's work.²⁶

SLGCQ originally had 100 *juan*, a preface and chronological table. The work was mostly completed in 506. It started to gradually disappear in Tang and survived now in fragments and reconstructed editions.²⁷ Cui Hong was an official historiographer of Northern Wei 北魏 who had access to the official records of the states described in his work. Sixteen seemed to be an arbitrary number and was simply based on the number of records available to Cui Hong²⁸ since there were actually more states involved, such as Western Yan 西燕 (384-394) or Dai 代 (338-376), at the time. The *JS*'s "Chronological Records," however, included fourteen out of the Cui Hong's sixteen states and did not include states of Former Liang 前涼 (314-376) and Western Liang 西涼 (400-421) that were originally under his sixteen-state nomenclature.²⁹

Sources

The *JS* was compiled based on the material produced during the third-sixth centuries. Taizong's edict calling for the compilation of the *JS* mentioned that eighteen versions of the Jin history existed at the time.³⁰ There were also more than twenty other various types of historical

²⁶ *Zhongguo shixue mingzhu pingjie*, p. 496.

²⁷ See reconstructed version in Tang Qiu 湯球 (1804-1881), *Shiliu guo chunqiu jibu* 十六國春秋輯補 (Jinan: Qi Lu shushe, 2000). Also on Cui Hong's work see David Brian Honey, "Shiliuguo chunqiu" in *Early Medieval Chinese Texts: A Bibliographic Guide*, pp. 289-295.

²⁸ Michael Rogers, trans and annot., *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 18.

²⁹ Those two accounts became chapters eighty-six and eighty-seven in the "Biographies" section in the *JS*. More on the structure and editorial modifications of the "Chronological Records" in Chapter 4.

³⁰ The number of existing Jin histories varies depending on how you count. Jin Yufu 金毓黼 (1887-1962) in *Zhongguo shixueshi* 中國史學史 (Shanghai: Shangwu yunshuguan, 2007), pp. 78-83, talks about at least twenty-three works on Jin history that were withdrawn from circulation with the compilation of the *JS*. Bo

documents, such as histories of hegemonies (*bashi* 霸史) or diaries of activity and repose (*qijuzhu* 起居注) that contained records related to the history of Western and Eastern Jin, and Southern and Northern dynasties.

Moreover, the editors of *JS* purportedly integrated a variety of sources, such as *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (*A New Account of Tales of the World*),³¹ that were deemed apocryphal based on their content and relevance. The historian Liu Zhiji in his *Shitong* 史通 (Comprehensive [Analysis] of Historiography), in which he skeptically reexamined a range of historical works from antiquity, extensively criticized the value of *JS* due to the inclusion of what he considered non-historical sources for their lack of factual foundation and accuracy.³² The specific attack on using *Shishuo xinyu* as a source was prompted by categorization of *SSXY* as *xiaoshuo* 小說 [lesser sayings] in the bibliographic treatise, “Jingji zhi” 經籍志, of the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of the Sui), and later, in *Jiu Tang shu* and *Xin Tang shu*.

It is not certain whether compilers of the *Jin shu* drew directly from the *Shishuo xinyu*³³ or those were already integrated pieces in the existing versions of the Jin histories. But since the

Yinpei 柏蔭培, “*Jin shu shiba jia de shangque* 晉書十八家的商榷,” *Youshi xuezhì* 7 (1968): 1, writes there were more than thirty. Despite mentioning eighteen histories of Jin, Taizong’s edict actually only listed authors of the fourteen works. The bibliographic section of the *Sui shu* listed nineteen. On the argument on how eighteen as a number came to be see a standard see Li Jianhua 李建华, “Xian Tang Shiba jia *Jin shu* neihan kaobian” 先唐“十八家《晋书》”内涵考辨, *Journal of Ancient Books Collation and Studies* (2018): 1-5, 30.

³¹ I use the generally accepted translation of the title by Richard Mather. But Jack Chen suggests an updated version based on the original title: *Recent Anecdotes from the Talk of the Ages*. Originally the work was just titled *Shishuo* 世說. But in order to distinguish it from the work of the same title by Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77-6 BC) now lost in transmission, *xinyu* was added. See Jack Chen, “Classifications of People and Conduct: Liu Shao’s *Treatise on Personality* and Liu Yiqing’s *Recent Anecdotes from the Talk of the Ages*,” in Wendy Swartz et al. eds., *Early Medieval China: A Sourcebook* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), p. 366, n. 1. Hereafter, I will refer to it as *SSXY*.

³² Liu Zhiji brought up a number of examples throughout the *Shitong* in which *JS* had failed in a variety of historical standards. There are a total of thirteen places in the *Shitong* where Liu Zhiji criticized *Jin shu*.

³³ The compilation is attributed to Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), a Liu Song 劉宋 (420-479) prince, who instead probably supervised a group of literati and endorsed the creation of such work. His biography

prototypes of *JS* already included entries from *SSXY* and other “questionable” sources it is probably more feasible that the parallels between the *JS* and *SSXY* implied that both of the texts were drawing from the same source.³⁴ Additionally, we should consider that at the time of the compilation lack of material for biographies might have prompted inclusion of any available materials, including *SSXY* that still reflected the life of Wei-Jin people in question.³⁵

Reception

Nevertheless, the use of sources not listed under the Division of History 史部³⁶ brought Liu Zhiji’s derogatory remarks and influenced the view of the *JS* by the later generations of historians, historiographers, and readers.³⁷ In Liu Zhiji’s perspective *JS* lacked veracity or factual information, focused on supernatural events and drew from works that were not considered part of *shi* 史 category. In section “Caizhuan” 採撰 [Selection of Materials] of *Shitong*, Liu Zhiji wrote:

Various works regarding the Jin dynasty were not limited to one type, such as *Yulin*, *Shishuo*, *Youming lu*, *Soushen ji* and the like. The things that they recorded were either witty small arguments or [anecdotes about] spirits, ghosts, and strange creatures. The

suggests that even though he was interested in literature, he was actually not a literati and probably could not be the author. Wai-ye Li, “*Shishuo xinyu* and the Emergence of Aesthetic Self-Consciousness in the Chinese Tradition” in *Chinese Aesthetics: The Ordering of Literature, the Arts, and the Universe in the Six Dynasties*, ed. Zong-qi Cai. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2004), p. 240.

³⁴ *SSXY* was completed in 430s and includes 1131 entries on 626 people from periods of Later Han 後漢 to Liu-Song, most were from Western and Eastern Jin dynasties. Biographies of 113 people in the *JS* had 474 parallel entries in the *SSXY*. Gao Shuqing 高淑清, “*Jin shu qucai Shishuo xinyu zhi guanjian*” 晉書取材世說新語管見, *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 1 (2001): 262.

³⁵ Jack Chen, “Knowing Men and Being Known: Gossip and Social Networks in the *Shishuo Xinyu*” in Jack Chen and David Schaberg, eds., *Idle Talk: Gossip and Anecdote in Traditional China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 63.

³⁶ *Sui shu*’s bibliographic treatise had four divisions, the rest were *jing* 經 (classics), *zi* 子 (masters) and *ji* 集 (collections).

³⁷ Richard Mather, trans, *A New Account of Tale of the World by Liu I-Ch’ing with Commentary by Liu Chün*, 2nd. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), p. xiv. The bibliographic category *shi* officially a separate category in the *Sui shu* “*Jingji zhi*.” Lu Yaodong 逯耀東, “*Suishu*, ‘*Jingji zhi*,’ shibu, ji qi ‘*Zazhuan lei*’ de fenxi,” 《隋書·經籍志·史部》及其〈雜傳類〉的分析 in *Wei Jin shixue de xixiang yu shehui jichu* 魏晉史學的思想與社會基礎 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), pp. 65-67.

affairs contradicted the sagely and was something Yang Xiong (53-18 BCE) did not read. The words confused the mind and was something that Confucius did not utter. The *History of Jin* newly compiled by our August Dynasty extensively selected from these works. Indeed, what Gan [Bao] and Deng [Can] had dismissed as the waste and that Wang [Yin] and Yu [Yu]³⁸ had set aside as junk, [the authors of *History of Jin*] have considered useful fragments and used them to complete the previous biographies.”³⁹

晉世雜書，諒非一族，若《語林》、《世說》、《幽明錄》、《搜神記》之徒，其所載或談諧小辯，或神鬼怪物。其事非聖，揚雄所不觀；其言亂神，宣尼所不語。皇朝新撰《晉史》，多採以為書。夫以干鄧之所糞除，王、虞之所糠，持為逸史，用補前傳⁴⁰

Liu Zhiji was mainly concerned about the sources. It seemed that if the structural organization of the bibliographical section of the *Sui shu* were different and *SSXY* were in the section with other sources it might not have bothered Liu Zhiji that much. Another problem was the content, provoking and blasphemous, it was not part of what he considered a proper history. While Liu Zhiji's criticized the *JS* compilation for carelessly incorporating materials that should not have been incorporated, for Taizong, on the other hand, it seemed that it signified completeness. He wanted *JS* editors to peruse and take into consideration all of the sources. The idea was close to the compilatory nature of Sima Qian's *Shiji* in which he included not only the texts from the archives that he worked with but also the notes from his travels. Sima Qian extensively travelled around the country collecting local records and alternative materials that made their way into his work. And to Sima Qian those materials were as valid of a source as the official documents. Unlike Liu Zhiji, Sima Qian deemed his travel notes and things he heard, to be “not far from the ancient texts”

³⁸ Four of them each wrote a history of Jin around fourth century, and their histories were part of the eighteen histories of *JS*. Gan Bao's 干寶 (d. 336) *Jin ji* 晉紀 (twenty *juan*), Deng Can's 鄧粲 *Jin ji* 晉紀, Wang Yin's 王隱 *Jin shu* 晉書 (originally 93 *juan*, now 11), and Yu Yu's 虞預 (ca. 285-340) *Jin shu* 晉書 (originally 44, now 1).

³⁹ This is a commonly cited passage used to represent Liu Zhiji's views on *JS*. Translation is based on Damien Chaussende, trans. and annot., *Liu Zhiji. Traité de l'historien parfait. Chapitres intérieurs* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2014), pp. 107-108 and Sujane Wu, “The Three Scourges and Zhou Chu,” *Early Medieval China* 23 (2017): p. 12. There is also a translation in Lily Lee, “The Historical Value of *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*,” *Papers on Far Eastern History* 34 (1986): 121-2.

⁴⁰ *Shitong tongshi*, 5.108. There is a similar passage *ibid.*, 8.224 that talked about the ignorant who took pleasure in those kinds of works.

and “near to the truth”⁴¹ 不離古文者近是。⁴² Therefore, what for Taizong (and Sima Qian) should have constituted a proper history was exactly the thing that Liu Zhiji could not accept. For example, in Taizong’s edict calling for the compilation of the *JS*, he specifically urged for putting together all of the existing information on the Jin history:

Let it be ordered that a History of the Jin be newly compiled by the office for compiling the state history. Compare and put in sequence the old accounts, tailor to completion the proper categories, and bring to light all of the documents which have hitherto lay buried. As for those things which may be needed, all will be provided for as was done with the History of the Five Dynasties. If there should be a shortage of scholars, come and seek them from me as is appropriate to the importance of the matter.⁴³

宜令修國史所更撰《晉書》，詮次舊文，裁成義類，俾夫湮落之誥，咸使發明。其所須，可依修五代史故事。若少學士，亦量事追取。⁴⁴

The separation of *shi* 史 as a category on its own from classic studies 經 took place during the Wei-Jin times.⁴⁵ And the inclusion of a separate chapter on historical works (*shi* 史) in the first literary critique work by Liu Xie 劉勰 (465-522), *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍⁴⁶ served as one of the unofficial evidences that *shi*, instead, became conceptualized as part of literary studies.⁴⁷ Based on its sources from the third-sixth centuries, the compilation of the *JS* raised the question on the limits of how much of the literary content was allowed, and, essentially, this is what bothered Liu Zhiji in his evaluation. For him, the final version of the *JS* crossed the line between non-literary

⁴¹ William H. Nienhauser, ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records, Vol. 1: The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994, rev. ed. 2018), p. 43.

⁴² Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 1.46.

⁴³ Translation of the edict (full edict pp. 254-7) in Fairbank, pp. 256-7 and Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au IIIe siècle* (Paris: Belles lettres, 2010), p. 83. There is also a partial translation by Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty*, p. 149.

⁴⁴ *Tang dazhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集, 81.467.

⁴⁵ Lu Yaodong, 47-52.

⁴⁶ *Wenxin diaolong*, “Historical Traditions” 史傳, 4/16.99-107.

⁴⁷ Stephen Durrant, “史 Shǐ: From ‘Scribe’ to ‘History’?” Unpublished paper, Jerusalem, “Keywords Conference,” 15-16 June 2016, p. 16.

and literary and, therefore, was not a proper history, while, counterintuitively, he deemed the earlier versions of Jin history to be better examples.⁴⁸

For Tang Taizong, the opposite seemed to be true: the previous versions of the *JS* were not satisfactory and he did not evaluate them highly. He disqualified the previous versions of the Jin history on the basis that their authors were not “fine historians” (*liang shi* 良史) and that the matters of existing histories were short of “veritable records” (*shilu* 實錄) – a lot of material but lacking essentials is a criticism very similar to Liu Zhiji’s ideas on what history should be, and called for the new compilation that would fix the problems of the previous versions.

Even though there were eighteen authors whose accounts and notes are still preserved, they lacked the talent of fine historians, and their writings were lacking veritable records. [Zang] Rongxu tried, but had few essentials; Xingsi (Xie Chen 謝沈; ca. 340)⁴⁹ labored, but had little success. Shuning’s (Yu Yu) investigations are empty, and their aftertaste is that of a drawn biscuit; [Xiao] Zi-yun’s learning was as broad as the sea, but his drops of water dissipated in a dry stream. Chushu (Wang Yin) did not treat the restoration; [He] Fasheng did not deal with the foundation. Gan [Bao], Lu [Ji], Cao [Jiazhi] and Deng [Can] gave cursory accounts of the rulers; [Tan Dao]luan, [Sun] Sheng, [Xu] Guang and Song (Liu Qianzhi) merely compiled chronicles. Their words are unrefined, and their affairs are rarely transmitted.⁵⁰

但十有八家，雖存記注，而才非良史，書虧實錄。榮緒煩而寡要，行思勞而少功。叔寧課虛，滋味同於畫餅；子雲學海，涓滴埋於涸流。處叔不預於中興，法盛莫通於創業。洎乎幹、陸、曹、鄧，略紀帝王；鸞、盛、廣、鬆，才編載記。其文既野，其事罕傳。⁵¹

While the comments offered by Taizong in regards to the earlier histories are overall rather general and do not reveal much of his ideals for good history other than completeness, Tang Taizong used similar wording of “talent of a fine historian” to Ban Biao’s 班彪 (3-54 CE), father

⁴⁸ Before the Tang, history writing was considered as a literary activity. There had always been court diarists but there was no Historiographical Office. A deliberate separation of the routine keeping of a Court Diary from the process of state-sponsored historical composition was formalized under the Northern Zhou 北周 (557-581) and later under the Sui. Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T’ang*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ Author of one of the versions of the *Hou Han shu* that Fan Ye presumably relied on in his final compilation.

⁵⁰ Fairbank, p. 257 and Chaussende, p. 83.

⁵¹ *Tang dazhaoling ji*, 81.467.

of Ban Gu 班固 (32-92), evaluation of Sima Qian in Ban Biao's biography in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han). Taizong, like Ban Biao, used *shi* not to signify a category of writing (as it was used in the *Sui shu*) but a profession (as it was used predominantly in early China), the one who is responsible for writing:

Being skillful in narrating and ordering the principles of affairs, disputing but without being flowery, questioning but without being wild, and writing and substance that match each other – these, it seems, are the talents of a fine historian.⁵²

然善述序事理，辯而不華，質而不野，文質相稱，蓋良史之才也。⁵³

Ban Biao in his comment called for a balanced perspective in evaluation of historian and was closer to Liu Zhiji's standards of *shi* as a type of writing rather than to Taizong's ideas.⁵⁴ Ban Biao still distinguished a writer and his written work: while praising Sima Qian as an excellent historian he was rather dismissive of the *Shiji*. Taizong similarly dismissed the historians of Jin, such as Gan Bao, and did not consider him talented. However, on the other hand, in Gan Bao's account in the chapter eighty-two of the *JS* that provides biographies of the Jin historians, Gan Bao's work was highly appraised (using the same *shi*). When commenting on his version of the Jin history, *Jin ji* 晉紀, the commentators deemed "his writing simple and brief, direct but capable of being delicate; everyone praised it as a fine history" 其書簡略，直而能婉，咸稱良史。⁵⁵ Moreover, Gan Bao's

⁵² David Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu: The Biography of Liu Yüan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1990), p. 34, n.47.

⁵³ Fan Ye 范曄 (398-445), *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 40.1325. Ban Biao did not value highly Sima Qian's work yet he deem Sima Qian to have talents of a fine historian 良史之才.

⁵⁴ Liu Zhiji, as the title of his work signifies, looked at *shi* as the type of writing. And therefore, all the instances of *liang shi* that he brought up referred to well-written history/a fine historical work.

⁵⁵ *JS* 82.2150. Also parallel in *SSXY* 25.19. *JS* 82 evaluation possibly followed one of the high appraisals by Gan Bao's contemporaries and successors. For example, He Fasheng 何法盛 (fl. 415) in his *Jin zhongxing shu* 晉中興書 had a similar statement. Fairbank, p. 112. It could be also possible that Liu Zhiji followed the previous acclaims of Gan Bao's work and similarly acknowledged it in his work. *Shitong*, 12.325. There are also examples of Liu Zhiji's statements on several other Jin dynasty historians that were similar to their contemporary evaluations. Therefore, Liu Zhiji's overall higher evaluation of the earlier versions of the *JS* might simply stem not from his own views but adaption of the earlier views. For a detailed analysis of Jin historians in *JS* 82 and comparison to their evaluation by Liu Zhiji see Fairbank, pp. 87-188.

Soushen ji, later disqualified by Liu Zhiji, also received appraisal and was compared to Dong Hu's 董狐⁵⁶ work (see epigraph to this chapter), who recorded everything without hiding.⁵⁷

[Gan Bao] was famous for composing *Soushen ji*, total of thirty *juan*. He showed it to Liu Tan. [Liu] Tan said to him, "You're what might be called the Dong Hu of the ghosts."⁵⁸
名為《搜神記》，凡三十卷。以示劉惔，惔曰：「卿可謂鬼之董狐。」⁵⁹

Wang Yin 王隱, another compiler of one of the eighteen histories in his *Jin shu* 晉書 also contributed to the discussion on what constituted the work of a good historian. The examples of obsequious ministers, such as Xun Xu 荀勗 (d. 289), and their actions, according to Wang Yin, who seemed to blame him for the fall of Jin, should be recorded in the works of fine historians.

[Xun] Xu's nature was insinuating and flattering. He praised the crown prince, and agreed to the banishing of the Prince of Qi.⁶⁰ At the time, there were private discussions that he would destroy the state and harm the people ... In later ages, if a good historiographer should arise, he should include his [Xun Xu] biography among "The Insinuating and Self-Interested"⁶¹

勗性佞媚。譽太子。出齊王。當時私議、損國害民。孫資劉放之匹也。後世若有良史。當著佞幸傳。⁶²

Clearly, the notion of *liang shi* signified not only different parameters for different people at different times but itself was a term that from an idea of "fine scribe or historian" transformed into

In the JS 82, two more people were attributed a praise of *liang shi* 良史: Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297), who wrote *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) and Sun Sheng 孫盛 (302-373), author of *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋, one of the eighteen Jin histories. In contradiction, Taizong's edict dismissed completely the work of Chen Shou. Further discussion is below in the chapter.

⁵⁶ A grand scribe of the Jin 晉 state during the Spring and Autumn period famous for his honest and complete recordings of the events.

⁵⁷ Potentially, traces of Gan Bao's history might be found in JS 5 "Annals of Emperor Xiaomin 孝愍帝 (r. 313-316)" as it cites Gan Bao's discourse (干寶有言曰) in the chapter's historian's comments (史臣曰).

⁵⁸ Translation based on Mather, p. 441.

⁵⁹ JS 82.2150.

⁶⁰ It referred to the choice of Emperor Wu of Jin between his developmentally disabled son, Sima Zhong 司馬衷 (259-307) and his talented younger brother, Sima You 司馬攸 (248-283) to designate the future heir. Many believe that the unpopular choice of Sima Zhong led to the fall of Western Jin. Further discussed in Chapter Three.

⁶¹ Mather, p. 145.

⁶² In the comment to SSXY 5.14.

an idea and could mean “a fine piece of historical writing.” Similarly, Taizong himself did not have a uniform perspective on what history compilation meant for him, for the ruler of China, or for the future generations. While completeness of the *JS* was the goal he stated in the edict, his motivation for compiling a history was rooted in his self-awareness of his own background: he could use it to justify his questionable actions and project a good image of himself based on the similarities with the historical precedents. At the same time, compilers of the historical works could also use historical compilation to their advantage: to promote the message of their patron and thus gain favor or, also, indirectly point out to the faults of the emperor and prevent him from making certain decisions.

Role of Standardized History

One of the five dynastic histories that was completed in the beginning of the Taizong's reign in 636 was the *Sui shu*. Chief editor for the *Sui shu* compilation was Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643).⁶³ Wei Zheng, an advisor to the second emperor of Tang, by portraying negatively the second and last emperor of the Sui, Sui Yangdi 隋煬帝 (r. 640-618), could have been trying to convey a certain message to young Taizong.⁶⁴ The failure of Sui Yangdi, to preserve his state was attributed to the failed campaign to Goguryeo 高句麗, which he failed to overcome three times. By bringing forth similar historical precedents and potential disastrous consequences for the country and the emperor himself, Wei Zheng wanted to dissuade Taizong against embarking on future military campaigns against Korean state.⁶⁵ At the same time, ministers' warning based on the similarity between the

⁶³ One of Taizong's key advisors who was very outspoken about Taizong's politics.

⁶⁴ Denis Twitchett, “How to Be an Emperor: T'ang T'ai-tsung's Vision of his Role,” *Asia Major* 9, no. 1/2 (1996): p. 5, n. 2.

⁶⁵ “To survive beyond the second generation of rulership.” Jack Chen, “The Writing of Imperial Poetry in Medieval China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 65, no. 1 (2005): 85.

two rulers could be read by Taizong or other ruler in questions as a call for challenge and demonstration of power and might in comparison to the failed attempts of his predecessors. The example in the earlier dynastic histories could be used as a justification for Taizong proceeding to attack Goguryeo. Many Chinese had taken refuge in Goguryeo after fall of the Sui. Silla 新羅, another Korean state and a professed loyal vassal to Tang, was also suffering from attacks by Goguryeo. Taizong could have used the precedents in the past and contemporary situation to justify the campaign by acting as a liberator and savior by punishing the insurgent.⁶⁶ Interpretation of historical precedents and how they were presented depended on who was reading and interpreting.

In the end, the accuracy of facts was not a priority for a historical compilation, instead, what mattered is what the historical work signified and what value it was attributed. The compilation of history was a political gesture, a gesture of power and domination, especially for the nascent regimes.⁶⁷ Compiling histories of the preceding legitimate regimes signified legitimate rule succession and was, essentially, one of the key legitimization strategies. Being aware of that, in 622 Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583-666) advised Taizong's father, the first emperor of Tang, Tang Gaozu 高祖 (Li Yuan 李淵; 566-635, r. 618-626) to compile six standard histories. Tang Gaozu issued an edict calling for the compilation but it was never realized.⁶⁸ After *JS* was compiled,

⁶⁶ Howard J. Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator" in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 231-3.

⁶⁷ After fall of Chang'an in 317 and establishment of the restored Jin dynasty, Eastern Jin (317-420) in Jiankang 建康 (Nanjing) Sima Rui 司馬睿 (r. 318-323) proclaimed himself Emperor Yuan of Jin 晉元帝 and commissioned the compilation of the Western Jin chronicles. Martin Hanke, *Geschichtsschreibung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Zentrale und Region am Beispiel der Jin-Zeit (265-420)* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2002), p. 74-6.

⁶⁸ Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung the Consolidator," p. 215. Those were the histories of Wei 魏, Liang 梁, Chen 陳, Northern Qi 北齊, Zhou 周, and Sui 隋. Text of the edict is in Linghu Defen's biography in Liu Xu, *Jiu Tang shu*, j. 73, p. 2598. Linghu Defen was also the editor of *Zhou shu* 周書.

Taizong presented an envoy from the king of Silla state, Tang's vassal state, with three texts, one of which was the newly compiled *Jin shu*.⁶⁹

Taizong was invested in explaining the role of the history and what historical work signified for the ruler of China. In his edict calling for the *JS* compilation Taizong evaluated many of the historical works individually. It signified that while he might not have read them in their entirety he was at least familiar with them on the level to comment on the basics of their contents and style. Similarly, he was well-read in Classics and the works on history available then.

Likewise, there were a number of examples of Taizong's interest in perusing the histories and analyzing its content in terms of usefulness for the ruler. In the *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (Essentials of Government in the Zhenguan Reign)⁷⁰ written by Wu Jing 吳兢 (670-749) there is an episode of Taizong commenting on Former and Later histories of Han 漢 to the Chief Compiler of the Dynastic History 監修國史⁷¹ Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578-648)⁷² on the inclusion of rhapsodies. In the narrative, Taizong reiterates the classical analogy of the historical event serving

⁶⁹ Fairbank, p. 262.

⁷⁰ The work was completed in 709-712 and was influential in crafting and delivering an idealistic image of Taizong and his reign. The work was famous among non-Chinese formations that arose after the fall of Tang and translated in their languages, such as Khitan or Tangut. "How to be an Emperor," p. 5-6. It might be conjectured that the non-Chinese states recognized the similarities in their paths with the path of someone of mixed ethnic origins who achieved and justified such a status in China.

⁷¹ Hucker, p. 148.

⁷² Fang Xuanling was Taizong's chancellor and also main editor of the *JS*. *Zhenguan zhengyao* featured Taizong's discussions with his ministers on problems of governing. A parallel work that discussed Taizong's military prowess was *Li Weigong wendui* 李衛公問對 that featured Taizong's discussions with his general Li Jing 李靖 (571-649).

as a moral lesson and edifying moment for the ruler.⁷³ In the idealized picture of Tang Taizong, he comments on the purpose of history:⁷⁴

“Since these works [rhapsodies] are written in frothy and flowery style, they are of no use as exhortations and admonitions; why should they be incorporated in books of history? But memorials to the throne and discussions of affairs with trenchant and straight wording and ideas, capable of benefiting the art of government – all such works should be included in the history of this dynasty, regardless of whether We have followed them or not.⁷⁵
此既文體浮華，無益勸誡，何假書之史策？其有上書論事，詞理切直，可裨於政理者，朕從與不從皆須備載。」⁷⁶

Taizong encouraged compilers of dynastic histories to include official documentation, such as memorials, and disregard flowery dictums for the sake of future generations. In his official rhetoric he did lean towards formalized delivery of the argument and praised political experience in the context of historical examples from the past. There are also several records of Taizong citing Jin history as edifying moment for him as an emperor. *Zizhi tongjian* cited many occasions of him reading and commenting on the excerpts from the Jin history as well as the other dynastic histories which were compiled during his reign.⁷⁷ In the latter half of his reign Taizong had preponderance to commissioning large-scale construction projects despite his ministers’ objections. *ZZTJ*, however, recorded that in 642 (before the official *JS* compilation) he had read the biography of

⁷³ “The communication of historical themes (cause and result, moral import, and cosmic context) was precisely the explicit goal of early Chinese historians.” Kenneth J Dewoskin, “On Narrative Revolutions,” *CLEAR* 5.1 (1983): p. 34.

⁷⁴ Taizong was also known as the one who propagated listening attentively to the advice from the ministers and advisors and encouraging remonstrance. More on potential use of *JS* as means to advise the emperor in Chapter 3.

⁷⁵ Translation from Hans H. Frankel, “T’ang Literati: A Composite Biography,” in Wright Arthur F. and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Confucian Personalities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 75.

⁷⁶ Wu Jing 吳兢, comp., *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 28.222.

⁷⁷ His ministers were also known to cite examples from the recent histories in order to change Taizong’s mind. Chapter 3.

Liu Cong 劉聰⁷⁸ (d. 318) who was advised by his wife⁷⁹ not to build a palace. In the passage, Taizong, who had already had arranged for construction at Lantian 藍田 near Chang'an 長安, claimed that he followed the advice himself and stopped the construction.⁸⁰ Whether or not the incident is simply attributed to Taizong in order to project a positive image of him as a wise ruler who heeds to the historical precedents and recognizes his own mistakes, it is clear that the narratives from the past were recognized as useful instruments that could be used to support one viewpoint or another.

The dynamic between the writers of history and the intended reader and “sponsor” of the work became explicit when the *JS* was ordered to be compiled by a group of officials who served as advisors to Taizong. On the one hand, the historiographer could bring to the ruler’s attention the examples and documents from the past that positively or negatively affected ruler’s decision in order to push forward his own opinion and introduce potential changes in the contemporary situation.⁸¹ On the other hand, the same incidents and examples could have been used by the ruler and patron of the compilation that reflected well on his image and justified his actions. The *JS* compilation revealed a “tension between the monarchy as sponsor of the work and its compilers.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Ruler of the Xiongnu 匈奴 state of Han Zhao 漢趙 (304-329), one of the Sixteen States. He captured, humiliated, and executed two subsequent Jin emperors. *JSCD*, p. 795.

⁷⁹ See the biography of Liu Cong’s wife Liu E 劉娥 (d. 314), *JS* 96.2519. Chapter ninety-six “Exemplary Women” (*lienü* 列女) included a number of biographies of wives and concubines of the rulers of the Sixteen States. More in Chapter 4.

⁸⁰ From David McMullen, “The Big Cats Will Play: Tang Taizong and His Advisors,” *Journal of Chinese Studies* 《中國文化研究所學報》 57 (2013): 309, 323.

⁸¹ Frankel, p. 76.

⁸² Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi, “The Growth of Historical Method in Tang China” in Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson, eds., *Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 2: 400-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 21. The certain bias in compilation could be inferred from overall presentation of particular type of material in the *JS*. For example, Andrew Chittick has noticed that Xie An 謝安 (320-385) received a more favorable appraisal than his rival, Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373). The disproportioned perspective could be attributed to the compilers being against more militaristic and less civil methods of the latter. Andrew Chittick, “Dynastic Legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch’ih and the Problem of Huan Wen,” *Asia Major* (Third Series) 11.1 (1988): 36. More in Chapters Three and Four.

The tendency was not new. And the authors of the privately-compiled histories of Jin faced similar dilemmas as the emperor's close ministers. Their connections to the patrons of the compilation determined the people who were to be included and how they were portrayed.⁸³ Most importantly, how the historical narrative reflected on their patron and their family. They also faced pressure from other family members in higher positions who were aware of the compilation. Biographies focused on family accounts were structured that one representative, after whom the biography was named, was followed by the accounts of his relatives. Account would start with providing a specific information on place of one and one's family origin as well as information on one's father and official titles.⁸⁴ Similar structure was preserved in the final version of the *JS* as the attention to the progenitors and aristocratism was still prevalent in the early Tang court. The type of narratives that were included or not in one's biography reflected on one's perceived image and the attitude of the writer. Therefore, in the final *JS* compilation, if the biographical accounts included more parallels to the *SSXY* anecdotes, while presenting a more well-rounded picture,⁸⁵ they did destroy the harmony of intended image, crafted either by the original compilers or the Tang editors of the *JS*.⁸⁶ Many times, the biographical account was crafted after the specific assumptions of the imagined role or specific function that the person served.⁸⁷ Such practices of

⁸³ For example, relationship of Yu Yu with Yu Liang 庾亮 (289-340), official and general, who served as Superintended of Palace Writers at the time and helped Yu Yu to submit his work to the throne. Also Gan Bao and Wang Dao 王導, who served in Yu Liang's position prior to him. Fairbank, p. 97 and 113.

⁸⁴ Such organization reflected the importance of family and clan records. *Song shu* and *Wei shu* 魏書 (History of the Northern Wei) for example modified their biographical sections to be structured around one family. On-cho Ng and Edward Q. Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, p. 102.

⁸⁵ *SSXY* anecdotes were much more imaginative in portraying a certain characteristic, many times, instead of or in addition to a simple description, *SSXY* supplemented it with vivid examples. Moreover, *SSXY* rarely presented a uniform perspective of one character. Keep in mind that many *SSXY* passages had origins in the Jin histories compiled earlier. And, therefore, this type of characterization might as well be representative of the Wei-Jin narrative tradition.

⁸⁶ Wai-yee Li, "Shishuo xinyu," p. 40-1. More on the intended image of the officials in the *JS* in Chapter 3.

⁸⁷ Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the Tang* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 63.

adjustment of a narrative tradition existed long before, and numerous examples can be found even now, in contemporary media, simply by watching coverage of the same event by different broadcasting stations. Most of the time, constructing a certain perspective in Chinese historical tradition involved not necessarily changing the content of the narrative but selection of parts of the materials to be presented and framed in a particular manner.⁸⁸

Shi and Legitimization of Rule

Taizong's overt demonstration of interest and motivation in compiling dynastic histories as well as the official compilation process of the *JS* revealed changes in the general practice of historiography and explicitly exposed it as a bureaucratic process. Han to Tang signified a crucial period in understanding early Chinese historiography; it transformed what the account of history might signify and resulted in the first official work on historiography by Liu Zhiji.⁸⁹ At the same time, the mechanisms of private compilation turned out to be not so different from the bureaucratized process. The state compilations simply made use of the historical account for the purposes of promoting the contemporary rule and relieving itself from the responsibility of potentially questionable decisions in a more obvious way. With Taizong's personal intentions at stake, the compilation of the *JS* also revealed the ways of not only how the historical compilation

⁸⁸ Mark Strange, "A Reading of Hou Jing's Rebellion in *Zizhi Tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror to Aid Government): The Construction of Sima Guang's Imperial Vision," in Daria Berg, ed., *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 200-37. Apparently, Confucius was known for the selective treatment of the material. "Confucius occasionally distorted or even falsified the facts of history because he wished to avoid the recording of things which did not agree with his moral principles" Burton Watson, *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 95.

⁸⁹ Durrant argued that the underlying dynamics of the private compilations were in fact similar to that of the state-compiled histories. Durrant, "史 Shi: From 'Scribe' to 'History'?", p. 27.

can be used to advance a certain image of oneself but also which aspects of rulership were considered crucial to discuss and, if necessary, to justify.

One of the most urgent concerns to Taizong was the question of the legitimacy of his rule and the ways of its legitimization. While the *JS* compilation was completed twenty years into his reign the question still required consideration and acknowledgement from the second emperor of the burgeoning new regime of Tang. In his edict calling for the *JS* compilation, he recognized the legitimacy of the Jin rule and decided that it was a legitimate predecessor of Tang, symbolizing the continuity of the Chinese rule.

As for those petty rulers who held sway, Chen Shou presented his *Record of the States*; and for the diminutive Liu-Sung, Shen Yue (441-513) crafted his imperial account. ... The Jin house responded to the cycle, and assumed control of the Central Plain. ... They are worthy of having flying blossoms from elegant brushes to record their excellence on tablets and in books.⁹⁰

陳壽敷其國誌；眇哉有宋，沈約裁其帝籍。... 惟晉氏膺運，制有中原 ... 足以飛英麗筆，將美方書。⁹¹

Likewise, Taizong disqualified the regimes that he deemed illegitimate⁹² and by extension the histories produced by the historians who wrote about those periods. While Shen Yue had also produced a history of Jin, *Jin shu* 晉書, Taizong did not even consider it in his evaluation later in the edict in regards to the eighteen histories of the Jin dynasty. Therefore, the official rhetoric and agenda of the seventh century defined what was plausible in the historiographical constructions of the third-fifth centuries. The next chapter will explore the legitimization techniques of Taizong

⁹⁰ Fairbank, p. 255.

⁹¹ *Tang dazhaoling ji*, 81.467.

⁹² Chen Shou was a literati from Shu-Han 蜀漢 (221-263), one of the Three Kingdoms 三國, that surrendered to what was about to become future regime of Western Jin. After that Chen Shou became a member of the Jin court in Luoyang. The ways of how Jin dealt with the population from the newly acquired lands of Wu 吳 and Shu and discussed in terms of reunification rather than invasion and conquest and will be further addressed in Chapter 2.

imagined in the compilation of the *JS*, its treatment of the first emperors of Western Jin, and Taizong's evaluations of Sima Yi.

CHAPTER TWO: LEGITIMIZATION AND LEGACY



Several years after Sima Yan's 司馬炎 (r. 266-290) official ascension to the rule and establishment of the House of Jin, a heated debate started in the court on how to proceed with the official records of the Jin history. The question was on where to start the official count of the Jin history. Sima Yan's posthumously named his grandfather, Sima Yi's 司馬懿 (179-251), Emperor Xuan of Jin 宣皇帝, his father, Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211-265), Emperor Wen of Jin 晉文帝, and his father's older brother, Sima Shi 司馬師 (208-255) Emperor Jing of Jin 晉景帝.² Since the first three emperors were officially serving under the Cao-Wei 曹魏 (220-266) regime it raised the

¹ David Sipress, "I'm concerned about my legacy – kill the historians," cartoon, *The New Yorker*, July 21, 2014. <https://www.newyorker.com/cartoon/a18350>.

² They were not the rulers of the Jin dynasty, but they still got included in the imperial records as the legitimate rulers, regarding them as the founders of Western Jin. *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (*The Records of Three Kingdoms*) treats in the same way the historical figures such as Cao Cao.

question of legitimization of the newly-established Jin dynasty. The debate is recorded in Jia Mi's 賈謐 (d. 300)³ account in chapter forty of *JS*.

Near the enthronement of Emperor Hui (r. 290-301), a new debate was initiated. [Jia] Mi then gave his opinion and asked to begin in the Taishi era (266-275). The case was submitted to the Three Excellencies, and Wang Rong (234-305), Minister of Education, Zhang Hua (232-300), Minister of Works, Wang Yan (256-311), General of the Palace Guard, Yue Guang, Palace servant, Ji Shao, servant at the gates of the palace and Xie Heng, literate to the vast knowledge of the national university, followed the advice of [Jia] Mi. Xun Qun, commander of the cavalry and Marquis of Jibei, Xun Fan, servant of the palace, and Hua Hun, servant at the palace gates, advocated the first year of Zhengshi (240). Xun Xi and Xi Xie, literate to vast knowledge, recommended the Jiaping era (249-254). [Jia] Mi insisted in writing with [Wang] Rong and [Zhang] Hua, and it was his opinion that was followed.⁴

謐上議，請從泰始為斷。於是事下三府，司徒王戎、司空張華、領軍將軍王衍、侍中樂廣、黃門侍郎嵇紹、國子博士謝衡皆從謐議。騎都尉濟北侯荀峻、侍中荀藩、黃門侍郎華混以為宜用正始開元。博士荀熙、刁協謂宜嘉平起年。謐重執奏戎、華之議，事遂施行。⁵

Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297), famous compiler of the *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) was advocating for the later date and suggested treating first three emperors as “lesser emperors.” Eventually, the final compilation of the *JS* followed the same path as it started its imperial annals with Sima Yi, Sima Shi, and Sima Zhao (*JS* 1 and 2).⁶ The dilemma prompted the debate among the succeeding generations of the writers of the Jin history⁷ who were making their own decisions of where to start the narrative. Justification of such decision in turn structured their entire narrative and revealed historians' views on the legitimacy of the Jin rule and whether or not

³ He was adopted by Jia Nanfeng 賈南風 (255-300), who by her machinations in the court, instigated the War of the Eight Princes. He was in charge of writing National History 國史. *JSCD*, p.

⁴ Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au IIIe siècle* (Paris: Belles lettres, 2010), p. 47 and Anthony Bruce Fairbank, “Ssu-Ma I (179-251) Wei Statesman and Chin Founder. An Historiographical Inquiry.” Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1994, pp. 77-80.

⁵ *JS* 40.1174.

⁶ Achim Mittag and Ye Min, “Empire on the Brink: Chinese Historiography in the Post-Han Period” in Fritz-Heiner Mutschler and Achim Mittag, eds., *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ Their accounts are grouped together in chapter eighty-two of *JS*. More on their biographies and what was known of the histories they had written in Fairbank, pp. 87-188

it was justified. At the same time, the stance on the matter was not free from the outside influences and circumstances of the compilation. Xi Zuochi 習鑿齒 (fl. 347-373) was a part of Huan Wen's 桓溫 (312-373)⁸ entourage and preferred military efforts in the rule takeover. Based on Huan Wen's success in reclaiming the lost lands of Western Jin, Xi Zuochi thought coming to power in such manner is acceptable if the reclaim of the North would also be completed and the transfer of power would be accompanied with the reunification of the empire. But instead of violent power takeover Huan Wen proceeding to a common practice and a well-established pattern of dynastic change in medieval China, the abdication ritual *shanrang* 禪讓.⁹¹⁰

Both emperors, Taizong and Jin Wudi, questionably rose to power and achieved reunification of the empire. Sima Yan's establishing of the Jin House followed the same manner to abdication,¹¹ as the Wei's founding emperor ascension forty-five years before. Sima Shi, eldest son of Sima Yi, deposed the Wei ruler, Cao Fang 曹芳 (r. 240-254) in 254, and Sima Zhao killed his puppet successor, Cao Mao 曹髦 (r. 254-260) in 260. Sima Zhao's son, Sima Yan, then accepted the abdication of Cao Huan 曹奂 (r. 260-265), and mounted the throne as Emperor Wu of Jin.

Xi Zuochi in his version of the Jin history, *Han Jin Chunqiu* 漢晉春秋, did not acknowledge Cao-Wei regime and used Shu-Han's 蜀漢 (221-263) calendar for chronicles from 211-264 in his history of Jin to support Shu-Han's connection to Han dynasty. Xi Zuochi recognized the fakeness of the ritual in Cao-Wei case and openly criticized it. The transfer of the mandate, according to Xi

⁸ JSCD, p. 460.

⁹ Achim Mittag and Ye Min, p. 350.

¹⁰ On Xi Zuochi's controversial views see Martin Hanke, *Geschichtsschreibung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Zentrale und Region am Beispiel der Jin-Zeit (265-420)* (Hamburg: Hamburger Sinologische Gesellschaft, 2002), 165-78.

¹¹ The classical "abdication" model to transfer imperial powers from one ruler to another was established in the example of Yao and Shun who chose their successors not on the hereditary basis but among their ministers.

Zuochi, only emphasized the ministerial insubordination which was based on the popularity of one group in the group who gained enough political support.¹² Instead, he brought up a precedent of indirect succession, and thought that Jin succeeding Shu-Han is like Han succeeding Zhou.¹³

At the same time the ones who claimed to be legitimate rulers used the convenient historical accounts to justify their claims. The *JS* biography on Sima Yi, Sima Yan's grandfather, who paved the way to founding of Jin, also focused on the questionable methods of his power takeover. His biography in the *JS* is rather uneven as it attempted to reconcile the perceived benevolent image of the first emperor with the records of Sima Yi's betrayal and violent methods to achieve his goals. But essentially, he was a scapegoat to distract from the messy and uncomfortable truth, even though the change from Wei to Jin was gradual and took three generations. Several damning anecdotes were placed at the very end of Sima Yi's account. One of them extended criticism from the perspective of the Eastern Jin.

During the reign of Emperor Ming (Sima Shao 司馬紹; r. 323-325), Wang Dao (276-339) was sitting in attendance by the throne, and the Emperor asked about the means by which his predecessors had obtained the empire. [Wang] Dao then explained how His Majesty (Sima Yi) first established the enterprise. When he came to the last years of Emperor Wen (Sima Zhao) and the affairs of the Duke of Gaogui (Cao Mao) in the past, Emperor Ming hid his face in the bed and said, "If it was as your excellency says, then how will the blessings of the Jin long endure?"¹⁴

明帝時，王導侍坐。帝問前世所以得天下，導乃陳帝創業之始，用文帝末高貴鄉公事。明帝以面覆床曰：「若如公言，晉祚復安得長遠！」¹⁵

¹² Andrew Chittick, "Dynastic Legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch'ih and the Problem of Huan Wen," *Asia Major* (Third Series) 11.1 (1988): 24.

¹³ Nobody would say that Han succeeded Qin or Chu. Achim Mittag and Ye Min, p. 357, *JS* 82.2156

¹⁴ Fairbank, p. 356. There is a parallel record in *SSXY* 33.7. In *SSXY* version, however, Sima Yi is referred to as King Xuan 宣王 reflecting the position of the writer on the status of Sima Yi. *SSXY* also included a detail on Sima Yi's questionable methods which the *JS* biography did not choose to preserve: "he exterminated all the famous clans and established in favor those who sided with himself" 誅夷名族，寵樹同己. Mather, p. 510.

¹⁵ *JS* 1.20

Taizong also felt a need to reflect on the regime that Tang claimed the succession from, Jin, and its founding father, Sima Yi. For one of his four imperial proclamations (*zhi* 制) in the *JS*, Tang Taizong wrote on Sima Yi. While he praised his military achievements as his service to the Cao-Wei overall, he was highly critical of the one who was just a subject (*beimian* 北面) to initiate the overthrow of power. Taizong picked up on the criticism from the last three anecdotes and criticized Sima Yi for his disloyalty to the Cao-Wei rule. The comment emphasized the proper ruler-subject relationship and can be read as a warning to the officials at the time.¹⁶ As a Cao-Wei official, Sima Yi should have been loyal to the Emperor Wen of Wei 魏文帝 (Cao Pi 曹丕; r. 220-226) and the Emperor Ming of Wei 魏明帝 (Cao Rui 曹叡; r. 226-239).¹⁷ For obvious reasons, Taizong disregarded the fact that he himself caused a disturbance and rebelled against the existing regime of Sui 隋 (581-619), not to mention his violence and fratricide. But for Taizong, castigating Sima Yi's case was a powerful example to prevent potential insurgent behavior of his ministers and coterie.

Overall, Taizong criticism was directed at Sima Yi's personality, and he attributed Sima Yi's actions to seeking personal gain. In addition to referring to Eastern Jin's emperor statement above Taizong went further to humiliate Sima Yi and in his criticism chose to mock Sima Yi with words of one of the illegitimate rulers and non-Chinese, Shi Le 石勒 (274-333): "[And this is why] Shi Le made his reckless statement, ridiculing the obscene way in which [Emperor Hsuan] established the enterprise."¹⁸ 石勒肆言，笑姦回以定業。¹⁹ Taizong once again reminded that it was

¹⁶ More on the perception of the official in Chapter 3.

¹⁷ "He received the deathbed trust of the Emperor, but did not reciprocate with undying loyalty ... How could such a loyal statesman have been like this!" 曾無殉生之報 ... 貞臣之體，寧若此乎！ Fairbank, p. 361 and *JS* 1.21.

¹⁸ Fairbank, p. 360.

¹⁹ *JS* 1.21.

inappropriate to undermine Wei as they still had the mandate. But clearly the attack was very personal and directed solely at Sima Yi and not the official Jin regime, as Taizong continued saying that “blessings passed on to his (Sima Yi) posterity.”²⁰ It implied that while what Sima Yi did was wrong and his methods were not right, Sima Yan’s ascension to the throne was justified.²¹

As the ruler of the nascent unified regime, Tang Taizong was looking for precedents in the past and antiquity to help him establish what his own position was and how to justify himself and his decision based on the past examples. His closest example was Sui Yangdi 隋煬帝 (r. 604-618), the second and last emperor of the Sui dynasty while Tang Taizong was a second emperor of Tang. The Sui emperor’s failed campaign to Korea and was deemed a tyrant who was blamed for the fall of his regime. Taizong deemed himself a benevolent ruler who treated his people and his ministers with utmost care as the father would attend to his child. He also embarked on the campaigns to Goguryeo 高句麗 to prove that, unlike his failed predecessor, he would succeed. Sima Yan unified the regime but because of a number of bad political decisions lost half of the country to the invasions from the north. Taizong ruled the unified China and extended its territory immensely making right choices and listening to his officials. The history of precedents was a powerful knowledge that each ruler possessed which helped one define the course of one’s rulership. The legitimacy factory, check Damien Chaussende (concluding chapter?+examination of early medieval historiography) and his argument on ties of Sanguo zhi and Jin rule and Jin shu and Tang Taizong's rule

²⁰ 慶流後昆 JS 1.22.

²¹ Taizong was also critical of Sima Yan, first emperor of Jin, but, in this case, he focused on his governing skills and decisions he made, such as the choice of heir. See below in this chapter.

Ways of Legitimate Succession

Chinese idea of rule legitimacy was the concept of “correct succession” (*zhengtong* 正統) that focused on the rules of succession.²² As in the case of Sima Yan or Tang Taizong, as well as many other examples throughout Chinese history, things did not go as planned and while the ascent to power was sudden and unexpected it had to be justified in the historical narratives. The most popular type of rule legitimization from Han to the southern dynasties was a ritual of abdication (as mentioned above). The transfer of power from Sui to Tang also followed the abdication strategy.²³ Cao Cao 曹操 followed the Han dynasty example, and likewise Sima Yi’s, grandfather of the first emperor of Jin, followed Cao Cao’s example when taking over Wei.²⁴

Many times, portents and prophecies would signify the advent of the future ruler. Four years before power takeover by the Tang, a nursery rhyme came in circulation that prophesied someone of Li surname coming to take over the regime of Sui.²⁵ The poem was incorporated in the narrative on Tang Taizong’s father, future Tang Gaozu 高祖 (Li Yuan 李淵; 566-635, r. 618-626), who is recorded to interpret the sign as Heaven’s will sanctioning his rule.²⁶ Tang Taizong was more

²² Chaussende, p. 29.

²³ Liu Puning, “Political legitimacy in Chinese history: the case of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-535)” (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2018), p. 117.

²⁴ For a detailed description of when Sima Yi started the process and how his sons strategized the final transfer of power see Carl Leban and Albert Dien, “The Accession of Sima Yan, AD 265: Legitimation by Ritual Replication,” *Early Medieval China* 16 (2010): 1-50. There is also article by on ascension of Cao Pi, David R. Knechtges, “The Rhetoric of Imperial Abdication and Accession in a Third-Century Chinese Court: The Case of Cao Pi’s Accession as Emperor of the Wei Dynasty,” in David R. Knechtges and Eugene Vance, eds., *Rhetoric and the Discourses of Power in Court Culture: China, Europe, and Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp. 3-35.

²⁵ On several variations of the rhyme see Woodbridge Bingham, “The Rise of Li in a Ballad Prophecy,” *JAOS* 61.4 (1941): 272-280.

²⁶ Howard J. Wechsler, “The Founding of the T’ang Dynasty: Kao-tsu (reign 618-626),” in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T’ang China, 589-906, Part I*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 156.

skeptical of such prophecies and auguries and supported more practical approach in his government not relying on symbolism and predictions. Similarly, there were rhymes predicting the advent of Sima family to power as recorded in the *Sanguo zhi*. “What’s on Sima’s mind, is known to all and everyone.” 司馬昭之心, 路人皆知²⁷ Stephen Bokenkamp’s article about Taoist signs or auguries, prophecies on the future rulers, portents of a new ruler. “Chronicles” of the *Jin shu* abound in such narratives, including observation of celestial elements and portents. Also examples from *JS* ch. 86 Zhang Gui and ch. 87. (compare with Former Liang and Western Liang and their tracing of signs, how is it different from Wu example below) Symbolism was a loose category and was dependent on the convenient interpretation at the time. The example below also showed how sensitive and fragile the regime is at its very beginning.

When Emperor Wu first ascended the throne, he drew a divining straw and obtained the number “one.” The number of reigns in a dynasty depends upon whether the number id drawn is large or small. Since the emperor was plainly dismayed, all his ministers turned pale, and there was no one who had anything to say. The personal attendant, Pei Kai, then stepped forward and said: “Your servant has heard that ‘Heaven by attaining the One is limpid; earth by attaining the One is calm... and nobles and kings by attaining the One become the standard for the realm’”

The emperor was pleased and all the ministers sighed with relief.²⁸

晉武帝始登阼，探策得「一」。王者世數，繫此多少。帝既不說，群臣失色，莫能有言者。侍中裴楷進曰：「臣聞天得一以清，地得一以寧，侯王得一以為天下貞。」帝說，群臣歎服。²⁹

Lastly, and possibly, a derivative of the former (or the other way around) the narrative justification of the rule legitimacy included the system of *wuxing* 五行 (Five Elements). Each element³⁰ represented the dynastic regime and the proper succession replicated the succession of the five elements. Jin represented the metal (*jin* 金) and each successive regime represented the

²⁷ SGZ, 魏志高貴鄉公紀注.

²⁸ Mather p. 41.

²⁹ SSXY 2.19. Parallel in *JS* 35.

³⁰ Each element came with a set of characteristics, such as color, which were also used in identifying implications of certain events and portents.

successive element. It was generally accepted that Tang represented the earth (*tu* 土). However, the accepted dynastic sequence, all depended on which regimes in-between Jin and Tang (northern or southern dynasties, for example) were considered legitimate.³¹

For example, Taizong did not recognize the southern Liu-Song 劉宋 (420-479) dynasty as the successor to Jin.³² While the rise of Liu Yu 劉裕 (r. 420-422) to power from the perspective of the compiler of the *Song shu* 宋書 (History of the Liu-Song), Shen Yue 沈約 (441-513), was described in terms of *wuxing* theory.³³ Chen Shou was criticized for including the *wuxing* narratives on legitimacy of the state of Wu 吳 (222-280) in his history. The record is on the appearance of the yellow dragon in Wu. Here we see the connection of portents to the succession of Five Elements: yellow color which represented the earth was meant to signify the replacement of fire which signified Han rule.³⁴

The foreign regimes in their legitimization strategies were using a combination of several techniques but with a heavy focus on portents. Many used the features of the mystical account of the first emperor of Han, Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 202-195 BCE) seemed to serve as a prototype to delineate the circumstances of the one destined to be a ruler in the accounts of Sixteen Kingdoms. Those included conception dreams, unusual physiognomy and body features as well as the recognition of the kingly presence by the stranger.

³¹ More on a number of ways to place Tang dynasty within the *wuxing* system. Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, “Nanbei chao de lishi yichan yu Sui-Tang shidai de zhengtonglun 南北朝的歷史遺產與隋唐時代的正統論,” *Wenshi* 文史 2 (2013): 127-51. Page 48 includes a summarizing table of how Tang could have traced its succession from Han, Jin, southern or northern dynasties. Things could get very complicated due to varying statements throughout the Tang and within the Taizong’s rule. For example, historian’s comment 史臣曰 in *Jin shu* 86 described Tang to be a successor of Li Gao’s 李嵩 rule of Western Liang 西涼, one of the Sixteen Kingdoms. More in Chapter 4.

³² See his edict on the *JS* compilation discussed in Chapter 1.

³³ *Song shu* 2.46, 48.

³⁴ Achim Mittag and Ye Min, p. 353.

Unusual conception dreams were prevalent in “Chronicles.” Liu Yuan 劉淵 (d. 310),³⁵ the first ruler of Han Zhao 漢趙 was born after his mother³⁶ dreamed of a man-turned fish who gave her the essence of the sun (*rijing* 日精)³⁷ to swallow. Mother of Fu Jian 苻建 (317-355), ruler of the Former Qin 前秦, dreamed of a big brown bear 大羆³⁸ and Li Xiong’s 李雄 (274-334), ruler of Cheng Han, mother of a snake.³⁹ Liu Bang was born after his mother fell asleep at the lake and a dragon was hovering over her.

The unusual body features and congenital marks also indicated the physical features of the destined ruler.⁴⁰ Liu Bang had seventy-two black moles on his left thigh and exerted authority with his dominating statue. Likewise, Liu Yuan was very tall and had three very long hair coming out from above his heart.⁴¹ The marks on the body were also common and both Liu Yuan and Fu Jian. And like Liu Yuan and Liu Cong 劉聰 (d. 318), Fu Jian had monkey arms.⁴² “His arms hung past his knees, and his eyes had a purple light.”⁴³ 臂垂過膝，目有紫光。⁴⁴ Lastly, Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (Liu Bang) was a prototype of a classical ruler-recognition trope. Numerous examples included

³⁵ JS 101.2645.

³⁶ Mother was Lady Huyan 呼延, one of the original noble Xiongnu lines. Liu Yuan’s father Bao 豹 was the next in line to the *shanyu* 單于 (chief of the Xiongnu). Therefore, based on his noble lineage, Liu Yuan was also “destined” to the highest rank among the Xiongnu. Honey, p. 18, n. 11.

³⁷ The element of light seems to have been adopted into Chinese historiographical tradition from nomadic lore. First time it explicitly appears in the biography of a Xianbei, Tan Shihuai 檀石槐 (136-181) (*San guo zhi*, 30.837; *Hou Han shu*, 97.2989), itself based on nomadic oral epics, and itself was based on nomadic oral epics. Honey, p. 43, n. 106. See his dissertation, pp. 377-9, n. 5 for extended analysis on the light *topos*.

³⁸ JS 112.

³⁹ JS 121.

⁴⁰ Lessa, Chinese Body Divination and Zhu P., Han dai de xiangren shu, 116-118.

⁴¹ 當心有赤毫毛三根，長三尺六寸 JS 101.2646.

⁴² Apparently, similar characteristics were considered auspicious in Indian narrative tradition. “Dschi, Hian-lin, “Indian Physiognomical Characteristics in the Official Annals for the Three Kingdoms, the Chin Dynasty and the Southern and Northern Dynasties.” *Studia Serica* 1 (1949): 100.

⁴³ Michael Rogers, trans and annot., *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 111.

⁴⁴ JS 113.2883.

Liu Yuan,⁴⁵ Liu Cong, Shi Le (4 times), Shi Hu, Fu Jian,⁴⁶ Murong Wei, Murong Jun, Yao Chang, and Li Xiong, as well as future Sui Yangdi and Tang Taizong (濟世安民, thus Li Shimin)⁴⁷

Such narratives clearly attempted to reflect classical structures and symbolism of the middle kingdom despite the fact that Western and Eastern Jin did not incorporate the narratives of mysterious conception or unusual physiognomy. The focus of the foreign states was specifically on the rule-legitimization ways of Han and its first emperor. The accounts in “Chronicles” also incorporated examples of the rulers who were well-educated and strove to promote classical learning. They politely declined to ascend the throne and once they did, announced general amnesty and proceeded to build schools and promote agriculture.⁴⁸ It might be interpreted as the foreign regimes striving to be incorporated under the Chinese rule but at the same time the purported subservience could be one of the techniques used to their benefit. And actually, allow one’s foreign regime not be incorporated under the Chinese influence. Making use of a well-known dominant cultural sphere and its rhetoric in most cases could be intended for the future justification of one’s legitimacy if one were to rule over China.

Unification and Reunification

The regimes of Sima Yan and Tang Taizong both achieved the reunification of the countries. Empire’s unity was a guarantee of peace and order (disregarding the means to achieve it and circumstances of the “lesser” states being incorporated).⁴⁹ Sustaining such state was where

⁴⁵ 「此人形貌非常，吾所未見也。」 JS 101

⁴⁶ 「此兒有霸王之相。」 JS 113

⁴⁷ Rogers, p.194, n.16.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 4 on imitation of typical decisions made by the new ruler of Sixteen Kingdoms.

⁴⁹ Chen Shou treating Three Kingdoms as a transitional period leading to the unified empire of Jin reflected the official perspective of the court and the opinions of those who wanted to takeover Wu. “Historiography in the Post-Han,” p. 352.

Taizong and Jin Wudi differed. Taizong in his imperial pronouncement on Emperor Wu made sure to point the mistakes in Sima Yan's policies that failed to sustain the rule.⁵⁰ While he was correct in his evaluation he also knew what the result of the Sima Yan's choices were. It was easier for Taizong to dictate the right choice of action once it happened. At the same time, it provided him with an opportunity of advantageous comparison. While, essentially, Taizong was lucky that it turned out well for him

The terminology and official rhetoric of the unification efforts are important to define in the historical narratives as the benevolent rule of the newly-established regime would want to distinguish them from occupation and military takeover. There was a difference between the conquest of Shu and Wu and the fights against the foreign/illegitimate/non-Han regimes. Therefore, the takeover of the states of Shu and Han was deemed the middle kingdom reclaiming its original territories. The "Chronicles" section in the *JS*, on the other hand, clearly delineated the northern regimes as illegitimate, and Eastern Jin and succeeding southern regimes were fighting them to take back the territories without the regard for the population.

The unification and reunification of the country, therefore, was of the utmost importance for any regime that wanted to increase its popularity and gain a positive evaluation. Unification was on the mind of the Cao-Wei regime. After Cao Pi's death in 226 and the advent of Cao Rui as Emperor Ming 明, Cao-Wei military strategy underwent a dramatic change: it started to focus on the defense and shut down large-scale military operations. The government realized that the economic and agricultural development is a priority in order to sustain and boost future military efforts directed at final goal of the reunification. (富國強軍 "rich state, powerful army".⁵¹ Sima

⁵⁰ See section of the heir choice below and Chapter 3.

⁵¹ Killigrew's "Jin's Conquest of Eastern Wu," p. 6.

Zhao likewise realized the importance of the unified country for the people's support in the looming change of power. In 263, Sima Zhao drafted a strategic plan for unification, which claimed it was the right time to unify the realm and punish the two bandits (*er lu* 二虜), Shu-Han and Eastern Wu.⁵²⁵³ The plan worked as Sima Zhao became known for the conquest of Shu-Han in 264.

Conquest of Wu was more controversial as the government of Jin was preoccupied with the other problems and the court was split as to where to apply their military efforts as the northern neighbors were causing peace disturbance as well. One of the main proponents of the campaign, Yang Hu 羊祜 (221-278), when he saw that it was an opportune moment to attack Wu, framed his proposition as Jin as a liberator of the state of Wu from the suffering under their ruler Sun Hao 孫皓 (r. 264-280).

Instead of praising the increase of labor force and elaborating on the benefits of the people of Shu and Wu serving Jin, the historical narratives extolled the restoration of the order under the benevolent virtue of Jin after times of chaos and confusion.⁵⁴ It was also crucial to adopt a policy of acceptance of the people who submitted to the Jin rule. With the defeat of Wu in 280, the Western Jin immediately adopted a policy of reconciliation with the Wu elite. In 283, they invited fifteen former Wu officials to take up posts at the court in Luoyang.⁵⁵ They were all from prominent Wu families. Among them were famous poets, two brothers, Lu Ji 陸機 and Lu Yun 陸雲, went to Jin court in 289.⁵⁶

⁵² JS 2.38.

⁵³ Killigrew's "Jin's Conquest of Eastern Wu," p. 14

⁵⁴ Achim Mittag and Ye Min, p. 351.

⁵⁵ JS 54.1487.

⁵⁶ David R. Knechtges, "Sweet-peel Orange or Southern Gold" in Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges, eds., *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature: In Honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman*. (Provo, Utah: T'ang Studies Society, 2003), p. 28.

The historical narratives, however, went further in the reaffirmation of the decisions in the state of power. Not only the state itself, obviously, supported its course, but its decisions also received an acknowledgement from the outside. *JS* records a conversation between Sima Yan and two officers, who were given positions in the Jin government. Sima Yan did not only bring up the topic of the fall of Wu but also asked to analyze the cause for destruction of their state. While the first officer mentioned that it happened because there was no trust between the ruler and officials, the second one, Wu Yan 吾彦, actually confirmed Sun Hao's capabilities. Curiously, the answer does not make Sima Yan angry and he continues to inquire about the reasons of Wu's fall. Wu Yan then gave the right answer and explained that it was part of the overall cosmological scheme of things, and Sima Yan was destined to receive the mandate of heaven.⁵⁷ The idea of different perspectives and pursuit of different interests by framing the narrative in a particular way can be imagined by switching the source of the narrative above. Were it written from the perspective of the person who just lost his homeland the picture would be different.

Reunification was a distinction achieved by the Jin Wudi. However, in Taizong's comments he methodically looked into the reasons for the end of Jin and did not focus on Sima Yan's achievements. This shows not only how selective the historical writings are but also how the audience picks the narratives that are more suitable. The choice of the right narratives and framing them in the way that is more advantageous to one's image reflected more on the audience rather than the content of the narrative. Taizong picking Sima Yi reflected on his insecurity about his rise to power and questioned his loyalty potentially suspicious of his ministers' intentions. When Taizong picked Sima Yan, one of his criticisms was directed towards Sima Yan's choice of heir.

⁵⁷ Killigrew, p. 31-32, *JS* 57.1562.

Taizong himself faced a tough dilemma three years ago which possibly questioned the correctness of his decisions.

Choice of Heir

The two emperors Emperor Taizong of Tang and Emperor Wu of Jin 晉武帝 (236-290, r. 266-290) by another similarity both faced a succession crisis. The difficulties in making decision and the repercussions on the choice of the heir apparent was not unique to the two of them. While traditionally the eldest son had to ascend the throne next, the circumstances allowed much flexibility with the historical sources carefully justifying the final selection in case it was not within the rules. Similarly, the country's future also depended on the right choice of the ministers and officials. The image of a minister who was right for the position was fluid and was framed by the contemporary situation and circumstances. While the ideal of wise and righteous minister was in the background, insubordination and abandonment of duties in times of chaos and instability could have been explained, justified and forgiven. The official going into hiding and retreating to reclusion might not have been a characteristic of eccentric behavior but could be interpreted as an expression of precocity and wisdom. As in the case of strategizing of how to present the historical narrative at the advent of one's reign, similar decisions had to be made on how to frame key political decisions and choices: future crown prince, closest advisors and who these advisors are and what they are allowed to do. Essentially, the structuring of the narrative happened *post factum* and depended on how the situation was to be represented based on contemporary situation in the time of compilation. The ones in charge decided positive and negative sides of the story, whom to blame and whom to absolve, as well as how the narrative from the past might reflect on the current situation.

Taizong chose his eldest son, Li Chengqian 李承乾 (d. 645), as the heir apparent shortly after his accession to the throne in 626. The crown prince started to behave strangely, dressed up in the foreign clothes and spoke Turkish, and basically rejected Chinese imperial way of behavior.⁵⁸ Due to that as well as many perturbations and conflicts among Taizong's children and family the original nominee for crown prince was removed. After the banishment and, soon, death of his son Taizong was strongly inclined to nominate Li Tai 李泰 (620-653). But Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659)⁵⁹ was adamant in his opposition and, instead, suggested to nominate the youngest son, Li Zhi 李治 (628-683, r. 649-683), the future emperor Gaozong 唐高宗. The situation seemed to have been resolved on its own as Li Tai started to threaten Li Zhi and had to be exiled. However, the heir dilemma was not resolved for Taizong as he was still hesitating about the choice and started to consider yet another option: Li Ke 李恪 (d. 653).⁶⁰ Li Ke reminded him of his younger self. Despite his personal preferences, since the other two influential ministers, Fang Xuanling⁶¹ and Chu Suiliang,⁶² also strongly supported the nomination of Li Zhi, Li Zhi ended up being chosen to be the crown prince in 643.⁶³ The final choice came from the ministers, not the ruler and father, and possibly signified for Taizong a potential of emulating his own violent rise to power.

⁵⁸ The focus on foreign attire is curious as in Tang the Xianbei-style male clothing: tunics, trousers, and boots, lost its ethnic association and became standard male dress at least in Tang art. Kate A. Lingley, "Naturalizing the Exotic: On the Changing Meanings of Ethnic Dress in Medieval China," *Ars Orientalis* 38 (2010): 51-80.

⁵⁹ His sister was Taizong's wife. Zhangsun Wuji was one of the Taizong's closest associates in the Xuanwu Gate 宣武門 incident. Zhangsun Wuji's strategy worked as he did exert a considerable influence on the next emperor of Tang.

⁶⁰ Son of Sui Yangdi's 隋煬帝 (r. 604-618), daughter. Sui Yangdi was the last ruler of the Sui dynasty (581-618) overthrown by Li Yuan 李淵 (r. 618-626), Taizong's father, emperor Tang Gaozu 唐高祖.

⁶¹ Served as a chancellor to Taizong and was listed as a main editor of the *JS* compilation.

⁶² Also known as a calligrapher. Served as a chancellor to Taizong and Gaozong and was in charge of the compilation of Taizong's court diaries and was part of the *JS* editorial team.

⁶³ See more in Howard J. Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator" in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 236-39.

As Taizong had secured the nomination from the onset of his rule the sudden change seemed to unsettle him and he was still doubting whether it was a right decision. He wrote *Difan* 帝範 (Model for an Emperor), his will and advice to his son and future emperor on the basics of governance, right before his death in 649. Explicitly, *Difan* served to edify the future ruler and described basic rules of governance that at the same time highlighted emperor Taizong's own achievements. By outlining the standards which the emperor of China should follow Taizong implied his own adherence to them making his own reign a golden standard.

Around the same time of writing the *Difan* and three years after the final change of heir apparent, Taizong issued the order calling for the *JS* compilation. Since the *JS* did not have a direct connection with Taizong's immediate past or future, him criticizing the first ruler of Western Jin, Sima Yan 司馬炎, and evaluating his government revealed more specific details of Taizong's thinking and character. It does not seem to be a coincidence that he picked Sima Yan to comment on: the choice of heir in Sima Yan's case had decided the fate of the country. As a newly-established ruler of Tang about to transfer his legacy, Taizong unconsciously was still seeking other ways to justify the irregular choice of his heir. Despite the similarities between the two rulers, against the background of failure of Sima Yan's political choices, Taizong's decisions, particularly the choice of the heir, seemed wise, justified, and thought out. Even if Taizong was still insecure about the final choice of Li Zhi, there is a realization that similarity in the historical patterns and the ways to discuss them can be used more efficiently to deliver a powerful message or serve a particular goal about one's current situation and justify one's questionable choices. Berating Sima Yan was also a way of justifying Xuanwu Gate incident when Taizong killed his brothers, one of them being an heir to the throne. The justification was very simple: he disqualified the unfit ruler.

Unlike Taizong, Sima Yan followed traditional customs of choosing the eldest as the heir apparent. Also, unlike Taizong, he seemed to ignore the advice of the majority of his ministers and adhered to his initial choice. He assigned Sima Zhong 司馬衷 (Emperor Hui of Jin 晉惠帝, 259-307, r. 290-301, 301-307), oldest but developmentally disabled son, as the crown prince. He disregarded the court members who urged him to pick Sima Yan's talented younger brother Sima You 司馬攸 (248-283).⁶⁴ Sima Yan's uncle, older brother of Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211-265),⁶⁵ Sima Shi 司馬師 (208-255),⁶⁶ passed away without leaving any male offspring, and Sima Zhao to continue his brother's line made his younger son, Sima You, Sima Shi's adopted son. Sima You enjoyed popularity at the court but both of the times failed to become an emperor. In the first case, the choice was between Sima Yan himself and Sima You. The establishment of Sima Yan then was considered "correct."⁶⁷ The second time, in the choice between Sima Zhong and Sima You, Sima Zhong was the "wrong" one. The choice of heir was one of the crucial reasons that caused the ceaseless fight for power after Emperor Wu's death and in the end led to a loss of northern and central China.

The heir choice delineated factional divisions in the case of Jin Wudi unlike the case of Tang Taizong. Being aware and wary of the patterns that history or past events render Taizong, might have been uneasy when his court members had a final say in who would take over next. In the case of Western Jin, striving to take over the power in the court one group at the court supported Sima

⁶⁴ Second son of Sima Zhao, became an heir to his uncle Sima Shi, but was passed over by Sima Zhao's eldest son. Sima You's son Sima Jiong was one of the Eight Princes. *JSCD*, p. 171.

⁶⁵ Posthumously titled Emperor Wen of Jin 晉文帝, he defeated Shu-Han 蜀漢 (221-263) and reclaimed its territory helping him to gain support to overthrow existing Cao-Wei 曹魏 (220-266) regime and establish his son as the regent of Western Jin. *JSCD*, p. 172.

⁶⁶ Posthumously titled Emperor Jing of Jin 晉景帝, he was also influential in the process that led to establishment of Jin dynasty. *JSCD*, p. 174.

⁶⁷ I will talk about the heir dilemma when the choice was between Sima Yan and Sima You later in the chapter.

You, and the other supported Sima Zhong's nomination. The reasons for Sima Yan's final choice are unclear. In his mind, Emperor Wu, while pressured by either clique at the court, might have been simply choosing the lesser of the evils and the path of least resistance to encounter less confrontation from the court. It could be also that Sima Yan harbored intimate attachment to his son as a parent and wanted to follow the rules of succession and thought the choice would be better for the future.

Nevertheless, the choice of the heir was thought as one of the major shortcomings of the Jin Wudi and one of the main causes for the fall of Western Jin. Discussion of his choice occupied the imaginations of the following generations. The following anecdote from the *SSXY* interpreted the difficulty of Sima Yan as the one in power struggling to balance between personal preferences and the major political decisions. In the narrative, Emperor Wu is presented as seemingly not aware of Sima Zhong not being suitable as the crown prince. In the account, one of the emperor's closest ministers, Wei Guan 衛瓘 (220-291),⁶⁸ pretended to be drunk and lamented for the future of the throne. While Sima Yan just laughed, the narrative added its own interpretation commenting that the emperor actually realized what was going on after hearing Wei Guan's remark. Wei Guan provided no explanation for his comment but the author of this section pointed out that Emperor Wu's reaction implied that he understood what his minister was referring to. However, the account did not explain the particular motivation behind the emperor's choice.

Since Emperor Wu *was not fully aware* of the feeble-mindedness of the crown prince, he held tenaciously to his intention of having him carry on the succession. The prominent ministers, for their part, mostly offered up honest counsels against it. The emperor was once at a gathering on the Lingyun Terrace (on the palace ground at Luoyang) when Wei Guan was in attendance by his side. Wishing somehow to state what was in his heart, Wei took the occasion to kneel before the emperor as though he were drunk, stroking the dais on which he was sitting, and crying: "Alas for this seat!"

⁶⁸ Cao-Wei's official who served Jin dynasty and was one of the most outspoken officials about Emperor Wu's choice of heir apparent. *JSCD*, p. 834.

The emperor, although *aware* of what he meant, laughed and said: “Are you drunk?”⁶⁹
 晉武帝既不悟太子之愚，必有傳後意。諸名臣亦多獻直言。帝嘗在陵雲臺上坐，
 衛瓘在側，欲申其懷，因如醉跪帝前，以手撫床曰：「此坐可惜。」帝雖悟，因
 笑曰：「公醉邪？」⁷⁰

Similar episodes related to ministers opposing Emperor Wu’s heir choice appear throughout the Tang’s final compilation of the *JS*. Likewise, the importance of the event for the future of the regime was discussed in Sima Yan’s biography. At the end of the chapter on Sima Yan there is a summarizing paragraph right before the official judgement written by Taizong.⁷¹ The summary is much more straightforward than the passage above and, instead of insinuating, makes a straightforward remark and criticizes Sima Yan for *knowing* about the incompetence of his son and yet not deposing him. In addition, it attempts to explicate the particular choice of the Jin emperor and hint at his motivation:

Consequently, until the end he *knew* that Emperor Hui is unable to succeed his predecessors. But still relied on wisdom and sharpness of his grandson and therefore did not have intention to depose [Emperor Hui].

爰至末年，知惠帝弗克負荷，然恃皇孫聰睿，故無廢立之心。⁷²

Taizong in his criticism that followed the above summary expanded on it and provided further interpretation. The Tang emperor made it clear that the excuse of relying on grandson mentioned

⁶⁹ Mather, “Admonitions and Warnings,” p. 300-1. Emphasis is mine.

⁷⁰ SSXY 10.7. The *JS* version of the passage (*JS* 36.1058-9, biography of Wei Guan) is much more detailed and shifts focus to the tensions in the Jin Wudi’s court reflecting the opposing parties that supported and were against Sima Zhong’s nomination. The anecdote is used to explain why Wei Guan became despised by Jin Huidi’s first wife, Jia Nanfeng 賈南風 (257-300). “Because of this Empress Jia bore a grudge against [Wei] Guan” 賈后由是怨瓘. The passage seemed to originate from one of the earlier versions of the *JS*, *Jin yangqiu* 晉陽秋 by Sun Sheng 孫盛 (ca. 302-373). In the latter, the passage is followed by another example of the crown prince’s incompetency and writes “After that Lady Jia’s father, Jia Chong, said to her, ‘That old rascal Wei Guan nearly ruined your family!’ From this point on Lady Jia was resentful of Guan and subsequently had him executed.” 於是賈充語妃曰：「衛瓘老怒，幾敗汝家。」由是怨瓘，後遂殺之。 Comment in SSXY 10.7. Translation from Mather, p. 301.

⁷¹ The passage might have been originally part of the standard historian’s comment 史臣曰 as it provided a summary of the chapter and did not add any new information on the emperor’s biography. Since Taizong wrote his own evaluation of the chapter, the summary was not titled as the historian’s comment.

⁷² *JS* 3.

above would not work and what should be done for the country should be done in spite of personal circumstances. In the evaluation of Jin Wudi, Taizong picked the Jin emperor's choice of heir for his criticism also marking it as the root of the crisis and fall of Western Jin. He wrote:

Emperor Hui could be removed and was not removed. This eventually brought about the collapse of the Great Work (that is, the foundation of the Jin). [...] To renounce a son is a minor suffering; to ensure the security of the country is great filial piety.⁷³
 惠帝可廢而不廢，終使傾覆洪基。... 棄一子者忍之小，安社稷者孝之大⁷⁴

Tang Taizong based on his own experience sympathized with Sima Yan and recognized precisely the hardest part of making such decision: that is, potentially stripping one's son of opportunities and ceasing the direct continuation of the royal line. But at the same time, he criticized Sima Yan who should have been alert at that time and given up on the aspect that involved personal considerations. Relying on precedents from the past, such as case of Jin Wudi, Taizong justified his own choice to break the rule of inheritance and to switch the heir. It was easy for Taizong to judge the situation as he knew its consequences and himself enjoyed prosperity and peaceful time. But just like in Sima Yan's case things could have gone wrong if Taizong was less lucky or other circumstances were in play. In the end, Sima Yan and Taizong were not that much different from each other as they faced similar choices and wanted similar things.

Taizong's coterie also supported Taizong's evaluation of the situation likewise placing importance on the right person rather than ritually correct. In some of their historian's remarks to the *JS*, they criticize the choice of the heir and place blame on him for the ensuing disorders in the country and its disintegration. Summarizing remarks in chapter four on annals of Sima Zhong (*JS* 4.108) read: "Not talented son yet was praised by Heaven as great" 不才之子，則天稱大, and in

⁷³ Translation from Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au IIIe siècle* (Paris: Belles lettres, 2010), pp. 84-85.

⁷⁴ *JS* 3.82.

chapter fifty-nine on the Eight Princes 八王 read: “from the time when Emperor Hui lost the reins of government, trouble broke out within one’s own doors” 自惠皇失政，難起蕭牆。⁷⁵

Many passages from the *SSXY* that have their origins from the versions of the Jin history written in the fourth century discuss the details of Sima Yan’s final decision not as a choice to pick or not Sima Zhong but specifically as a choice between Sima You and Sima Zhong.⁷⁶ The narratives were written from the perspectives of the officials who tried to dissuade the emperor to choose Sima Zhong. Many supported Sima You but there were a few who were afraid of Sima You’s popularity and were not on good terms with him. Therefore, instead, they chose to strongly promote Sima Yan’s son nomination to the point of persuading the emperor that his son is of sound judgement and is able to continue the legacy of his father well. To increase the chances of Sima Zhong’s nomination they persuaded the emperor to alienate Sima You. They made the emperor to send his brother to administer a remote principality remote from the capital, where Sima You passed away.⁷⁷ The final *JS* compilation incorporated and sided with the majority of narratives that were strongly against the choice of Sima Zhong and lamented the fate of Sima You. However, one curious *SSXY* anecdote about Huan Wen 桓溫⁷⁸ (312-373) evaluating Sima Yan’s heir decision, did not make it to the compilation:

Contemporaries were discussing together which was the greater mistake of Emperor Wu of Jin: his banishment of his younger brother, the Prince of Qi (Sima You), or his establishment of Emperor Hui as crown prince. The majority held that the establishment

⁷⁵ *JS* 59.1627.

⁷⁶ For example, entry in the comment to *SSXY* 5.11, p. 320 from *Jin zhugongzan* 晉諸公贊 (parallel in Wang Ji’s 王濟 biography in *JS* 42.1205) and the entry to *SSXY* 5.9 from *Jin yangqiu* and *Jin ji* 晉紀 by Gan Bao 干寶 (d. 336) (appears in He Qiao’s 和嶠 [d. 292] biography in *JS* 45.1283).

⁷⁷ *JS* 39.1162.

⁷⁸ One of the greatest generals of his time who was successful on a number of military campaigns against Former Qin and Former Yan and was able to return some of the lands to Jin regime (Cheng-Han) after its loss of the northern China. He essentially performed a coup d’état by setting up the youngest son of the first emperor of Eastern Jin, Sima Yu 司馬昱, (r. 371-372) as the emperor to set up a stage for his own establishment as the ruler. Huan Wen’s death, however, prevented him from realizing his ambitions.

of Emperor Hui was the graver mistake. But Huan Wen said, “You’re wrong. He had his son continue his father’s work, and younger brother carry on the family sacrifices. What was improper about that?”⁷⁹

時人共論晉武帝出齊王之與立惠帝，其失孰多。多謂立惠帝為重。桓溫曰：不然，使子繼父業，弟承家祀，有何不可？⁸⁰

It is not clear whether Huan Wen was portrayed as being serious or sarcastic. But it seems that the narratives of ambiguous nature or potential variability in interpretation such as the above did not make the final compilation of the *JS*. The *Jin shu* also shows a presentation bias against focus on military action in its favorable appraisal of Xie An 謝安 (320-385) over his militaristic rival, Huan Wen.⁸¹ Liu Xiaobiao’s 劉孝標 (462-521) commentary furthermore disputed the veracity of the account claiming that people such as Huan Wen could not have said that.⁸² The debate did not focus on one mistake of the Emperor Wu, but, instead disputed the potential severity of either decision. Huan Wen’s conclusion turned the issue around as he claimed that both decisions were the right courses of action. Such view presented an unpopular opinion, and perhaps, that is why Liu Xiaobiao did not accept the attribution as veritable.⁸³ The passage did stand out from the widely-accepted perspective of what the right course of action for the emperor should be.⁸⁴

In contrast, the history of the Jin dynasty presented another case of heir dilemma, which also involved Sima You and concerned the nomination of Sima Yan himself. Sima Zhao, father of the future Emperor Wu of Jin, faced the tough choice himself. His elder brother, Sima Shi, passed

⁷⁹ Mather, “Grading Excellence,” p. 276.

⁸⁰ *SSXY* 9.32.

⁸¹ Andrew Chittick points out that in *SSXY* there is a good portion of positive anecdotes about Huan Wen especially referring to his earlier years. Andrew Chittick, “Dynastic Legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch’ih and the Problem of Huan Wen,” *Asia Major* (Third Series) 11.1 (1988): 36-37.

⁸² Potentially the dismissal of Liu Xiaobiao might have had affected future borrowings of this passage and its inclusion in the *JS*. I mention another example of the commentator’s disbelief of another comment attributed to Wang Dao in Chapter 4. The episode was not part of the *JS* compilation either.

⁸³ Potentially, the author of the passage tried to use the familiar and authoritative figure to draw attention to the statement itself.

⁸⁴ The passage reflected the composite nature of the *SSXY*: a variety of opinions versus a set perspective in the official compilation.

away without leaving any male offspring, and Sima Zhao made his younger son, Sima You to be Sima Shi's adopted son. When it was time for Sima Zhao to choose a designated heir, it was not a straightforward decision as he was considering Sima You to become future ruler and continue his brother's legacy. As the situation was not considered common, the final selection of Sima Yan warranted an explanation. It appeared from the very beginning of the chapter on Sima Yan in "Annals" section of the *JS*:

Previously, as Emperor Jing (Sima Shi) was the heir to Emperor Xuan (Sima Yi) but died early and without descendants, Emperor Wen (Sima Zhao) chooses [Sima] You, younger brother of Emperor (Wu), as successor to Emperor Jing. [Sima Zhao] particularly liked [Sima] You. He said that he was only temporarily occupying the place of the minister and that, at his death, the Great Enterprise would come back to [Sima] You. Often, he would say, "This is Prince Jing's Empire, how can I interfere?" When there was about a counsel to establish an heir, he was considering [naming] [Sima] You. He Zeng (199-279)⁸⁵ and others told him emphatically: "The leader of pacifying armies (Emperor Wu) is intelligent and imposing, his abilities are immense. His hair touches the ground, his arms are above his knees. This cannot be the likeness of a subject!" So it was decided. In the fifth month of the second year of the Xianxi Era (June 265), the Prince of Jin was appointed as the heir.⁸⁶

初，文帝以景帝既宣帝之嫡，早世無後，以帝弟攸為嗣，特加愛異，自謂攝居相位，百年之後，大業宜歸攸。每曰：「此景王之天下也，吾何與焉。」將議立世子，屬意於攸。何曾等固爭曰：「中撫軍聰明神武，有超世之才。髮委地，手過膝，此非人臣之相也。」由是遂定。⁸⁷

The particular circumstances of the situation and dilemma are clearly defined. Since under other circumstances, the ascension of the eldest son would not be an issue at all: the emperor assigning his eldest as the crown prince. The potential issue had to do with the legitimacy and sensitivity of the situation when replacing the previous rule.⁸⁸ As in the case with Sima Yan's choosing the heir, it also presented as a personal issue for Sima Zhao who wanted to honor his late

⁸⁵ He supported Sima clan when they took over and served as Great Tutor 太傅 under Emperor Wu. He was known for his extravagant lifestyle and love of delicacies. *JSCD*

⁸⁶ Chaussende, p. 289.

⁸⁷ *JS* 3.49.

⁸⁸ As we saw in Chapter Two: the questions of when does the rule start, who it starts with and proper way to justify it.

brother. But Sima Zhao fully transferred the responsibility of the personal dilemma to his ministers to resolve it. While in the case of Sima Yan, it appeared that the personal choice remained personal. The choice-making process reemphasized the split in the court but it should not be forgotten that it was also prompted by the division of opinions at the start. And in the end, it was Sima Yan, and not the court, who bore the responsibility despite Sima Yan potentially giving up to pressure from one of the court's cliques.

Just like the episode of Sima Yan's heir dilemma occurred throughout the *JS* compilation, the dilemma above reappeared in the biography of the future key minister of Sima Yan, Shan Tao 山濤 (205-283).⁸⁹ There is a similar dynamic of the ruler consulting his ministers and asking for their advice as in the passage above. But in this case, Shan Tao was the one who shined as he made a final and correct decision.

The beginning of Xianxi era (264-265) (...) At that time the emperor because of [Shan] Tao's solid reputation in his home town, ordered the crown prince⁹⁰ to pay a visit to him. The emperor assigned [Sima] You, Prince of Qi, to continue Emperor Jing's line.⁹¹ He also cherished [Sima] You from the beginning, and once he had asked Pei Xiu (224-271): "Grand General [Sima Shi] could not accomplish what he started, I only want to continue and uphold [his legacy] for the future undertakings, therefore if I establish You [as the successor] the merit will be attributed to my elder brother [Sima Shi]; what do you think?" [Pei] Xiu did not consider it permissible. The emperor also asked Tao the same thing. Tao replied: "To depose the elder and enthrone the younger is against ritual and it is inauspicious. The state's peace or instability will definitely result from this." The crown prince's candidacy was confirmed based on this. The crown prince personally paid a visit to Tao to thank him. When Emperor Wu accepted [rule by] abdication [of Cao-Wei Emperor], he took Tao be in the post of Chamberlain of Dependencies,⁹² and help escort Prince of Chenliu (246-303, Cao Huan) to go to Ye.

咸熙初 (...) 時帝以濤鄉閭宿望，命太子拜之。帝以齊王攸繼景帝后，素又重攸，嘗問裴秀曰：「大將軍開建未遂，吾但承奉後事耳。故立攸，將歸功於兄，何

⁸⁹ Famously known as one of the members of Zhulin qixian 竹林七賢 (Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove) group. He was also one of the key assistants to Emperor Wu reaching the position of Minister of Education (*situ* 司徒) (Hucker, p. 458), one of the Three Excellencies 三公. He was known for his selection of the officials. *JSCD*, p. 36.

⁹⁰ Sima Zhao's eldest son, future Emperor Wu, Sima Yan.

⁹¹ Sima Shi didn't have any sons.

⁹² Hucker, 466.

如？」秀以為不可，又以問濤。濤對曰：「廢長立少，違禮不祥。國之安危，恆必由之。」太子位於是乃定。太子親拜謝濤。及武帝受禪，以濤守大鴻臚，護送陳留王詣鄴。⁹³

In this version, Pei Xiu 裴秀 (224-271)⁹⁴ and Shan Tao represented court members who advised against the proposal. Shan Tao was prominent in the narrative as he was the one who presented his judgement (role that He Zeng played above). His reasoning is also rather different from the version in the “Annals.” The minister wanted to adhere to customs and ritual and warned about potential instability of the country. While the passage before stressed the royal nature of Sima Yan, implying that it was not possible for him to serve as a subject to Cao-Wei rule, the Shan Tao passage focused on the rules of succession and future of the rule. It might signify that the Shan Tao passage could have been composed later when the future of the Western Jin was already known. Moreover, further mentions of promotions of Shan Tao and his closer relationship between him and the emperor in Shan Tao’s biography required explanation.⁹⁵ The dynamics are very similar to what ministerial participation implied in the case of Taizong’s final choice of crown prince. Zhangsun Wuji and Chu Suiliang strongly supporting the nomination of the future Gaozong became Gaozong’s close associates. The continuity of the imperial line implied the ministerial continuity. Not only did the choice of the heir matter but it also mattered whom the officials chose to support.

In the two cases of heir dilemma, the contrast between Sima Zhao and Sima Yan’s choices are clear. While the emperor Sima Yan did not delegate the decision to his ministers and seemingly

⁹³ JS 43.

⁹⁴ JSCD

⁹⁵ Shan Tao, during the Western Jin period, held successively the offices of president of the Board of Civil Office, vice-president of the Imperial Secretariat, junior tutor to the crown prince, and director of instruction 司徒 – the latter one of the Three Excellencies (*san gong* 三公). Audrey Shapiro, *Contemplating the Ancients: Aesthetic and Social Issues in Early Chinese Portraiture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), citing fourth-century Yu Yu’s 虞預 (ca. 285-340) *Jin shu* 晉書, p. 83.

made Sima Zhong the crown prince on his own will, Sima Zhao was presented to do exactly the opposite. In the end, the able ministers, who seem to be few during the Sima Yan's reign, were the essential asset to the emperor and stability of the regime. Just as Taizong in the end heeded advice of the ministers when choosing his heir, Sima Zhao, after proper explanation from Shan Tao or He Zeng, did the same. The ruler should listen to the able ministers and the proper customs should be articulated and supported by the wise officials. Officials involved in the *Jin shu*'s compilation shared the same sentiment.⁹⁶ They were no less invested in promoting not only the image of a good official, but also the importance of advice the wise official gives. It was in their interest that their advice is heeded by the ruler. Chapter Three will explore the implications of the wise official and advisor to the ruler and whether or not it was the absence of the able ministers and generals that brought Jin dynasty to its demise.

⁹⁶ Michael Rogers argued that Taizong ministers' main purpose for compiling *Jin shu* was to caution Tang Taizong against military expansionism and therefore, they edited *JS* in a certain way. Michael Rogers, p. 40-46.

CHAPTER THREE: EDIFICATION AND LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Disaster and good fortune have no special gate whereby they enter: they are
precisely what people bring upon themselves.¹
— *Zuo zhuan*

When the country collapses what does it say about relationship of emperor-minister and their share of responsibility? Was it the emperor's responsibility to recognize the wrong decision with the help of the ministers or by himself? Was it minister's responsibility to take any possible action to warn the ruler and avert the danger? And who bore the burden of blame in case things went wrong? Clearly, it all depended on the source recounting the narrative, and the narrative could have been adjusted based on the writer's views and perception. Sima Zhao's choice was deemed correct as he was following the tradition and Taizong's decision was justified as well as he followed what was right for the future of his regime. Sima Yan, not his officials, on the other hand, was blamed for country's collapse. The biographies of the ministers who were against such decision amplified their righteousness with the cases of them dissuading the emperor, even to the point of pretending to get drunk. The incident was never discussed from the point of view that the officials were possibly not trying harder to sway the emperor and failed to prevent the danger. Therefore, the potential incompetence of the ministers was not at stake.

The one-sided evaluation of the issue reflected the standardized ideal image of the ruler surrounded by his wise advisors to ensure the prosperity of the state and its people. This idealized idea is reflected in Taizong's postulates in *Difan*, particularly, in section five, "Accepting Remonstrance" 納諫, on listening to ministers and encouraging his advisors to express their

¹ 禍福無門，唯人所召。Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, ed., *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, Xiang 23, p. 1079. Translation from Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg, trans., *Zuo Traditon/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* p. 1115.

opinion even in the cases when the emperor did not want to hear it.² Taizong reverberated the ideal of the right timing of their advice and support to the ruler. He compared the relationship of the ruler and his officials to that of carpenter and his materials, where the carpenter can utilize any type of the materials in his work.³ Therefore, in *Difan*'s interpretation any official could be valuable and it was up to the ruler to how make use of him, once again shifting focus from the potential blame on the minister to the emperor.

Perfect Official

Tang Taizong was very outspoken about the importance of being surrounded by good officials. He wrote about it in both *Difan* and *Jinjing*. And he also pointed out the crucial role of the ministers and the importance of their loyalty when he wrote his judgement on Sima Yan. By emphasizing the Confucian five relationships, Taizong drew connection between father-child relationship and that of the ruler-official:⁴

Moreover, the one who understands his child is a sagely father and the one who knows his subject is an enlightened ruler.⁵ If the child is unworthy then the home will perish and if the subject is not loyal then the country will be in turmoil. When the country is in turmoil it is not possible to pacify and when the family perishes it is not possible to be restored.

且知子者賢父，知臣者明君；子不肖則家亡，臣不忠則國亂；國亂不可以安也，家亡不可以全也。⁶

By criticizing Sima Yan's choices, Tang Taizong in his comment indirectly implied the importance of talented subjects and their judgement in decision making. Tang Taizong himself

² Taizong expressed very similar ideas in the *Jinjing* 金鏡 (The Golden Mirror) which he composed in the very beginning of his rule. He wrote that the ones who did not follow the advice came to eventual destruction.

³ Tang Taizong, *Difan* 帝範 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), pp. 15-16.

⁴ He brought up very similar connection between father and son and ruler and minister in the *Jinjing* and importance of filial piety and loyalty in each case.

⁵ Taizong in *Difan* also encouraged his son to behave like the "enlightened ruler."

⁶ *JS* 3.82.

was surrounded by a number of famous ministers, for example, Zhangsun Wuji who served as a chancellor and was the one who insisted on Li Zhi's candidacy and Fang Xuanling, another chancellor, who was the chief editor of the *Jin shu*. However, in this passage, unlike his works on rulership, Taizong shifted the focus from the ruler attentively attending to his minister's opinion to the discussion of the particular traits the ideal ministers should possess. The comment reflected on the responsibilities and characteristics of the loyal subject and could be potentially read as a warning to the officials as the entire country depended on their competence. The comment on loyalty to the regime is not devoid of duplicity, since the one who had caused a disturbance and rebelled not only against the existing regime of Sui but also against his family and his father was the future emperor Taizong. Obviously, Taizong never brought it up in his writings.⁷

Western Jin was known for a number of officials and court members whose unrestrained behavior and examples of opposition to etiquette norms became emblematic of the time. The *JS* reflected the phenomena of grouping those people together or providing their biographies in composite biographies' section of the compilation. Zhulin qixian 竹林七賢 (Seven Sages of Bamboo Grove) were the most famous example that grouped the biographies of their members in chapters forty-three and forty-nine. *JS* chapter forty-three included biographies of Shan Tao and Wang Rong with some addition of Wang Rong's family members who also exhibited unrestrained behavior.⁸ *JS* chapter forty-nine included biographies of the rest of Zhulin qixian group along with a number of other people mostly famous for their free and unrestrained lifestyle and unusual

⁷ There was also a tension between Tang Taizong and his father Gaozu as the latter remained in the main palace until 629 inadvertently reminding him of the Taizong's violent ascent to power. Denis Twitchett, "How to Be an Emperor: T'ang T'ai-tsung's Vision of his Role." *Asia Major* 9, no. 1/2 (1996): 14.

⁸ On structure of the family biographies also representative of Wei-Jin times see Chapter 1.

customs.⁹ Overall, the ministers and literati who exhibited such behavior were generally blamed by the later generations for disregard of their duties and referred to as one of the reasons for the fall of Western Jin.

But was it immorality or sheer incompetence that might have ruined the country? The Tang editors who served as the key advisors to Taizong might have focused on the former to dismiss even the possibility that the minister in Jin (and officials in general) might have lacked the required qualifications.¹⁰ Therefore, the biographies of the worthy officials might have been adjusted based on the idealized function of the righteous official. The aspired qualities would be accentuated and the less-desired qualities would be sterilized in order to not contradict the desired image. While the emperor should heed to his talented ministers what were the characteristics that distinguished the one? The *JS* compilation hinted not only at the idea that there is a set of characteristics of the perfect official but actually cracked open an entire new level of ramifications of what it could mean when serving as the official. Despite being ascribed to Zhulian qixian group, Shan Tao was a prominent minister of the Western Jin. As we saw above, Shan Tao indirectly took credit for the enthronement of the Emperor Wu. His account abounds in the interactions between him and Sima clan members, more importantly, the Emperor Wu of Jin. And we will see below, biographical records of Shan Tao promoted the idea of a perfect official to whom the emperor should listen. Shan Tao's account is followed by the biography of Wang Rong 王戎 (234-305),¹¹ the youngest member of the Zhulin qixian, and the anti-example of the ideal official, whose behavior and

⁹ Those included Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263), Ruan Xian 阮咸 (234-305), Xi Kang 嵇康 (223-262) Xiang Xiu 向秀 (ca. 227-272), and Liu Ling 劉伶 (ca. 221-300).

¹⁰ David Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu: The Biography of Liu Yüan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1990).

¹¹ A Western Jin *mingshi* 名士 (famous scholar) and official. He contributed to the pacification of Wu and ultimately served as a Minister of Education. *JSCD*, p. 47.

noninvolvement in the affairs signified the qualities of the ministers who could be responsible for bringing the entire country down. Due to the variegated nature of its sources the JS compilation challenged the fixed ideas about immorality, unrestrained behavior, and reclusion. Eccentric mode of conduct that prevailed among the elite in Luoyang in the 290s reflected a spectrum of acceptable behavior for the ruler's coterie and what it could signify at that time.

Proper Behavior and Sincerity

Just as Emperor Wu of Jin closely interacted with Shan Tao, Sima Zhao, Emperor Wu's father, while not officially titled an emperor, enjoyed similar privileges and was known by his close relationship with another Zhulian qixian group member, Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210-263).¹² Sima Zhao did not only approve of Ruan Ji and his eccentric behavior but even encouraged and allowed it.¹³

The discourse on propriety and what indicated a proper behavior of the minister or people in charge of accompanying and advising the ruler revolved a lot around adherence to mourning rites and proper rituals. The implication was similar: son's devotion to his parents was an indication of subject's loyalty to the ruler.¹⁴ Shan Tao stood out in his expression of filial piety when his mother passed away and went beyond the standard rituals of mourning for one's parents.

It so happened that [Shan Tao] was going through the mourning for his mother and he returned to his village. Tao was over sixty years old,¹⁵ and while observing his mourning he did more than the ritual [required] as he carried the earth on his shoulders to raise tumulus and with his own hands planted the pines and cypresses.

¹² *JSCD*, p. 293.

¹³ *SSXY* 1.15 Only Ruan Ji was allowed to sit with his legs sprawled in the presence of Sima Zhao. *SSXY* 24.1

¹⁴ Again, it is interesting to think about Taizong's experience. His minister, Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580-643), ridiculed the emperor for not being filial when he built smaller tomb for his father, especially compared to the tomb built for himself and his wife. Howard Wechsler, *Mirror to the Son of Heaven: Wei Cheng at the Court of T'ang T'ai-tsung*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 136-7.

¹⁵ Just like his mother, it seems, Shan Tao also lived to an advanced age for the time and died when he was seventy-eight.

會遭母喪，歸鄉里。濤年逾耳順，居喪過禮，負土成墳，手植松柏。¹⁶

Disregard of rituals and giving reign to passions, for which Ruan Ji was most famous for, challenged the idea of the official whose dedication to observance of proper mourning ritual reflected dedication to the ruler. Just as Sima Zhao defended Ruan Ji's behavior in court there are records of him similarly justifying Ruan Ji's "improper" behavior when Ruan Ji's mother passed away.¹⁷ Against the rules, Ruan Ji still ate meat and drank wine during the period of mourning. At the same time, his physical and mental state reflected that he actually suffered: emaciated he spat blood and wailed continuously.¹⁸ Therefore, the act was closer to the real experience (despite being exaggerated) and rather than hiding behind the veil of standardized practices it was the expression of actual feelings (include the irrational behavior that one might exhibit in the times of crisis). By extension, the official who could freely express himself to the ruler might prove to be more helpful than the other who was following ritual practice.

Ruan Ji's fellow member, Wang Rong, similarly disregarded ritual propriety but likewise exhibited physical signs of extreme suffering. While the narrative does not necessarily present one option as being better than the other it still offered an alternative to single expression of filial piety. Just like Emperor Zhao deemed Ruan Ji's behavior as sincere Emperor Wu is recorded to recognize the sincerity of his official, Wang Rong.

[Wang Rong] because of mother's death left his post. By nature, he was extremely filial. But he did not follow the ritual regulations. But while he drank wine and ate meat, or sometimes observed a game of draughts and chess, his features became emaciated and sallow, and he could only stand up with a help of a staff. After Pei Wei (267-300)¹⁹ went to express his condolences to him he said to others: "If one's sorrow can hurt people, then Rong cannot avoid being destroyed by his grief." At the time He Qiao was also observing mourning for his father, and held himself rigidly the ritual measuring the rice before eating it. But his grief and emaciation did not exceed that of Rong's. The Emperor [Wu]

¹⁶ *JS* 43.

¹⁷ *SSXY* 23.2 and *JS* 33.

¹⁸ *SSXY* 23.9, 23.11. Also *JS* 49.

¹⁹ *JSCD*, p. 738.

said to Liu Yi (216-285): “He Qiao emaciation and exceeds the ritual [standards], send someone to take care of him.” Yi said: “Even though Qiao sleeps on a straw mattress and eats grains, it is still filial piety of life. But as for Wang Rong, it is filial piety of death, Your Majesty should primarily care about him.” Rong had had a vomiting sickness before, but as he went into mourning it became much more severe. The Emperor sent doctors to treat him, also conferred medicine. Moreover, stopped visitations to him.²⁰

以母憂去職。性至孝，不拘禮制，飲酒食肉，或觀弈棋，而容貌毀悴，杖然後起。裴頠往吊之，謂人曰：「若使一慟能傷人，濬沖不免滅性之譏也。」時和嶠亦居父喪，以禮法自持，量米而食，哀毀不逾於戎。帝謂劉毅曰：「和嶠毀頓過禮，使人憂之。」毅曰：「嶠雖寢苦食粥，乃生孝耳。至於王戎，所謂死孝，陛下當先憂之。」戎先有吐疾，居喪增甚。帝遣醫療之，並賜藥物，又斷賓客。²¹

While on the surface violation of the ritual practices was unacceptable and provoked condemnation of the unrestrained practices of Wei-Jin period, the histories of Jin and the final version of the Jin history, not necessarily intentionally, revealed the possibilities of different political structures and order. The official who followed the standardized etiquette might be argued to be more loyal to the ruler and less prone to insubordination. At the same time, strict adherence to the rules might lead to insincere behavior. The minister might not offer his best judgment being afraid to cross the line, offend the ruler and potentially lose the imperial favor. The close ministers of Taizong during the second half of his rule, despite his postulates in *Difan* on the ministers not being afraid to say an inconvenient truth, were still rather reluctant to directly voice their opinion and, according to some scholars, the compilation of the dynastic histories was one of the indirect ways to do so.

Impeccable Judgment and Recruitment

Nevertheless, in the ideal government, the perfect official should always present an impeccable judgement and understanding of the situation. As we will see below, throughout the chapter, Shan

²⁰ Translation based on Mather, p. 9.

²¹ JS 43. Parallel in SSXY 1.17 (Mather, p. 9) and *Jin yangqiu* by Sun Sheng.

Tao's advice and decisions happened to be always correct in his representation in the *JS* compilation. The contradictory accounts that did not match his pristine image were either removed or edited.

Wang Yan's 王衍 (256-311)²² biography, also included in chapter forty-three, described a short incident of Shan Tao encountering young Wang Yan. While Shan Tao spoke highly of Wang Yan he also accurately predicted his wrongdoings in the future.²³ The incident highlighted Shan Tao's perspicacity and ability to evaluate people well even when they were still at the young age.

[Wang] Yan's style name was Yifu, his expression was bright and beautiful, bearing refined and elegant. With his hair in tufts (not yet of age) he once went to see Shan Tao. Shan Tao was sighing for a long time. When he had left, [Tao] watched him go and said: "What kind of old woman gave birth to such a wonderful child! But the one who will have all of the people wronged is this person without a doubt."

衍字夷甫，神情明秀，風姿詳雅。總角嘗造山濤，濤嗟歎良久，既去，目而送之曰：「何物老嫗，生甯馨兒！然誤天下蒼生者，未必非此人也。」²⁴

However, the earlier versions of the *JS* that recorded the event not only ascribed the narrative to Yang Hu 羊祜²⁵ (221-278) without mentioning Shan Tao at all, but also the tension between two was framed as a reflection of the confrontation between Wangs (Wang Rong and Wang Yan) and Yang Hu at the court.²⁶ The parallel record in the *SSXY* entry, however, included both Yang Hu and Shan Tao who were evaluating Wang Yan. Unlike *JS* version, Shan Tao was described as fascinated by Wang Yan and saying he could be an ideal son (not criticizing him at all). Yang Hu,

²² Wang Yan 王衍, *zi* Yifu 夷甫, was a Western Jin official, held multiple posts throughout his life and referred to as Grand Marshal 太尉 in *SSXY*. He was known for adherence to Zhuangzi and Laozi and being skillful at *xuan yan* 玄言 (arcane discourse). *JSCD*, pp. 50-1.

²³ There is a record on the famous general and founder of his own state Later Zhao 後趙 (319-351), Shi Le 石勒 (274-333), blaming Wang Yan (Wang Rong's cousin) for non-involvement in politics. In a famous episode, Shi Le killed off Wang Yan based on the latter's claims of not willing to serve as official and attending to his duties. Shi Le blamed him for all the chaos and dissolve of the Western Jin.

²⁴ *JS* 43.

²⁵ *JSCD*, p. 226.

²⁶ Sun Sheng's *Jin yanqiu* and Xi Zuochi's 習鑿齒 (d. 384) *Han Jin yangqiu* 漢晉陽秋.

on the other hand, delivered similar judgement as Shan Tao in the *JS* version. Therefore, the *JS* version not only did not follow *SSXY* version in having Shan Tao misjudge the situation but also attributed Yang Hu's perspicuous view and judgement to Shan Tao and removed Yang Hu from the picture completely.

When Wang Yifu's (Wang Yan) father [Wang] Yi was serving as General Pacifying the North (272), he was involved in a public affair. He sent a messenger to plead [for him], but without result. At the time Yifu was at the capital, and ordered a carriage to meet vice-president of the Imperial Secretariat, Yang Hu (221-278) (uncle) and the president of the Board of Civil Office, Shan Tao. Yifu's hair was in tufts at the time, but his appearance and ability were extremely outstanding. The way he recounted the matter was reasonable and fluent, moreover, the content was reasonable. Tao was extremely impressed with him. When he left, he could not take his eyes off him, finally he sighed and said: "If I were to have a son should he not be like Wang Yifu?" Yang Hu said: "The one who would disrupt all under Heaven is certainly this boy!"²⁷

王夷甫父義為平北將軍，有公事，使行人論，不得。時夷甫在京師，命駕見僕射羊祜、尚書山濤。夷甫時總角，姿才秀異，敘致既快，事加有理，濤甚奇之。既退，看之不輟，乃歎曰：「生兒不當如王夷甫邪？」羊祜曰：「亂天下者，必此子也！」²⁸

Despite Wang Yan's unfortunate contribution and fate, he was praised in many examples from the *SSXY* and *JS*, particularly for his looks and statue; he was considered outstanding. The praise mostly came from the members of his own clan or from the ones supporting same type of behavior. As in the case of different attribution of evaluation above, *JS* and *SSXY* also had other examples of disparity of attribution of the parallel statements. In *JS* biography of Wang Yan Wang Yan's was praised by Wang Dun 王敦 (266-324)²⁹ followed by Gu Kaizhi's appraisal.

[Wang] Yan was talented and superior and had a good name, adored the profound mystery, and had never talked of profit. After Wang Dun crossed Jiang (moved south to Jiankang) he often talked of him: "When Yifu (Wang Yan) becomes part of the crowd, [he stands out] like a precious stone among the rubble." Gu Kaizhi (346-407) wrote in *Introduction*

²⁷ Mather, "Insight and Judgement," p. 211.

²⁸ *SSXY* 7.5.

²⁹ Wang Dun was son-in-law of the Western Jin emperor Wu 晉武帝 (r. 265-289) and a powerful general who along with Wang Dao 王導 (276-339) became key advisors to Sima Rui 司馬睿, then prince of Langye 琅琊王, and first emperor of the Eastern Jin, Emperor Yuan 晉元帝. As Wang Dun's power and influence grew, he rebelled against Eastern Jin capital Jiankang 建康 twice, in 322 and 324. *JSCD*, p. 56.

of Paintings [of Famous Men in Wei and Jin Dynasties], and also called [Wang] Yan *lofty like a crisp peak, standing bold upright a thousand ren high*. His behavior was held in esteem like this.³⁰

衍俊秀有令望，希心玄遠，未嘗語利。王敦過江，常稱之曰：「夷甫處眾中，如珠玉在瓦石間。」顧愷之作畫贊，亦稱衍岩岩清峙，壁立千仞。其為人所尚如此。

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It appears almost verbatim in SSXY as well. However, the content of JS's comments of Wang Dun and Gu Kaizhi are merged and attributed to Wang Dao: "Lord Wang (Wang Dao) characterized the Grand Marshal (Wang Yan): '*High-towering like a crisp peak, standing bold upright a thousand ren high*.'"³² 王公目太尉：「巖巖清峙，壁立千仞。」³³ Another example are almost verbatim praises of Wang Dao that are attributed to Wen Qiao 溫嶠 (288–329)³⁴ and Huan Yi 桓彝 (275–328)³⁵. While the inconsistency could be attributed to a human error, the role of personal perception of the compiler of the account and the individual judgement of how things happened should be also taken into consideration. The commentator of the SSXY, Liu Xiaobiao, occasionally dismissed the attribution in his notes to SSXY narratives.³⁶ The preconceptual image and function of the character might have influenced the attribution of specific saying or praise that reflected both on to whom the uttering was attributed to and on the one about whom the uttering was about.³⁷

³⁰ Mather, 14.17 "Appearance and Manner," p.

³¹ SSXY.

³² Mather, "Appreciation and Praise."

³³ SSXY 8.37.

³⁴ SSXY 2.36 and Wen Qiao's biography JS 67.1786.

³⁵ Wang Dao's biography in JS 65.1747. Huan Yi was Huan Wen's father and one of the *ba da* 八達 [Eight Unrestrained].

³⁶ See above on Huan Wen and Chapter 4 on Wang Dao.

³⁷ Matthew Wells, "From Spirited Youths to Loyal Official: Life Writing and Didacticism in the Jin Shu Biography of Wang Dao," *Early Medieval China* 21 (2015): 18. Example of similar strategy by Sima Qian 司馬遷 when in his compilation of the *Shiji* 史記 (examples in "Wei shijia" and "Han shijia" chapters) he attributed speeches of nameless or lesser-known names in *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 parallels to Su Dai 蘇代. Kim V. Vasil'ev, Plani srazhaiushchikhsia tsarstv: issledovaniye i perevodi (*Strategies of the Warring States: research and translations*) (Moscow: Nauka, 1968), p. 27.

Going back to Shan Tao, he did not only offer precise judgments on people and their fates but also could predict the effect of separate policies on the future of the entire country. After the pacification of Wu 吳 in 280 (the final step in reunification of Western Jin),³⁸ Emperor Wu of Jin decided to abolish local military forces and subsequently placed substantial military power in the hands of princes of the imperial house which in turn brought about the War of the Eight Princes (291-306) and the influx of Xiongnu insurgent groups in the country due to general lack of defense and military support.³⁹ Shan Tao criticized the military reform:

After Wu was pacified (280), the Emperor decreed to suspend military service throughout the empire to demonstrate that the realm was in a great peace, in all states and commanderies soldiers were disbanded, in larger prefectures hundred military officials were stationed, in smaller prefectures fifty. The emperor had once trained in military arts at the Xuanwu field, Tao at the time was sick, and was summoned to follow in an imperial hand-pulled carriage. Taking advantage of it he discussed the foundation of employing soldiers with Lu Qin⁴⁰, thought they should not give up the military preparation in provinces and commanderies. His analysis was outstanding. At the time, everyone thought that even though Tao had not studied [works of] Sun and Wu, but unknowingly he matched with them. The emperor praised him saying: “It is the most celebrated argument in the empire.” But he could not implement it. When it came to [the years] after Yongning (301-302) there were repeated unrests, rebels arose everywhere. All of the commanderies and states because of lack of [military] preparation could not contain [them], in the end all under heaven was in a great turmoil, like [Shan] Tao had predicted.⁴¹ 吳平之後，帝詔天下罷軍役，示海內大安，州郡悉去兵，大郡置武吏百人，小郡五十人。帝嘗講武于宣武場，濤時有疾，詔乘步輦從。因與盧欽論用兵之本，以為不宜去州郡武備，其論甚精。于時鹹以濤不學孫吳，而暗與之合。帝稱之曰：「天下名言也。」而不能用。及永寧之後，屢有變難，寇賊叢起，郡國皆以無備不能制，天下遂以大亂，如濤言焉。⁴²

³⁸ When the Sima clan took over they only recently conquered the Shu-Han state and were waiting for the right moment to overtake the last one, Wu. In Chapter Two I discuss how the unification or plans for the unification increased the popularity of the new dynasty and was used for the rule legitimization purposes.

³⁹ David A. Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 43

⁴⁰ Potential record mistake. Lu Qin already passed away at the time of discussion. *JS* 3.68 records [咸寧] 四年(278)... 三月甲申，尚書左僕射盧欽卒。But *JS* 3.84, note 22 argues that he might have died in 280 (first year of Taikang) based on mistake in dating Shan Tao's appointment. See Wang Yin's 王隱 () *Jin shu* 晉書 and 晉起居注. Compare with ST biography.

⁴¹ The episode also appears in *SSXY* 7.4 (Mather, p. 210). Another opposition to the reform is mentioned in the biography of Tao Huang 陶璜 *JS* 57.1560-1. (Chaussende, p. 330-1)

⁴² *JS* 43.1227.

While Shan Tao did not necessarily predict the precise outcome, the passage framed it as such by reiterating the dire consequences. Similar to the discussion of Sima Yan's choice of heir the demilitarization was brought up and recognized as the key political event and another misstep from Sima Yan.

The episode above from Shan Tao's biography is consistent with Taizong's criticism of Sima Yan politics which showed the importance of ruler-minister collaboration and the dire consequences of the emperor not paying attention to sound judgement. Similar to the wrong choice of heir, Sima Yan's demilitarization efforts and focus on the inner politics was another mistake pointed out by Taizong. He called Sima Yan narrow-minded and passive in his political decisions, he criticized him for distributing power to his clan members instead of entitling responsibilities to qualified people.⁴³ Taizong pointed out that both aspects, civil and military, should be considered in the governing of the state.

He was not aware that when you find yourself in a wide space you need to think about narrowness. Therefore, wideness could be wide for a long time. If you adhere to governing but forget about danger, then governing could not be forever governed. Moreover, if you establish something not in the right time, then the duties will be entrusted to the wrong people. If your aspirations and desires are just towards peace, then the actions will foremost bring in calamity and chaos.

不知處廣以思狹，則廣可長廣；居治而忘危，則治無常治。加之建立非所，委寄失才，志欲就於升平，行先迎於禍亂。⁴⁴

Taizong was skillful in martial affairs. He enjoyed imperial hunts and actively participated in military training and war campaigns. His ministers tried to curb his expansion aspirations and

⁴³ Unlike Taizong's supporters, supporters of Sima clan were mainly relatives who were rewarded with lands and local power. Essentially, that was yet another factor that contributed to internecine wars in the Western Jin. In Tang Taizong's case his supporters were allocated central government positions and were allowed to provide close support in the major decisions. Curiously, Taizong had plans for creation of feudal system. The plan never worked but it revealed another duplicity between his rhetoric and actions. Howard J. Wechsler, "T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator" in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

⁴⁴ JS 3.

wanted him to focus on civil affairs. From Taizong's judgment above, the emperor should not be relaxed and calm but need to constantly adjust to the circumstances. While from the ministers' perspective Taizong did go overboard in his foreign campaigns, Taizong in *Difan* justified military activity as part of maintaining balance: keeping up with warfare and civil government.⁴⁵ For him the domestic stability inadvertently led to success in foreign affairs and should not be just contained.

Another characteristic of perfect official was the excellent work in selecting candidates for office.⁴⁶ In *JS* Shan Tao was known for his precise candidate selections as he famous for his work on selection principles, “Shangong qishi” 山公啟事 (). In his biography, Shan Tao's merits of picking and promoting the right people are mentioned repeatedly. “[Shan]Tao identified and selected from recluses and humiliated ones, searched for and visited people of virtue and talent, commended and hired more than thirty people, all of whom established their name at the time.” 濤甄拔隱屈，搜訪賢才，旌命三十餘人，皆顯名當時。⁴⁷

SSXY, however, offered passages which contradicted the pristine image of Shan Tao who, according to his *JS* biography, would not only employ the right people but would not even allow the appointment if he was against it. While praising Shan Tao selection efforts, *SSXY* passage described the only case when the person was employed against Shan Tao's will and judgement.

⁴⁵ Compare with Li Gao's wife, mother of Li Xin being against her son's military campaign because the domestic affairs are not stable. Chapter 4. *JS* 87.

⁴⁶ The characteristic takes roots in much earlier texts such as Li ji 禮記 and was known as *jin xian* 進賢 (advancing sages), one of the capacities of the able minister. Hans van Ess from the *Shih Chi* Translation Workshop discussion in Nankai University, Tianjin, June 2018.

⁴⁷ *JS* 43.

Lu Liang 陸亮, otherwise unknown, was one of the Jia Chong's 賈充⁴⁸ (217-282) people and was intended to be placed in the office to increase the influence of Jia Chong's decisions.

Shan Tao selections for public office which he had made throughout his career had practically run the gamut of the various offices, and of those he had recommended none had ever fallen short in ability. In every case where he had written an estimate of a candidate's ability it proved to be exactly as he had stated. It was only the case of Lu Liang, who had been appointed by imperial command, that exception was taken to Shan Tao's advice. He had contested it, but his advice was not followed. [Lu] Liang was indeed eventually ruined through taking bribes.⁴⁹

山司徒前後選，殆周遍百官，舉無失才。凡所題目，皆如其言。唯用陸亮，是詔所用，與公意異，爭之不從。亮亦尋為賄敗。⁵⁰

Shan Tao's biography in the *JS* did incorporate a variant of the opening sentence of the *SSXY* passage above: "The people he selected and recommended before and after were from the capital and from all the way beyond it. They were all men of talent." 前後選舉，周遍內外，而並得其才。⁵¹ But it omitted entirely the case of Lu Liang that followed in the *SSXY* example.⁵²

The importance of the responsibility to select the right candidates is discussed throughout the compilation. The *JS* biography of impeccable minister Shan Tao additionally amplified in the process of compilation is followed by his complete opposite in terms of aspired qualities of the perfect official: Wang Rong, famous representative of Langye 琅琊 (modern Shandong) Wang clan.⁵³ Unlike Shan Tao, a fellow member of Zhulin qixian, Wang Rong did not strive to pick the candidates for office based on talent, especially in the difficult times.

⁴⁸ Served as the advisor to Sima Shi and Sima Zhao during Cao Wei. Succeeded in recommending his daughter Jia Nanfeng to be married to Emperor Wu's son Sima Zhong, future emperor. Jia Nanfeng was notoriously known for provoking the War of the Eight Princes. *JSCD*

⁴⁹ Mather, "Affairs of State," p.

⁵⁰ *SSXY* 3.7.

⁵¹ *JS* 43.

⁵² There are several more questionable

⁵³ Chapter forty-three stands out from the entire compilation as it has two end-of-chapter historian's comment 史臣曰 instead of one. One followed after Shan Tao's account and the other was in the end of the chapter. Clearly, something was mixed up and Shan Tao's account was probably supposed to be a separate chapter.

At that time when the House of Jin was in disorder, Wang Rong strived to follow Qu Boyu in his behavior. He showed himself [came to work] or hid himself [stayed home] according to the moment. He did not have open and direct principles. When he was in charge of appointments, he had never recommended a commoner, nor did he dismiss a man of underserved reputation. Solely drifting along with the times, he just picked the candidates based on the size of their family domain.⁵⁴

戎以晉室方亂，慕蘧伯玉之為人，與時舒卷，無蹇諤之節。自經典選，未嘗進寒素，退虛名，但與時浮沈，戶調門選而已。⁵⁵

What was even more problematic is that, just like Shan Tao, Wang Rong was able to identify the right people and provide accurate characterization but yet, as we saw in the above passage, did not make use of the skill in his role of a minister.⁵⁶ Wang Rong characterized Shan Tao as follows:

Rong had an ability to discern talented ones and of moral character. He had once evaluated Shan Tao comparing him to an uncarved jade and unrefined gold, all the people admire its preciousness, but nobody knows how to define his abilities.⁵⁷

戎有人倫鑒識，嘗目山濤如璞玉渾金，人皆欽其寶，莫知名其器⁵⁸

However, despite that ability, unlike Shan Tao, he failed to employ the right people and thus was lacking as a good official. What was worse, he was skilled to fulfill the abilities of a righteous minister but he chose not to. Unlike Shan Tao as well, Wang Rong's image was very uneven. Shan Tao's biography was strictly focused on Shan Tao's government career with rare parallels found in *SSXY* especially related to Shan Tao's interests and peculiarities of the character. Wang Rong's

⁵⁴ Based on translation from Holzman, "Les Sept Sages de La Forêt de Bamboua et La Société de Leur Temps" *T'oung Pao* 44 (1956): 335 and Japanese translation by Takahashi Akihisa 鷹橋明久, "Shinjo Ō Jū den (kans yonjūsan) yakuchū 『晉書』王戎伝(卷四十三) 訳注, *Bulletin of Onomichi University/Faculty of Artistic Culture* 日本文学科 (2007), p. 61.

⁵⁵ *JS* 43.1234.

⁵⁶ "Memorials to the thrones criticizing flaws and abuses of the recruiting system, the "aristocratization" of the system." Dominik Declercq, *Writing against the State: Political Rhetorics in Third and Fourth Century China* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p.145.

⁵⁷ The passage also appears in *SSXY* 8.10 (Mather, "Appreciation and Praise," p. 227). Gu Kaizhi's *Introduction of Paintings* provided similar evaluation of Shan Tao. Similarly, "[Wang] Rong had no special talents in his official duty but had great managerial qualities." 戎在職雖無殊能，而庶績修理。 *JS* 43. Ironically, Sima Zhao, who favored Ruan Ji, when a choice presented to to pick a secretary of the Board of Civil Office, he did not pick Wang Rong. *SSXY* 8.5 (Mather, 225-6).

SSXY 8/5 Sima Zhao not picking Wang Rong, Wang Rong's characteristic.

⁵⁸ *JS* 43.1235.

biography is interlaced with parallels found in *SSXY*. The anecdotes provided a multi-dimensional perspective of the character but simultaneously was intended to intensify the purported unlikability of the character (unlike the rigid and consistent image of Shan Tao).⁵⁹ One of the bulk of anecdotes was on Wang Rong's abundant wealth but extremely frugal lifestyle:

By nature, he was fond of raising profit, widely collecting from the gardens, fields and water mills⁶⁰ that were spread all over the country. The accumulated goods and gathered coins were countless. Often he himself held ivory counting rods, calculating day and night, always thinking there is not enough. He was moreover greedy and did not spend on himself. People of the empire called it an incurable disease.⁶¹

性好興利，廣收八方園田水碓，周遍天下。積實聚錢，不知紀極，每自執牙籌，晝夜算計，恆若不足。而又儉嗇，不自奉養，天下人謂之膏肓之疾。⁶²

A high number of anecdotal incidents were included in Wang Rong's biography especially on his greedy nature all of which had parallels in *SSXY*.⁶³ Overall, if we compare the number of *SSXY* parallel entries in the Shan Tao's *JS* account to the number of the *SSXY* entries in the account of Wang Rong and the rest of Zhulin qixian members, the proportion of anecdotal occurrences in Wang Rong's account is much higher: sixteen out of thirty-six *SSXY* entries on him are included.⁶⁴ And while Wang Rong's biography alternates between narratives on his service and curious episodes from his life, Shan Tao's biography simply attached the three curious incidents at the end of his biography.⁶⁵ The result is also "more solemn": meaning the Shan Tao's biography is compromised less of anecdotes/short stories but more of interactions with the emperor with

⁵⁹ See Chapter 1.

⁶⁰ Yang Lien-sheng, "Notes on the Economic History of the Chin Dynasty," *Harvard Journal of Asian Studies* 9 (1946): 107. The *shuitui* 水碓, or watermill, known since the beginning of the Christian era, became very popular in the third and fourth centuries when its ownership was mentioned along with the ownership of farms and slaves as great riches. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, (Cambridge University Press, 1971), IV, 2, 390-403

⁶¹ The passage also appears in *SSXY* 29.3 (Mather, "Stinginess and Meanness," p. 491) and Wang Yin's *JS*.
⁶² *JS* 43.1234.

⁶³ Four out of nine entries (almost fifty percent) in *SSXY* section "Stinginess and Meanness" are on Wang Rong.

⁶⁴ Shan Tao's *JS* account only included two out of eighteen *SSXY* entries.

⁶⁵ Still, two of them were related to his career and only one extolled Shan Tao's drinking abilities. *JS* 43.

inclusion of the lengthy memorials.⁶⁶ It could simply be the result of sources availability but it seems that the editorial staff of *JS* spent more time working on Shan Tao's account compared to that of his youngest colleague of the Zhulin qixian, Wang Rong.

Such compilation technique (unfiltered copy of the *SSXY* anecdotes vs edited material) of the *Jin shu* unconsciously and accurately reflected the instability and mood of the times officials such as Wang Rong had witnessed. While there are descriptions of Wang Rong's service almost half of his biography are anecdotal incidents. People of his time were adapting to the circumstances, and adherence to morals or high values with attention to proper execution of rituals did not guarantee survival anymore. Being able and talented official not matter as it was in the case of Shan Tao. Thus it was possible to edit out and present an image of a perfect official in time of stability (as in the times of the *Jin shu* compilation) but it did not matter during the chaotic times (both when it happened and when the events were recorded).

The historians of the Jin history recognized the importance of circumstance and change of behavior in times of crisis. The possibility to absolve the minister of not worthy behavior and disregard of duties was recorded in Sun Sheng's *Jin yangqiu* where it remarked on potential reasons of such behavior for the case of Wang Rong. Perilous times, where wealth could be one's downfall might justify the frugal habits in Wang Rong's behavior. A person of such statue and possessing so much wealth due to his status might need to adjust to the circumstances just to survive. Moreover, Wang Rong was not the only one who behaved like that and turned his backs on his responsibilities. Such measures were needed when the country was split apart and every move had to be strategized.

⁶⁶ See Chapter 1 on Taizong calling for inclusion of memorials in the historical chronicles as a useful tool in governing.

Jin yangqiu wrote: “Wang Rong was worth a great deal in property and money, but always appeared to be in want. Some said he did so deliberately in order to make himself inconspicuous.”

Dai Kui (ca. 331-396) characterized him as following: “By being inconspicuous and silent in an age of danger and chaos, Wang Rong avoided pain and disaster. Since he was both intelligent and wise, he survived.”

Someone remarked, “Do you mean to say that a great minister who takes his responsibilities to heart would act like that?”

Kui replied, “Fortune is sometimes perilous, sometimes safe; the times now dark, now enlightened. According to what you say, then people like Qu Yuan (minister of Duke Ling of Wei, r. 543-493 BC, who spent most of his life out of office) and Ji Zha (heir of King Shoumeng of Wu, r. 585-561 BC, who refused his birthright) all turned their backs on their responsibilities. Observing great men from antiquity onward, would you say it was Wang Rong alone who acted this way?”⁶⁷

晉陽秋曰：「戎多殖財賄，常若不足。或謂戎故以此自晦也。」戴逵論之曰：

「王戎晦默於危亂之際，獲免憂禍，既明且哲，於是在矣。或曰：『大臣用心，豈其然乎？』逵曰：『運有險易，時有昏明，如子之言，則蘧瑗、季札之徒，皆負責矣。自古而觀，豈一王戎也哉？』」⁶⁸

Dependence on circumstances as a way to justify specific choices, while not specifically mentioned, was certainly a defining framework for historical narratives. The strategy was employed when founding a new dynasty, choosing and justifying the choice of heir as well as defending a highly dignified and ritualized position of a minister. The times when the changes in the regime, territory, and people were so sudden and drastic the reasons could not be as straightforward and uniform.

Therefore, even though Shan Tao's *JS* account seemed to be highly sanitized, his image was not as straightforward and uniform, just like the portrait of Wang Rong and the rest of the members of Zhulin qixian.⁶⁹ Just like Wang Rong and the rest of the group members he made choices between service and reclusion when the political situation warranted such considerations. In his

⁶⁷ Mather, p. 491.

⁶⁸ *SSXY*, p. 963. From *Jin yangqiu*.

⁶⁹ The traditional perception was that Shan Tao and Xiang Xiu 向秀 (ca. 227-272) did not share the frivolous characteristics of other members of the group. Holzman, p. 340

JS biography, Sun Chuo 孫綽⁷⁰ (320-377) in his critical evaluation of Shan Tao revealed inconsistency of his image.

[Sun Chuo] once despised Shan Tao and told people: “Shan Tao is someone who I do not understand: official but not an official, recluse but not a recluse. Yet if he thinks of the way to success as of [something as difficult to cross as] the Dragon Ford, what he should do is to nod his head [to his superiors whose support he needs] and expose his scales to the sun [i.e. sweat over some real effort to get there].”⁷¹

嘗鄙山濤，而謂人曰：「山濤吾所不解，吏非吏，隱非隱，若以元禮門為龍津，則當點額暴鱗矣。」⁷²

Service and Reclusion

It is the time of prosperity and relative peace when the ruler should heed the advice of his wise officials. In the time of peace, the emperor should be surrounded by ministers with impeccable judgement and ability to recruit the right people. In the times of chaos, the priorities change. And while the wise advice is needed one cannot guarantee that the ministers themselves would not turn to their own private worries and personal concerns of safety. Therefore, it seemed that the reclusion or withdrawal from duties should not only be considered a negative thing but also, under certain circumstances, it could be a part of the service to the country and exemplify a wise official.

Tang Taizong four imperial pronouncements for the final compilation of the *JS*. The ones on the political figures, Sima Yi and Sima Yan, were much more critical than the commentary on the biographies of two literary figures, Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303)⁷³ and Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361)⁷⁴. Such choice revealed the variegated interests of the emperor who, in addition to political sphere, was also involved in the literary and artistic world. In his evaluation of Wang Xizhi Taizong's

⁷⁰ A poet and literati, famous for landscape poetry. He was part of Lanting 蘭亭 gathering along with Wang Xizhi 王羲之 (303-361). *JSCD*, p.

⁷¹ Translation based on Declercq, *Writing against the State*, p. 297, n. 122.

⁷² *JS* 56.1544.

⁷³ Taizong's comment in *JS* 54.1487-88.

⁷⁴ Taizong's comment in *JS* 80.

wanted to show off as a calligraphy connoisseur in describing the value of calligraphic work and Wang Xizhi's contribution. Free from any considerations for the political background, the comment focused entirely on the calligrapher's talent and distinguished him and his work from everyone else before him.⁷⁵ On the other hand, while clearly distinguishing Lu Ji's writing skills and praising his legacy as a poet putting him on pedestal of everyone's literary achievements, Taizong integrated the analysis of Lu Ji's life both as a literati of great poetic talent and as an exemplary civil and military official.⁷⁶ Lu Ji was an émigré writer from the state of Wu defeated by the Western Jin. Lu Ji served under the Jin government but on the basis of false charges was executed with his family. Taizong's warning against plotting one's ruler: they forgot about 居安保名 and it became a tragedy of 卒令覆宗絕祀，良可悲夫！⁷⁷

Taizong's elaborate praise of Lu Ji as a poet is contrasted with regret and even blame for how the poet's life ended. Taizong supported the idea of preserving talent and not wasting it to the circumstances of fate justifying the idea of the official going into hiding. A talented poet in the absence of the ruler is thus justified to hide oneself in times of trouble and it would not be considered disloyalty or abandonment of one's duties.

When worthy men establish themselves, they take deed and name as the basis; when gentlemen dwell in the world, they take wealth and rank as the priority. This being so, then glory and profit are what men seek, while ruin and shame are what men detest. Dwelling in peace and preserving one's name — a superior person could find rest in this; risking danger and treading among the mighty — the wise gentlemen would flee from

⁷⁵ In his article, Martin Kern described the idealization and framing of Wang Xizhi's image not associated with any concerns of public sphere. Martin Kern, "Made by the Empire: Wang Xizhi's *Xingrangtie* and its Paradoxes," *Archives of Asian Art* 65.1-2 (2015): 117-137.

⁷⁶ Lu Ji was also one of the compilers of earlier version of Jin history, *Jin shu* 晉書, and decision-maker in the process of periodization of Jin history. See Chapter 2 and Anthony Bruce Fairbank, "Ssu-Ma I (179-251) Wei Statesman and Chin Founder. An Historiographical Inquiry." Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1994, 78-79.

⁷⁷ JS 54.1488.

this. ... Rather, the differing circumstances of hiding and exposure are the reason for differing ends of life and death.⁷⁸

夫賢之立身，以功名為本；士之居世，以富貴為先。然則榮利人之所貪，禍辱人之所惡，故居安保名，則君子處焉；冒危履貴，則哲士去焉。... 而生滅有殊者，隱顯之勢異也。⁷⁹

Taizong acknowledged himself that realistic perception of the surroundings is more valuable. Taizong thoughts on when to serve and when to go in reclusion are also applicable to the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Zhulin group was prominent for its members' talents and fame but primarily known for their nonchalance toward politics and their lack of observance of traditional rituals. Wang Rong and Shan Tao were grouped in one chapter while the rest of the members were grouped in the other. Such organization of the Zhulin members' accounts might correspond to how much each member played a role in the political sphere and how much they were involved or not. While it is true that only Shan Tao and Wang Rong occupied significant political posts, the private and political were not be easily separated especially when the dynastic change was at stake. Similarly, unusual or non-traditional behavior was just a veil to not express one's position and therefore not provoking either of the sides. It was not easy for one to not stand neutral.

Unlike his forbearers such as Sima Yi, Sima Shi, and Sima Zhao, who had been ruthless in persecuting and executing renowned intellectuals, Emperor Wu of Jin adopted a much more tolerant attitude.⁸⁰ However, before that voicing directly one's opinion was precarious as the Sima family was in process of deposing Cao-Wei members.⁸¹ Therefore, little is known about the

⁷⁸ Jack Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010), pp. 156-157.

⁷⁹ JS 54.1487-88.

⁸⁰ Wu Fusheng, *Written at Imperial Command: Panegyric Poetry in Early Medieval China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 49.

⁸¹ Even the possession of talent could be dangerous, and, for example, direct denial of service can be construed as allegiance to the opposite party. Therefore, the snobbery and hoity-toity behavior could be just one of the coping mechanisms in presence of potential danger. Paul Rouzer, "The Competitive Community" in *Articulated Ladies: Gender and the Male Community in Early Chinese Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 86-87.

contemporary ideas on the changes in the regime, only the consequences of potential insurgent behavior. For example, Ji Kang largely stayed out of politics, but Shan Tao seemed to dissuade him from the idea of raising troops to support Guanqiu Jian's 毌丘儉 revolt in 255 against the new Sima regime.⁸² Ji Kang still had a shaky reputation with the court of Sima supporters and was eventually executed on Sima Zhao's orders which he later regretted.⁸³ Sima Zhao admired Xiang Xiu's decision on taking up the post after execution of Ji Kang in 262.⁸⁴

Shan Tao's case was slightly different. While he is presented as a brilliant official in his *JS* biography, he gained access to the official service through the blood ties to the ruling family. Sima Yi's wife, Zhang Chunhua 張春華, was Shan Tao's second aunt on father's side (表姑). Shan Tao and Sima Shi and Sima Zhao (Sima Yi's sons) were cousins from the family of father's sister and Sima Yi was his uncle-in-law.⁸⁵ According to the *JS* narrative, Shan Tao officially started his service at forty (during Cao-Wei) and this is when Shan Tao's narrative starts in the compilation. However, his encounter with not yet officially ruling family was not explicitly framed as Shan Tao's appointment. "He was a cousin of Xuanmu hou (Zhang Chunhua; 189-247), and therefore could have an audience with the Emperor Jing⁸⁶ (208-255). The Emperor asked: 'Lü Wang⁸⁷ wishes to serve, right?'" 與宣穆後有中表親，是以見景帝。帝曰：「呂望欲仕邪？」 However, there are records in earlier versions of the *JS* that were not included in the final

⁸² It is not known whether he actually did it. Stephen Owen and Wendy Swartz, trans., *The Poetry of Ruan Ji and Xi Kang* (Boston/Berlin: De Gruyeter, 2017), p. 256.

⁸³ *JS* 49 and *SSXY* 6.2 (Mather).

⁸⁴ *JS* 49 and parallel in *SSXY* 2.18 (Mather, p. 41)

⁸⁵ Zhang Chunhua's mother of the Shan clan was Shan Tao's father's cousin from the same grandfather. *JSCD*, p. 425.

⁸⁶ Sima Shi, Sima Yi's older son.

⁸⁷ Partially mystical advisor of King Wen of Zhou, who is regarded as a founder of China's military art and purported author of Six Secret Teachings 六韜.

compilation of the *JS* on younger Shan Tao's being recognized by Sima Yi and predicted to serve the future regime.

When Shan Tao was in his seventeenth year (221), one of his kinsmen said to Emperor Xuan (Sima Yi): "Shan Tao will be one of those who will rule the realm with your sons, Emperor Jing (Sima Shi) and Emperor Wen (Sima Zhao)."

The emperor [Xuan] asked him in jest: "How did your insignificant clan get possession of this keen-witted fellow?"⁸⁸

年十七。宗人謂宣帝曰：「濤當與景、文共綱紀天下者也。」帝戲曰：「卿小族，那得此快人邪？」⁸⁹

Despite the privileges of being associated with Sima family, as a reaction to circumstances, Shan Tao fled and hid when it seemed obvious how unstable the situation was. Some scholars point out that instances of Shan Tao going into reclusion in his biography might refer to Zhulin group gatherings, and the first one, when group was established might have been around the time of the Cao Shuang 曹爽 (d. 249) incident.⁹⁰⁹¹

He was staying at a post house with Shi Jian (d. 294). Tao got up in the night and kicked [Shi] Jian, saying: "What a time to be sleeping! If you knew the grand tutor (Sima Yi) were lying abed, what would you think?"

[Shi] Jian replied: "When a chief minister does not attend the dawn audience for three days, they hand him an order telling him to go back to his mansion to nurse his illness. Why are you worried about it?"

[Shan] Tao said: "Ha! Is Master Shi⁹² so safe between the horses' hooves?" and resigning his duty, he departed.⁹³ He discarded official tallies and left. In less than two years (249), as expected there was the Cao Shuang incident. Thereupon he went in reclusion and was no longer in contact with current affairs.

⁸⁸ Mather, p. 87. Also translation in Donald Holzman's "Les sept sages de forêt des bambous," p. 329. It could be possible that the passage was not entirely satisfactory or coherent for Shan Tao's image. As we in the passage below, Shan Tao was not involved in any machinations by Sima Yi that led to abolition of Cao-Wei. Thus his dealings with Sima Yi were edited out.

⁸⁹ *Jin shu* by Yu Yu. Also in Yuanhe xingzhuan 元和姓纂.

⁹⁰ Sima Yi killed Cao Shuang which led to strengthening of Sima clan and essentially led to overthrow of Cao-Wei regime and establishing of Western Jin. *JSCD*, p. 528.

⁹¹ Fits Wang Rong's biography where it says that he became friends with Ruan Ji at the age of fifteen, thus around 249.

⁹² Shi Jian did not suffer any consequences and continued his official career into the Western Jin.

⁹³ Mather, p. 87.

與石鑒共宿，濤夜起蹴鑒曰：「今為何等時而眠邪！知太傅臥何意？」鑒曰：「宰相三不朝，與尺一令歸第，卿何慮也！」濤曰：「咄！石生無事馬蹄間邪！」投傳而去。未二年，果有曹爽之事，遂隱身不交世務。⁹⁴

Therefore, the act of reclusion is not connected with abandonment of duties. In fact, it becomes a duty of a righteous minister to escape danger and not be involved in factional strife. Shan Tao having a fame of a distinguished recruiter found excuse to leave the service when he sensed the danger. However, Shan Tao's later attempts to retire as he was getting older were stalled. At the times of peace, a wise official was an irreplaceable asset to the emperor and the empire, and it was not permissible for an able official to abandon his duties.

Wang Rong, on the other hand, stayed and therefore was not deemed praiseworthy as he was not attending to the duties as a minister. The youngest member of the Zhulin group did not take his duties seriously and did not recruit people of talent. The contemporary background and political situation played a big role in how the decisions would be evaluated. The difference between generations and situation in the country outlined a difference between justified reclusion and what could be interpreted as ministerial insubordination. Just like in Wang Rong's case, his cousin, Wang Yan seemed to be admired by many and had talent but, as we saw above, was responsible for the ruin of the country.

While in the case of older members of the Zhulin qixian the political climate made concealment and equivocation valuable in order to avoid conflict and its escalation,⁹⁵ in the case of the later groups, such as *bada* 八達 [Eight Unrestrained] and proponents of Neo-Daoism,⁹⁶ who wished to

⁹⁴ JS 43. Also in the *Jin shu* by Yu Yu.

⁹⁵ "Shan Tao lived through the transition from Wei to Jin and had never had a conspicuous reputation as a conversationalist." 居魏、晉之間，無所標明。 *Mingshi zhuan* 名士傳 by Yuan Hong 袁宏 (328-376) in the comment to SSXY 7.5. (Mather, p. 211)

⁹⁶ The flaunting behavior and audaciousness of Neo-Daoism is contrasted to embodiment of Confucian values, the Teaching of Names *mingjiao* 名教. Many adherents to Neo-Daoism became well established

imitate Zhulin members *ziran* 自然 (naturalness) it was counterproductive as the regime was falling apart and they were not actively involved in the political life. “[Xie] Kun and Wang Cheng’s clique looked up to everyone from ‘Bamboo Grove,’ with disheveled heads and loose hair, they sat bare naked on the ground with legs stretched out and called themselves Eight Unrestrained.”⁹⁷ 鯤與王澄之徒，慕竹林諸人，散首披發，裸袒箕踞，謂之八達。⁹⁸ The later imitations simply adopted the frame of frivolous behavior and pure conversation without considering the underlying circumstances of its manifestations. While they claimed to be proponents of naturalness, their behavior was far from the sincere and natural expression of their feelings and reflected more of an identity crisis. “He (Wang Yan) successively occupied prominent positions, and among the younger scholar-officials none failed to admire and emulate him... Arrogant high-mindedness and frivolous abandon thereafter became the custom.”⁹⁹ 累居顯職，後進之士，莫不景慕放效。選舉登朝，皆以為稱首。矜高浮誕，遂成風俗焉。¹⁰⁰ The time defined under which circumstances unrestrained behavior was considered to be insurgent and was castigated and under which circumstances it was the only way to deal with the volatile and dangerous times.

Seemingly rigid borders of the characteristics of the perfect minister as defined in the official rhetoric of early Tang became loose and melted away at the closer look at the historical narratives of Wei-Jin. Tang editors of the *JS* seemed to care about their own image as the advisors to Taizong. They elevated the perfect official as the one who presented an impeccable judgment, attracted the

among some of the northern great families, including the younger members of Wangs from Langye. Livia Kohn, ed., *Daoism Handbook* (Boston: Brill, 2000), p. 257.

⁹⁷ Mather, p. 272.

⁹⁸ Deng Can 鄧粲 (fl. 377) *Jin ji* 晉紀 in comment to *SSXY* 9.17.

⁹⁹ Translation from David R. Knechtges, “Sweet-peel Orange or Southern Gold” in Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges, eds., *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese Literature: In Honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman* (Provo, Utah: T’ang Studies Society, 2003), p. 56.

¹⁰⁰ *JS* 43.1236.

right people to the court and was irreplaceable for the ruler. Taizong in his official writings on government fully supported the views of his advisors, furthermore stressing that there were no bad ministers, and it was solely ruler's responsibility to find the right niche for each of them. In reality, however, especially in the second half of his rule, Taizong leaned more towards the autocrat regime of power. And it seemed his ministers had trouble relaying the message to the emperor, not mentioning preventing Taizong from accomplishing his aspirations, specifically military campaigns. The editing of the *JS* and the imperial pronouncements written by Taizong revealed that the qualities and functions of the officials were not that absolute. The subjects' behavior and actions may very well be blamed for political developments and national disasters. Emperor Wu's not heeding the warnings of his advisors and the advisors not attending to their duties led to failure of the Jin regime to defend against the intrusion of barbarians who took over the north for the next four hundred years. The next chapter will explore the perception of foreign as Taizong's identity and what role does the defining of foreign play in constructing the legitimacy of the state and the ruler.

CHAPTER 4: “WE ARE FAMILY”: TRACING ANCESTRY

Although he was from a distant place and of a different kind,
nevertheless he was a distinguished person of the border peoples.¹
— *Shishuo xinyu*

The burgeoning cosmopolitan society of early Tang saw a considerable increase in foreign population due to major perturbations in its composition and migration movements in the preceding centuries. Presence of people of different backgrounds in a variety of settings required rethinking the category of foreign, reevaluating what distinguished “Chinese” *huaxia* 華夏 from “barbarian/non-Chinese,” and reassigning measures in the treatment of the groups of people that were “the other.”² Much like today, there are a variety of terms, such as *Gastarbeiter* and expatriate, indicated a person of foreign origins, each with very different connotations.³ The place of origin became to be associated with the social standing and, most importantly, with the way one was to be treated.⁴ The peculiar circumstances of Taizong’s origins as well as contemporary political developments required the Tang emperor to reflect on what status the foreigners occupied under his government. The state’s attitude to the foreign groups was determined by the amount of their contribution and usefulness to the state. Tang Taizong, moreover, by putting himself apart from

¹ 雖遠方殊類，亦邊人之桀也。SSXY 8.152. Translation from Mather, p. 264.

² Shao-yun Yang, “Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600–1300” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014), p. 86.

³ On the naming of the barbarians see Hu Hong 胡鴻, *Neng xia ze da yu jian mu Huafeng: zhengzhi ti shijiao xia de Huaxia yu Huaxia hua* 《能夏則大與漸慕華風：政治體視角下的華夏與華夏化》 (Beijing shifan daxue chubanshe, 2017). One of the terms introduced in Tang was *huawai ren* 化外人 from the Tang Code *Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議 composed in 652 by Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659). It translates directly as “people living outside the civilizing influence of Chinese culture.” However, Gan Huaizhen argued that the term *huawai ren* in clauses of the Tang Code does not refer to simply foreigners, but mainly to diplomatic envoys in public service from foreign countries, including monks and students. Gan Huaizhen 甘懷真 “Cong *Tanglü* huawai ren guiding kan Tang dai guoji zhidu” 從《唐律》化外人規定看唐代國籍制度, *EMCH* 早期中國史研究 3:2 (2011): 1-32.

⁴ Liu Zhiji brought attention to the issue of chrononyms in his *Shitong*.

the ethnically-different groups and stressing the impossibility to claim rule legitimacy by the foreigners, further emphasized and defended his right to govern.

The discussion took place on three different levels: the emperor's personal level, the domestic situation, and foreign policies. As there were different facets of foreignness that came into play, the issue did not have a straightforward resolution on each of these levels. It was reflected in the unclear and contradictory views in the official statements and other type of writings that commented on the issues or suggested a course of action and were attributed to Taizong and his ministers.

Generally, Taizong was known for his broadmindedness and tolerant attitude toward a variety of population groups. He claimed to treat everyone equally regardless of their ethnic background.⁵ In the twenty-first year of Zhenguan (647), Taizong discussed with his ministers establishing successful way (idea of owning one's history): "Since the ancient times all held the "Central Efflorescence" (Chinese) in high regard and regarded the Yi and Di as inferior. We alone love them equally. That is why their clans and divisions all attached to Us as if to their own parents."⁶ 自古皆貴中華，賤夷、狄，朕獨愛之如一，故其種落皆依朕如父母。⁷ He takes on the role of the magnanimous ruler, almost a father of the nation. Taizong emphasized the role of a ruler who treated equally all types of people and incorporated them under his reign.⁸ Such rhetoric was

⁵ Randolph Ford, "Ethnographic Identities and the Politics of Legitimacy in Late Roman and Early Medieval Chinese Historiography" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2016), p. 169.

⁶ Translation revised from Irina F. Popova, "The Administrative and Legal Regulations of the Tang Emperors for the Frontier Territories" in Wallace Johnson and Irina F. Popova, eds., *Central Asian Law: An Historical Overview. A Festschrift for the Ninetieth Birthday of Herbert Franke* (Lawrence, Kansas: Society for Asian Legal History, 2004), p. 42.

⁷ Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956), 194.6247. Similar claims were also recorded in *Zizhi tongjian*, 194.6103-4.

⁸ Compare with passage from the *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經) quoted in the *Works of Mencius* that reads "Under the whole heaven, every spot is the sovereign's ground; To the borders of the land, every individual is the sovereign's minister" 普天之下，莫非王土；率土之濱，莫非王臣. James Legge, trans., *The Works of Mencius* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 352.

helpful not only in elevating his noble image, but was also yet another device to corroborate Taizong's legitimacy.⁹

While claiming to incorporate those groups of people, he delineated them at the same time by addressing them by the name of their respective groups. The naming was helpful in potentially marginalizing the originally included group when it fell out of favor or was not useful for the empire. The generous treatment was in place as long as the foreign populations were under control, did not bother the regime, and they did not interfere with another military campaign to expand the borders of Tang.¹⁰

The marginalization allowed the one in power to modify the qualities and define himself the purported motivation of the separate groups. Military action against the foreign population was justified by viewing it as the Tang delivering a cosmic retribution for ungrateful peoples who did not appreciate the alleged kindness of the Tang ruler.¹¹ Moreover, the insubordinate were conveniently assigned the familiar and common stereotypes about non-Han or barbarian (*hu* 胡) people,¹² in turn, making their state illegitimate.¹³ Therefore, timely military campaigns against

⁹ Li Peidong 李培棟, "Jin shu yanjiu xia" 晉書研究下, *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 3 (1984): 85-91 on *huayi* as one family concept by including "Chronological Records" in the JS together with the history of Jin.

¹⁰ "Instead, he (Taizong) could alternate freely between barbarophilic and barbarophobic arguments depending on the pragmatic needs of the moment — needs that usually revolved around his expansionist ambitions." Shao-yun Yang, "'What do Barbarians Know of Gratitude?' – The Stereotype of Barbarian Perfidy and its Uses in Tang Foreign Policy Rhetoric," *Tang Studies* 31 (2013), p. 59.

¹¹ Marc S. Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 35. Taizong was known to have used the traditional policy of using barbarians to control barbarians 以夷制夷 whenever necessary.

¹² The most common stock phrase "faces of men and hearts of beast" 人面獸心 was further refined based on the circumstances. Generally, it implied the deceitful and betraying nature of the barbarians, the ones who cannot be trusted or converted to Chinese way.

¹³ The dynamics is not new with a number of examples from the past. When the power and influence of the Qin state 秦國 (770-221 BCE) started to grow during the Warring States period, other states used the familiar rhetoric of Qin having customs of Rong 戎 and Di 狄 and the heart of a beast. See Pines, "Reassessing Textual Sources for Pre-Qin Imperial History," in *Sinologi Mira k iubileiu Stanislava Kuczery:*

the Tang neighbors brought a number of benefits: not only accretion of power and territorial expansion, but also the ability to define and raise Tang's own status, reaffirm its legitimacy, and validate future political decisions.¹⁴

Tang Local Ethnic Policy

Unlike Taizong, his close ministers took more of a uniform and direct approach to the foreign population. At least in writing, their view was conservative and practical. They preferred status quo and were satisfied with the current state. In the end-of-the-chapter comment to chapter ninety-seven "Four [Barbarian] Tribes" 四夷,¹⁵ the *JS* editorial staff, suggested that "those who followed the path of benevolence and righteousness resided in the Middle, while the ones who acted violently and insolent became barbarians outside." 蹈仁義者為中寓，肆凶獷者為外夷。¹⁶ Continued quote: 夷狄之徒，名教所絕，窺邊侯隙，自古為患 This is how the things were and ought to be implying the spatial distinction between the Us and the Other with the borders that should not be transgressed. The majority of them were against Taizong's idea to interact with or incorporate the neighboring regimes under Tang. Attempting to contain imperial expansionism efforts, they used metaphors and historical precedents to dissuade the emperor. "Middle Kingdom (Zhongguo 中國) is like the trunk, and the four 'barbarians' (*siyi* 四夷) are the branches and leaves.

Sobranie Trudov (Sinologists of the World for Stanislav Kuczera Anniversary: Collection of Works), eds. Sergej Dmitriev and Maxim Korolkov (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniia RAN, 2013), p. 257.

¹⁴ "By considering these cases together, we may recognize Taizong not as an exceptionally broad-minded or "cosmopolitan" individual, but rather as a master in the arts of self-promotion and political rhetoric." Shao-yun Yang "What Do Barbarians Know of Gratitude," pp. 59-60.

¹⁵ The chapter described four groups of people outside of the direct influence of central government based on for cardinal directions: Eastern Yi 東夷, Western Rong 西戎, Southern Man 南蠻, and Northern Di 北狄.

¹⁶ *JS* 97.2550.

Investment in these outlying areas would be costly and without any benefit for China itself”¹⁷ 欲懷遠者必先安近，中國如本根，四夷如枝葉，疲中國以奉四夷。¹⁸

The first substantial debate on ethnic policy took place 630. Taizong had achieved a major victory over Tang’s dangerous neighbor, the Eastern Turks (Dong Tujue 東突厥). The question was what to do with the subjugated population that resided in the newly acquired lands. The ministers emphasized the common stereotype that barbarians could not be trusted and urged the emperor to resettle the foreigners. Taizong, on the other hand, appealed to humanity:

The ministers said: “Your Majesty has only just begun a long-range expedition to the east of the Liao River. Yet you are resettling the Türks on the Ordos plateau, not far from the capital [Chang’an]. How could they not become a threat in the future?” The emperor replied, “The Yi-Di, too, are human beings. If they are governed with moral power, they can become like members of the family. Besides, [the Eastern Türks] did not flee north to the Syr-Yanda, and instead returned to us; one can see their [loyal] sentiments from this.”¹⁹

群臣言：「陛下方遠征遼左，而置突厥於河南，距京師不遠。豈得不爲後患？」
上曰：「夷狄亦人，以德治之，可使如一家。且彼不北走延陀而歸我，其情可見。」²⁰

Wei Zheng was the most outspoken against Taizong’s expansionism policy and was very cautious in dealing with non-Chinese people. In order to convince the emperor against settling Tujue people within Chinese territory, he related the example from the similar historical precedent in Western Jin recorded in one of the histories on Jin dynasty. In his argument, he compared himself to the Chinese official Jiang Tong 江統 (d. 310) who urged his emperor to resettle the

¹⁷ Translation from Tineke D’Haeseleer, “Tang Taizong in Korea: The Siege of Ansi,” *East Asian History* 40 (2016), p. 5, note 24.

¹⁸ *Zizhi tongjian*, 193.6081-82.

¹⁹ Translation from Shao-yun Yang “What Do Barbarians Know of Gratitude,” p. 56. (The Ordos plateau was known in the Tang period as Henan 河南 (“south of the [Yellow] River”), not to be confused with the modern Henan province.)

²⁰ Wang Pu 王溥 (922-982), comp., *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 94.1690.

foreign population. The emperor did not listen, and, as Jiang Tong predicted, the foreign people brought about the end of Western Jin and took control of the north of China.²¹ Wei Zheng worked off the negative image of the barbarian as the rest of Taizong's ministers in the example above. However, as we saw in Chapter 3, the emphasis for failure here is on the ruler's failure to not heed the advice of his minister. Wei Zheng disregarded the numerous other factors that contributed to the fall of Western Jin. The situation was framed to be as similar as possible to the current dilemma of the Tang emperor.

During the Jin period there were *hu* tribal encampments dwelling dispersed over nearby commanderies which had been settled during Wei times. Jiang Tong urged that they be expelled out beyond the passes. Emperor Wu did not heed his counsel. Several years later they subsequently toppled [the regions of] the Chan and Luo [rivers] (the area of the capital).²²

晉代有魏時，胡部落分居近郡，江統勸逐出塞外，武帝不用其言，數年之後，遂傾瀾、洛。²³

While David Honey points out that the quote is not entirely accurate as Jiang Tong's memorial was submitted to Emperor Hui, not Emperor Wu, around 300, it does not change the purpose of Wei Zheng's persuasion.²⁴ He used a similar precedent and directly compared it to the contemporary situation. Without directly stating it, he implied the potential detrimental consequences for Tang (as they were for Jin) if the emperor did not resettle the population. The strategy partially worked as Taizong resettled the Turks in the northern prefectures that had not been previously settled. However, the settlements were still within the borders of Tang. Taizong

²¹ When opposing other decisions in Tang Taizong's ethnic policy and in court debates, Wei Zheng used other examples from Jin historical precedents to support his argumentation in dealing with non-Han. Western Jin events appear in *JS* 56.1529-34, 97.2549, 101.2643-52, 102.2658-59. Yang Shao-yun, "What Do Barbarians Know of Gratitude," p. 46, n. 50.

²² David Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu: The Biography of Liu Yüan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1990), p. 7.

²³ Wu Jing 吳兢, comp., *Zhenguan zhengyao* 貞觀政要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 9.14.

²⁴ Emperor Wu also received a memorial urging him to expel the "barbarians," but it was presented by a little known court official Guo Qin 郭欽; his suggestions are in the ethnographic chapter *JS* 97.2549. Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu*, p. 7.

at the time was still sensitive about analogies to his nascent and fragile regime yet elevated from the major victory and title of Heavenly Qaghan that he acquired.²⁵

Barbarians in Jin: Blame and Stereotypes

Had Emperor Hui acted up on Jiang Tong's memorial it might not necessarily salvaged Western Jin. Even if the emperor had attempted some further measures, it was already too late at that point. The problem of saturation of nomadic people along the northern frontier and within the empire became especially critical after the disarmament in 280 that followed the unification of the country after defeating the state of Wu. The non-Han population was gradually increasing and getting stronger, unlike the Chinese population of Jin. The newly discharged soldiers were giving up their weapons to Xiongnu and other nomadic people in exchange for land. Local princedoms taken aback by military reform and in need of protection, were desperately hiring personal bodyguards and accumulating military power in their own hands. Moreover, they were hiring northern nomads to gain the upper hand in power dynamics among each other.²⁶ Therefore, when the Western Jin was at its weakest one of the major blows inadvertently came from within: immigrant foreign tribes, mostly Xiongnu.²⁷

The shock of losing the country, the division and, more importantly, the influx of foreign regimes that competed over the domination of Chinese north was reflected in the inadvertent negative evaluation and treatment of foreigners from the Eastern Jin and beyond. However, the

²⁵ The title implied his right to rule not only over China as the Emperor but also over the Central Asia as the Qaghan. It potentially meant that Chinese and Turkish populations are blended together and are equal. More on the title connotations and its creation in Jonathan Karam Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and Its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580-800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 119-22.

²⁶ Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu*, pp. 6-7.

²⁷ Dominik Declercq, *Writing against the State: Political Rhetorics in Third and Fourth Century China* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), p. 130.

change in the ethnic composition of the population and overall negative assessment of the phenomena were evident before split of China to the north and south. As the Han Chinese population declined in the north, Chinese leaders accepted the submission of more and more steppe peoples along the frontier. For example, the Jin government accepted more than a hundred thousand Xiongnu in 286.²⁸ Many Xiongnu and other foreign peoples were relocated closer and closer within the empire, where eventually they came to outnumber the Han inhabitants. When Jiang Tong composed his memorial in 300, he claimed that of the million people in Guanzhong 關中 (Chang'an area), half were barbarians.²⁹ In his memorial, Jiang Tong also used familiar tropes complaining that the barbarians look different, have strange customs, and speak different languages. He proposed to send them back to where they came from.³⁰

The negativity towards the ethnically different populations translated into negative appraisals of the foreigners. Furthermore, likening another Chinese to the foreigner was also one of the ways to degrade one. Curiously, the negative characters of the *JS* were also attributed to, what could only be interpreted as, the direct racist statements based on the ethnic identity. Wang Dun 王敦 (266-324),³¹ a general and a rebel against the Eastern Jin government, picked on the Eastern Jin emperor Ming 晉明帝 (r. 323-325) for his foreign origins.

²⁸ Ni Jinsheng 倪今生, "Wu Hu luan hua qianye de Zhongguo jingji" 五胡亂化前夜的中國經濟, *Shihuo banyuekan* 1.7 (1935), p. 39, cited in David Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 40, n. 21.

²⁹ 且關中之人百餘萬口，率其少多，戎狄居半 *JS* 56.1533.

³⁰ *JS* 56.1529-1534. Connie Chin, "Climate Change and Migrations of People during the Jin Dynasty," *Early Medieval China* 13-14.2 (2008), p. 58.

³¹ He was son-in-law of the Western Jin Emperor Wu of Jin and a powerful general who along with Wang Dao became key advisors to Sima Rui 司馬睿, then Prince of Langye 琅邪王, future Emperor Yuan 晉元帝 (r. 318-323). His power and influence grew, and he rebelled against Eastern Jin capital Jiankang 建康 twice, in 322 and 324. *JSCD*, p. 564.

[Wang Dun] said: “Certainly, this must be the yellow-bearded Xianbei slave who has come.” The emperor’s mother, Lady Xun (d. 335), was a native of Yan-Dai (Xianbei). The emperor’s features resembled his mother’s and his beard was yellow.³²

「此必黃鬚鮮卑奴來也。」帝母荀氏，燕代人，帝狀類外氏，鬚黃。³³

Therefore, the *SSXY* commentator Liu Xiaobiao was perplexed when a similar statement was attributed to Wang Dao 王導 (276-339).³⁴ In his opinion, the person of a status and quality such as Wang Dao could not have said similar things.³⁵ Before Wang Cheng 王澄 (312)³⁶ was killed by Wang Dun, Wang Dao, his cousin, said the following to Wang Dun about him: “We can’t let any more Qiang barbarians come from the east!” 「不可復使羌人東行。」³⁷ The *SSXY* continues: “Wang Cheng’s face resembled that of a Qiang.”³⁸ 平子面似羌。

The prejudice, stereotypes and overall adverse treatment prevailed until the inception of the Tang. The editors of other historiographical projects conserved earlier views on the foreigners reflecting partially the contemporary situation and contemporary views. The ethnographic chapter of the *Sui shu* 隋書 (History of Sui) written in the first half of Taizong’s reign described and related

³² Translation based on Richard Strassberg, *Wandering Spirits: Chen Shiyuan’s Encyclopedia of Dreams* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 112, n. 10.

³³ *JS* 6.161.

³⁴ *JSCD*,

³⁵ The commentator expressed similar confusion about an alleged statement by Huan Wen recorded in *SSXY* 9.32. See Chapter 3, p. rhetorical truths conveyed by character and actions of these individuals, becomes a stock figure (Wang Dao and Zhuge Liang become paradigms of the ministers who despite their power and opportunity never abused their position to seize power already in the times of Emperor Jianwen, 372). Matthew Wells, “From Spirited Youths to Loyal Official: Life Writing and Didacticism in the *Jin Shu* Biography of Wang Dao,” *Early Medieval China* 21 (2015): 20.

³⁶ *JSCD*, plus reference to Chapter 3.

³⁷ *SSXY* 33.5.

³⁸ Mather, p. 509. “The Qiang were a proto-Tibetan pastoral people inhabiting the highlands of the west and northwest.”

certain undesirable behavior within certain geographic regions: amorality in the north, transgression of kinship in the west, family fragmentation in the south, and free love in the east.³⁹

Purpose of “Chronological Records” and Legitimacy

Therefore, using the compilation of the *JS* was also one of the indirect ways to influence the emperor since in the second part of Taizong’s rule his ministers had even less power over the emperor. Taizong did partially heed to the ministers’ advice against the resettlement of foreign populations close the capital in the beginning. However, in the second half of his rule one of the major conquests he had set his mind on was to overcome Goguryeo 高句麗, a growing powerful state located in modern northeast China and the northern part of the Korean peninsula. Taizong’s other prominent minister as well as the main editor of the *JS*, Fang Xuanling, while against the campaign, was rather silent on Taizong’s military ambitions, unlike his blunt and direct but late predecessor Wei Zheng.⁴⁰ Only when Fang Xuanling was on his deathbed and had nothing to lose, did he write a memorial explicitly criticizing Taizong’s actions and urging against a second campaign against Goguryeo.⁴¹ According to one interpretation, the twelfth century account of Taizong from Korea, Taizong did admit the rashness and impossibility of attempting to conquer Goguryeo. Moreover, in this version, the emperor stressed the importance of an adviser with a firm stance at his side: “[Emperor Taizong] himself, on account of not having been successful, regretted

³⁹ Free love implied that young people could pick any partner without first obtaining a consent from the parents. Wei Zheng 魏徵 *et al.*, eds., *Sui shu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 81 婦人淫奔，俗多游女。有婚嫁者，取男女相悅，然即為之 Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ Also in *ZZTJ*, 199, p. 6260 Fang Xuanling saying that nobody dared to remonstrate against Taizong. See Howard J. Wechsler, “T’ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator” in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T’ang China, 589-906, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 193.

⁴¹ Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 186: 5017-18, cited in D’Haeseleer, “Tang Taizong in Korea,” p. 10, n. 59.

it deeply and lamented: ‘Had Wei Zheng been alive, he would not have allowed me to behave like this.’”⁴² 帝以不能成功，深悔之。嘆曰：「魏徵若在，不使我有是行也。」⁴³ The veiled exhortation against expansion that went hand in hand with the ideas on foreigners and what ethnic policy should be had been reflected in the commentarial layer of the *JS* compilation by Fang Xuanling as well as the rest of the editorial staff.

The long history of association of barbarians with all the negative things and, more prominently, with danger and mistrust, came in handy for the compilers of the *JS*. The compilation presented not only the opportunity to remind readers what mistakes the dealings with the foreigners can bring about but also to discourage from any kind of interactions with them. It was mirrored in the historian’s commentaries (*shichen yue* 史臣曰) of the *JS*. Particularly, those on the chapters in the “Chronicles” (*zaiji* 載記), a section on illegitimate non-Han regimes. One comment, while blaming Sima Yan’s decision of resettling foreigners close to the imperial capital, also included yet another stereotypical, negative evaluation of the non-Han. “The Rong-Di have the faces of men and the hearts of beasts; they desert their rulers and kinsmen upon seeing [an opportunity for] profit, and forget humaneness and moral duty upon coming across [an opportunity for] riches”⁴⁴ 彼戎狄者，人面獸心，見利則棄君親，臨財則忘仁義者也。⁴⁵

“Chronicles” is a separate section comprised of the last thirty chapters in the *JS* dedicated to insurgent and nonlegitimate foreign states in the compilation. The section, while serving an informative purpose to once again emphasize the atrocities of the foreigners, had also an educational goal in mind. This mindset and motivation of the editors was reflected in the chapter

⁴² Translation from D’Haeseleer, “Tang Taizong in Korea,” p. 9.

⁴³ Kim Pusik 金富軾, *Samguk sagi* 三國史記 (Seoul: Ŭlyu munhwasa, 1980), 22:220.

⁴⁴ Yang Shao-yun, “What Do Barbarians Know of Gratitude,” p. 46, n. 50.

⁴⁵ *JS* 103. 2702-3.

ninety-seven of the biographical section, an ethnographic chapter on non-Chinese peoples that provided a summary of “all their various tribes and kinds.”⁴⁶ It stated what type of content went into the “Chronicles,” and implied the reason for the inclusion of the section: “The Northern Di have usurped the title of Emperor [and seized] the Central Plain. All this is recorded in the ‘Chronicles.’”⁴⁷ 北狄竊號中壤，備於載記⁴⁸ In preceding sections of the *JS* discussion focused on the foreigners who were not to be trusted, were attributed a variety of negative traits, and repeatedly blamed for the ruin of the Western Jin. Therefore, the “Chronicles” brought in another dimension on how non-Chinese were discussed in the *JS*: the right to rule over the Middle Kingdom was contingent on ethnic background.⁴⁹ And if one is of a non-Han ethnic origin, one is automatically denied of such right.

In one of the chapters in the “Chronicles,” Liu Kun 劉琨 (270-318),⁵⁰ a governor of Bing province 并州, reminds the powerful insurgent Shi Le 石勒 (274-333),⁵¹ who conquered most of the northern China, as follows:

Since ancient times there has never been a Rong person who became an emperor. But there were cases of celebrated subjects who rendered meritorious deeds.⁵²
自古以來誠無戎人而為帝王者，至於名臣建功業者，則有之矣。⁵³

⁴⁶ 其諸部種類 *JS* 97.2532. Translation from Ford, p. 182.

⁴⁷ Based on Chaussende, p. 88.

⁴⁸ *JS* 97.2532.

⁴⁹ Chaussende mentions that the term *jian* 僭 (“to usurp”) occurs 120 times in “Zaiji” versus 50 times in the biographical section. Chaussende, p. 89.

⁵⁰ Liu Kun was a famous general of Western Jin who also possessed a literary talent. He along with such people as Lu Ji, Pan Yue 潘岳 (247-300) and Shi Chong 石崇 (249-300) belonged to a literary circle “Twenty-four Friends” 二十四友. *JSCD*, p. 789.

⁵¹ General under Liu Cong who toppled the Western Jin regime. He broke away from Liu Cong’s Han Zhao state and was a founding emperor of Later Zhao. He himself was a representative of northern people of Jie 羯, *JSCD*, p. Also see Chapter 3.

⁵² On loyal ministers and *JS* narrative see Chapter 3.

⁵³ *JS* 104.2715. Similar ideas in *Shitong*, “Yanyu” 言語.

It is hard not to notice that for Taizong his ethnic origins could be a question of concern. After all, his eldest son, who started to express affinity towards his foreign origins, lost his privileges and could not be a crown prince anymore. The ethnic background with all the complications and implications for the ruler of China had to be normalized and discussed in a particular way to fit the right picture or not brought up at all. At the same time, it is the personal level and question of self-identity that does and did complicate the straight-forward discussion of the issue in case of Taizong and his family. As Taizong was creating his genealogy linking his family to a Han-dynasty clan and tracing it further back to Laozi, his ethnic origins became inadvertently interconnected with a network of several other aspects: prestige of his clan and his origins, legitimacy of his rule, and religious affiliation. If one of the aspects were to be affected, it had to be addressed together with the emperor's ethnic roots.

One of the well-known examples was when Taizong was challenged on a personal level by Buddhist monk Falin 法琳 (572-640). The incident took place after 637 when Taizong declared that the Daoist priests were to rank higher than the Buddhists in all official occasions.⁵⁴ In his petition to protect Buddhism, Falin claimed that Taizong and the Tang house did not descend from Laozi and was not connected to the Li clan of Longxi 隴西 but, instead, came from a prestigious, yet not ethnically Chinese line. Taizong confronted Falin but did not punish him and, instead, sent him to an exile in 640, where the monk shortly thereafter died. The event was not repeated or brought up afterwards.⁵⁵ The incident showed that just as with Taizong's son, the ethnicity did not

⁵⁴ Thomas Jülch, "In Defense of the Saṃgha: The Buddhist Apologetic Mission of the Early Tang Monk Falin," *The Middle Kingdom and the Dharma Wheel: Aspects of the Relationship between the Buddhist Saṃgha and the State in Chinese History* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 35.

⁵⁵ Sanping Chen, *Multicultural China in the Early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 4-6. The story appears in a number of sources but its most detailed version is in *Tang hu fa shamen Falin biezhuàn* 唐護法沙門法琳別傳 (The Separate Biography of Falin: a Monk Defending Buddhism in the Tang) written by the Tang dynasty Buddhist monk Yanzong 彥棕 (ca. 627-688) in the

matter until it did, and was not discussed until it had to be discussed and the issue had to be dealt with. It showed the complicated nature of how ethnicity was implicated in one's identity. The ethnic origins involved the claims on prestigious origins (to compete among the court's prominent families) as well as claims on state's religious ideology. It all came together to justify one's right to rule and continue Chinese cultural tradition.

“Chronological Records”: *JS* chapters eighty-six and eighty-seven?

Taizong's concern over mixed ethnic origins came along with the overall anxiety about the stability and legacy of his government in the latter half of his regime. The incident with Falin, the change of heir, failure to overcome Gogureyo were small instances which could have prompted the anxiety as they snowballed towards the end of Taizong's reign. Therefore, it might not be coincidental that the new *JS* compilation included a new section, not included before in the dynastic histories, the “Chronicles.”

The “Chronicles,” like other sections in the *JS*, underwent editorial modifications, however, the major one was a structural one. While drawing most of its material from its prototype, the *Shiliu guo chunqiu* 十六國春秋 (Spring and Autumn of Sixteen States) *JS*'s “Chronicles” was missing two chapters.⁵⁶ The *JS* editors moved accounts of the two of the sixteen states, Former Liang 前涼 (314/320-376) and Western Liang 西涼 (400-421), to the “Biographies” section in the *JS*, namely chapters eighty-six and eighty-seven.⁵⁷ The original sixteen-states nomenclature as defined by the compiler of *SLGCQ* lost two states in the *JS* version, and “Chronicles” had only

second half of the seventh century and compiled in the Chinese Taishō Tripitaka (*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經), no. 2051, 198b–213b.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 1 for more on sources for “Chronicles.”

⁵⁷ Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722-1797), *Shiqi shi shangque* 十七史商闕 (Changsha: Shangwu, 1937) 51. 東吳王鳴圃述, 晉書九.

fourteen states left. The structural modification was intentional, as the preface to “Chronicles” that roughly outlined the chronology of the states to be mentioned still did include the missing Liangs.⁵⁸ The placement of the new chapters within the biographical section was rather awkward as well. It did not follow a particular chronological order and was tucked in right after the accounts of the individuals and before the composite biographies that were product of Tang (starting from chapter eighty-eight, “Xiaoyou” 孝友 [Filial Piety and Brotherly Love] to chapter ninety-six, “Lienü” 列女 [Exemplary Women]). Lastly, the chapters on the rest of the states in “Chronicles” section prominently feature the interactions with both of the Liang states filling out the gaps in the parallel accounts of the same events in the chapters eight-six and eighty-seven as well as in the imperial chronicles of the *JS*.

If we were to point out one specific *JS* chapter of interest to Taizong, it would have to be chapter eighty-seven. The chapter is an account of Li Gao 李曷, Prince Wuzhao of Liang 涼武昭王 (351-417, r. 400-417) and his family. It traced the roots of the prestigious Li clan of Longxi⁵⁹ back to the Han ancestry and Han’s general Li Guang 李廣 (d. 119 BC).⁶⁰ Taizong claimed to be a descendant of the clan and, therefore, the chapter served as another evidence of Taizong’s right to rule as a Han Chinese.⁶¹ This was not the only way the emperor verified his roots and the prestige of his family line but, possibly, in the light of the events of his last years on the throne, he realized

⁵⁸ *JS* 101.2644.

⁵⁹ Longxi is north of modern Qin’an 秦安. Longxi (隴西, in present Gansu 甘肅 province). See the bibliography on the Longxi Li family in Ping Peihong 馮培紅, “Han Jin Dunhuang dazhu luelun” 漢晉敦煌大族略論.” *Dunhuang xue jikan* 2 (2005): 110-16.

⁶⁰ 漢前將軍廣之十六世孫也. *JS* 87.2257.

⁶¹ Reference to his genealogy.: “It has been suggested that the Li clan was not connected with the royal house of Western Liang, or with the prestigious Li clan of Lung-hsi, but was a minor offshoot of an eastern lineage, the Li clan of Gaoqin in Hebei, who had settled in the northwest under the Toba Northern Wei, and had intermarried widely with the non-Chinese tribal aristocracy.” Howard Wechsler, “The Founding of the T’ang Dynasty: Kao-tsu (reign 618-626)” in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T’ang China, 589-906, Part I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, p. 151

that genealogical links need to be further solidified. Therefore, he made use of the *JS* compilation. Chapter eighty-six, account of Zhang Gui 張軌 (255-314, r. 301-314) and his line, also established links to the Han ancestry, Zhang Er 張耳 (265-202 BC).⁶² However, the reason why it was allegedly taken out from the “Chronicles” section and moved to “Biographies” was based on the links of Zhang family to Western Jin court and their continuous loyalty to the Jin regime.

At the same time, there was no pattern for the chapters placement in the biographical section. While the distinction between non-Han and Han seemed crucial for both Former Liang and Western Liang which were both considered ethnically Han Chinese regimes, the chapters on state of Former Yan 前燕 (337-370) in Liaoning, which was also Han, remained in the “Chronicles” section. Randolph Ford points out the importance of loyalty to the imperial court of Jin and provides example of Tuyuhun 吐谷渾 (Xianbei people) who are positively described and “behave with Chinese virtues and recognize the authority of the Jin emperor.”⁶³⁶⁴ While we find the information on them technically in the ethnographic section, chapter ninety-seven is on foreigners (which is not part of “Chronicles”), the Tuyuhun still did not receive special treatment as did the two Liangs.

Unlike chapter eighty-seven on Li Gao, there did not seem to be a well-defined reason to move chapter eighty-six on Former Liang. Therefore, it might have been the case that chapter eighty-six had to migrate together with eighty-seven because of the territorial links between the two states as well as the legacy that state of Western Liang inherited and strove to continue Former Liang. It was easier to justify Zhang family inclusion in the biographical section rather than go through and edit out the entire narrative of chapter eighty-seven that kept bringing up the connection to Zhang

⁶² 漢常山景王耳十七代孫也. *JS* 86.2221.

⁶³ *JS* 97.2537.

⁶⁴ Ford, pp. 190-1.

Gui and his state. From the beginning of each account for both Zhang and Li families their ancestry is traced to Han which not only distinguished them right away from those of non-Han origins, but elevated the status of their families.

Loyalty to Jin

The loyalty narrative is emphasized in both of the chapters, but particularly in chapter eighty-six. Former Liang, even after fall of Western Jin, continued to use its calendar,⁶⁵ send tribute to the imperial court, and participate in military campaigns against its enemies and usurpers. The descriptions of the assistance to the Jin rule are further supplemented by ostentatious rhetoric (example see below). The virtue of Zhang family in assisting the imperial court was rewarded in turn by granting titles to family members. In 313, Zhang Gui was granted a title of Lord of Xiping 西平公.⁶⁶ The loyalty narrative was not the invention of the early Tang historians, but rather, those narratives were preserved from the local records (earlier versions of the *JS* and *SLGCQ*) that deemed it necessary to mention ties to the Jin regime. (Ford, p.364 Murong refusing the throne by using familiar trope of loose hair and belt to the left is a bit suspicious. It could be of spurious origins. *JS* 110.2834 吾本幽漠射獵之鄉，被髮左衽之俗，曆數之籙寧有分邪！卿等苟相褒舉，以覬非望，實匪寡德所宜聞也 I am originally from the northern deserts, the land where men shoot with bows and hunt. My custom is to wear my hair loose and fasten my robe on the left.

⁶⁵ According to the records, throughout all times they retained Western Jin's era title Jianxing 建興 (which ended at 317 for Western Jin). However, it was pointed out that in the regimes that supposedly supported Eastern Jin, two calendar systems were at work. One to show loyalty to the court and the local one assigned by the local ruler. There are also records of Former Liang declaring vassalage to neighboring powerful states, such as Former Zhao in 323 and receiving official appointments and titles from them. Michael Rogers, *The Chronicle of Fu Chien: A Case of Exemplar History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968).

⁶⁶ He was originally a Western Jin official and was appointed by Western Jin as a governor of Liang province which was a starting territory for Former Liang and later Western Liang.

How could I have a share in the prerogatives of imperial succession! If you ministers all wish to elevate me in order to covet presumptuous hopes, this is truly not what my humble self should be listening to.) The problem was that with the course of history of the Former Liang the loyalty rhetoric of the region was not as straightforward and absolute. Records started to contradict themselves, and *JS* editors could only additionally amplify the needed narratives but disregard the ones that did not match the picture.

A good example that expressed Former Liang's loyalty to the court with exaggerated narration described a critical situation for Western Jin (316) when Liu Yao 劉曜 (d. 329)⁶⁷ was approaching Chang'an. Zhang Shi 張寔 (271-320, r. 314-320) ordered a unit sent to protect the capital. His elderly uncle, Zhang Su 張肅 was determined to protect the capital as well and asked to go first to attack Liu Yao's army. When his request was declined due to his advanced age, Zhang Su gave a long speech full of patriotic feelings and loyalty to the Jin government. "Just like when the fox dies and turns its head to its burrow, the heart does not forget one's origins⁶⁸ ... how can I possibly consider myself [Jin's] subject!" 「狐死首丘，心不忘本 ... 何以為人臣！」 Zhang Shi managed to persuade him not to go, but when he heard that the capital was captured, Zhang Su died from grief and resentment. 既而聞京師陷沒，肅悲憤而卒。⁶⁹

The pompos diction deflated as the chapter's narrative went along and the rulers replaced one another. Moreover, many of the descriptions started to contradict the image of a virtuous regime posing itself as an obedient subject of the Eastern Jin. Zhang Chonghua 張重華 (327-353, r. 346-353), great grandson of Zhang Gui, took over at the peak of Former Liang's reign. He nominated

⁶⁷ Last ruler of Han Zhao state founded by Liu Yuan. *JSCD*, p.

⁶⁸ A similar phrase is used in the historical evaluation of the Former Liang's state to justify the inclusion of the chapter in the "Biographies" section: 無忘本朝, *JS* 86.

⁶⁹ *JS* 86.2227-8. The parallel account is in Zang Rongxu's 臧榮緒 *Jin shu* 晉書 (5th century).

himself as the acting Prince of Liang 假涼王 and refused to give it up when in 347 the Jin's envoy Yu Gui 俞歸⁷⁰ came to appoint him as the Governor of Liang instead. In a rather childish manner Zhang Chonghua protested, saying that his family had been loyal to the house of Jin for generations but still did not seem to be as prestigious as Xianbei. Unlike him, he got the title of the Prince of Yan 燕王. Yu Gui patiently explained that the men of non-royal surnames cannot be titled princes. The highest rank they could receive is lord (*gong* 公) and how can the status of barbarians compare to that prestigious title.⁷¹ The *JS* narrative resolved the conflict by stating that Zhang Chonghua was satisfied by the explanation and stopped (*zhi* 止) pursuing the coveted title. The parallel in the *SLGCQ*, however, stated otherwise: in the end he obtained the desired title.⁷² The example is rather telling of the manipulated nature of the loyalty claim. Every state, including Jin, sought to gain an upper hand and ensure various means of support and protection. At the height of its development, Former Liang dared to demand the restricted title. Eastern Jin, to keep track of its dangerous neighbor, breaks the rule and assigns the coveted title, but does not grant the request to remote and non-threatening Liang.

The importance of loyalty to the Jin regime, and, therefore, presenting oneself as not a petty and illegitimate state, was also recognized in the records on Western Liang. After changing the reign name to Jianchu 建初 in 405, Li Gao, founder of Western Liang, sent two of his trusted

⁷⁰ It is not clear whether there is a gap in the records but, according to the chapter, Yu Gui did not get back to Jin right away. There is a record of him going back to Jin only after Zhang Tianxi came to power, sixteen years later in 363. If so, it seemed reasonable that Zhang Chonghua did not want to let him to go back.

⁷¹ 王者之制，異姓不得稱王；九州之內，重爵不得過公。... 是以爵以上公，位以方伯，鮮卑北狄，豈足為比哉！ *JS* 86. (Rogers writes that he conferred the title of prince to Murong Huang for practical reasons)

⁷² 羣寮上重華為丞相、涼王、雍秦涼三州牧。 *SLGCQ* also portrayed Zhang Chonghua as more impatient and disrespectful to the representative from Jin. While in the *JS* version he “was not willing to accept imperial edict” 不肯受詔 in *SLGCQ* version he “got angry and did not accept the imperial edict” 怒不受詔. *SLGCQ* is missing the persuasion by Yu Gui.

people with a memorial to Eastern Jin to justify the era title change, pleading for forgiveness for making such decision on his own and requesting to become a vassal state.⁷³ While the *JS* “Imperial Annals” (*diji* 帝紀) have a parallel record of the event,⁷⁴ the subsequent records of Western Liang have no record of it.

Chapter eighty-seven continues to write that since the group did not return and there was no response from the court, they sent a request again in 408.⁷⁵

Also, since there was no response to the previous memorial, they again sent a Buddhist monk, Faquan, to secretly present the memorial to the emperor. “At the time we sent a trusted person, Huang Shi, to present the memorial and express our sincere intentions. The way is far and the surroundings are dangerous, it is unknown if he has reached you or not.”

又以前表未報，復遣沙門法泉間行奉表，曰：...時遣舍人黃始奉表通誠，遙途險曠，未知達不？⁷⁶

This shows that while *JS* editors did care about certain modifications with regard to the records on Western Liang when it became chapter eighty-seven in the compilation, the detail above was too miniscule to catch or pay attention to. They either did not read carefully or thought it was not significant, thus did not make adjustments further on in the chapter or in the parallel *JS* 10. In reality, however, Eastern Jin seemed to ignore similar pledges from the neighboring states, especially if the state was as insignificant as Western Liang at the time. They might not have actually reached the court or were regarded as insignificant from the Eastern Jin perspective as

⁷³ *JS* 87.2259.

⁷⁴ 是歲，涼武昭王玄盛遣使奉表稱藩 *JS* 10.259. Along with the incongruity with *JS* 87 the records of the events related to Western Liang in the Imperial Annals give a sense of a later interpolation. They are attached at the very end of the paragraphs after a long series of unrelated events and start with a phrase “this year” 是歲. Also *JS* 10.253.

⁷⁵ The Imperial Annals have no record of the second mission.

⁷⁶ *JS* 87.2263.

they were coming from the petty regimes that the government looked down upon. They probably did not bother to address their queries.⁷⁷

Just like the rulers of illegitimate states or self-proclaimed legitimate Jin, Tang Taizong during his reign differentiated the useful and not useful relationships with the other foreign regimes. Each state defined its rule legitimacy through its relations with the other foreign states: assigning specific type of relationships based on how powerful and dangerous the neighbor was. Loyal subjects – to contain their military aspirations, insurgent rebels – to overcome and expand one's territory. The rhetoric of the written records of the regimes that aspired to control Middle Kingdom was very similar to the predominant narrative that either Jin or Tang had promoted. When the power became to wane and in times of danger the less significant and not acknowledged neighbors are recognized, the rules are broken in terms of how titles are assigned and what honors are given to the states previously deemed as insurgent.⁷⁸ Tang Taizong knew this very well when in the beginning of his rule he had to concede to a humiliating request to have an audience with the Eastern Turks that is normally not allowed by the Chinese tradition.⁷⁹

Content Inconsistency in “Chronological Records”

By comparison with the two extracted, eighty-six and eighty-seven, chapters, if we survey the entire section of the “Chronicles,” the contradictions within the narratives not only reflected the editorial efforts but also the times of the records' compilation. As with the Former and Western

⁷⁷ From Jakub Hrubý's comments at European Early Medieval China workshop, Prague, November 2017.

⁷⁸ Yang Shao-yun provides an example of conveniently devised rhetoric of the ones in power from the later period of Tang when Zhang Yichao 張議潮 (799-872) was deemed loyal to the court justified by him conveniently turning against the Tibetans, despite formerly collaborating them. Yang Shao-yun, “Stubbornly Chinese?” p. 156.

⁷⁹ Howard J. Wechsler, “T'ai-tsung (reign 626-49) the Consolidator.” in Denis C. Twitchett, ed., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 3: Sui and T'ang China, 589-906, Part I*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Liang the local records of the other states in the north mirrored the unstable times and rapidly changing political moods and decisions which depended on the situation at the time. The loyalty claims were easily swayed. If the state in question was weak and threatened by other neighboring states, it easily preferred to claim the allegiance to a more powerful state rather than to the one that claimed cultural continuity of Chinese heritage. While the records pertaining to Western and Eastern Jin did not contain such narratives, the “Chronicles” section preserved the complexity of group political dynamics and reflected closer the contemporary reality and difficulty of choices. Therefore, while the evaluative statements of the editorial staff to the chapters in “Chronicles” were quite uniform, the sources for the “Chronicles,” which were not modified much and were of various origins, did not present much cohesiveness.⁸⁰

The content modification of the “Chronicles” was pointed out by several scholars. Honey argues that Tang editors attempted to deliberately conceal the incompetence of Western Jin government in Liu Yuan’s 劉淵 (d. 310)⁸¹ biography. They did not include the detail, mentioned in the earlier versions of the *JS*, that Liu Yuan started off with a smaller army. The idea that the imperial government could not contain even minor military aspirations was humiliating. The editors of the *JS* switched focus to blaming immorality of the regime rather than overall incompetence since the former could be forgiven and the later reflected on the poor efforts of the officials and did not make them look good.⁸² In his dissertation, Randolph Ford points out the examples of the two contradictory characteristics of Shi Le: he was well known to be extremely

⁸⁰ As mentioned in the Chapter One the “Zaiji” was largely based on records of the *Shiliuguo chungiu* 十六國春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals of the Sixteen States) which was based on local records compiled by the state historians.

⁸¹ Liu Yuan, was a nativized Xiongnu and a loyal subject of Jin, but during the War of the Eight Princes he reunited with the Xiongnu troops outside the capital and rebelled against Western Jin. Claiming genealogical links to Han dynasty he founded Han Zhao state. *JSCD*, p.

⁸² Honey, *The Rise of the Medieval Hsiung-nu*, p. 15.

violent. However, there are narratives on him that emphasized his desire to learn and gift the learned ones.⁸³

The negative characteristics by the Tang editors in the majority of the cases were counteracted by local records of the self-constructed positive portrait to simulate the image of righteous and loyal Chinese subject that deserved the right to rule. In the case of Shi Le above, his efforts in education extolled learning as one of the Chinese values. Similarly, in Liu Yuan's account he is recorded to be well-read and proficient in a number of Chinese Classics.⁸⁴ Fu Jian 苻堅 (338-355) surprised his grandfather when he asked him for education.

At the age of eight years he requested a teacher to come to his house so that he might study. [Fu] Hong⁸⁵ (285-350) said, "You are of an alien race of barbarians that for generations has known only wine-drinking. Now you seek to study, do you?" Pleased, he permitted it.⁸⁶

八歲，請師就家學。洪曰：「汝戎狄異類，世知飲酒，今乃求學邪！」欣而許之。⁸⁷

Curiously, Taizong's father, Li Yuan 李淵 (r. 618-626) while encouraging his children's military training was not too keen on Taizong's education in literary studies. There is a record of him regarding the "book-reading fellows,"⁸⁸ whose influence in his opinion was not beneficial for his son, Taizong.⁸⁹

⁸³ Ford, p. 314.

⁸⁴ Honey, however, points out that in the official biographies it is very rare to see such a long list of the specific text titles. Usually, the official who was well educated was simply characterized as such and, if given examples, only one or two would be given. Honey thought such description was in fact a potential attempt of *JS* editors to mock the failed usurper of China.

⁸⁵ His son was the first ruler of the Former Qin 前秦 (351-394).

⁸⁶ Translation from Rogers, p. 112. Wu Shijian 吳士鑑, *Jin shu jiaozhu* 晉書斟注 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, n.d.), 5.1870 cited SLGCQ's parallel which wrote that Fu Hong did not allow it as Fu Jian was too young. Fu Hong also claimed that he requested a teacher when he was thirteen and it was already considered a speedy achievement.

⁸⁷ *JS* 113.2884.

⁸⁸ *dushu han* 讀書漢. Rogers, p.195 n. 17.

⁸⁹ 此兒典兵既久，在外專制，為讀書漢所教，非復我昔日子也。Liu Xu 劉昫 (887-946) *et al.*, eds., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 64.2b.

There are also other cases, however, which took adherence to the Chinese way of thinking to the extreme. One of them was a familiar trope of the refusal to accept official nomination right away. While there are records of the rulers “declining” the imperial title to express their modesty, the rulers in the “Chronicles” justify themselves being “incompetent” due to their foreign origins. Murong Jun 慕容儁(319-360), the ruler of Former Yan, points out his barbarian customs of wearing his hair loose and fastening his clothes to the left.⁹⁰ In another example, Fu Rong 苻融 (340-383) reminding his brother Fu Jian of their ethnic origins as Rong tried to dissuade the latter against embarking on the campaign which threatened the existence of Eastern Jin.⁹² There is a self-awareness of one’s ethnicity in the “Chronicles” but depending on the context it seemed to be used either to boost one’s image or remind of one’s limitations.⁹³

Overall, the records of the states in the “Chronicles” generally follow standardized and what could be also deemed as sinicized course of perfect rulership.⁹⁴ The modesty in accepting an official position mentioned above was one of the many tropes or similarities reminiscent of the Chinese political and cultural spheres. It is not clear to what extent the historical records reflected

⁹⁰ 被髮左衽 *JS* 110.2834. Ford, pp. 364-4.

⁹¹ The *JS* account on the alleged ancestor of Tang Taizong, Li Gao, founder of Western Liang, similarly used the rhetoric of modesty when he was nominated to the throne. But, obviously, without any mentions to different ethnic origins.

⁹² *JS* 114.2965. Ford, p. 365. Also see above when Fu Hong is reminding Fu Jian of the same fact.

⁹³ Throughout, the “Chronicles” there are numerous examples of one foreign state referring to each other as hu 胡 (barbarian) to alleviate one’s own state and diminish the intentions and qualifications of the other. Many times, it is used in offensive connotation. For example, *JS* 110.2841: “Freaking barbarian, how dare you appear in the dream of the Son of Heaven!” 死胡安敢夢生天子. The records on Western Liang also have plenty of examples. E.g. *JS* 96.2527: 李氏為胡所滅 and *JS* 87.2270: 不殺此胡，復何面目以見母也！]

⁹⁴ Monique Nagel-Angermann surveyed a number of examples and argued that states in the “Chronicles” section were all familiar with the Chinese norms and, at least in writing, tried to imitate the stereotypical account of the ascension of a new ruler that also included traditions of general amnesty, agricultural reforms, and building of schools. From her paper “Representations of vain efforts to establish order during the period of the Sixteen States 十六國 (304-439) – a critical evaluation of the historiography on Early Medieval China” presented at European Early Medieval China workshop, Prague, November 2017. Her forthcoming paper on amnesties.

the application of those governing principles in reality. Similarly, we can only hypothesize about actual intentions and motivation of purported adherence to Chinese bureaucratic system. However, clearly each regime with intentions of conquering the rest and unifying the Middle Kingdom had to portray oneself as the one well-versed in Chinese values and worth of continuing the Chinese tradition. The strategy was not that much different from Taizong's rule legitimization efforts as we saw in Chapter 2.

Dunhuang and Establishment of Prestigious Clans

The bureaucratic system dominated by distinguished families prominent in Jin migrated to Hexi 河西 area occupied by Former Liang and Western Liang states.⁹⁵ The ruling family was supported by members of the most prestigious clans, the status which guaranteed official positions. The structure was still at stake in early Tang government structure.⁹⁶ Starting from Zhang Gui's move to Liangzhou 涼州 and foundation of Former Liang and, more prominently, with Li Gao, there is a physical break from the Jin territory as the Jin capital moved south. And while in writing Liangzhou sang praises of Jin and swore their allegiance, pressure from the new and active neighbors and influence of the personal aspirations contributed to formation of local dynamics, rise of new prominent families and competition to preserve and elevate one's status.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Former Liang occupied a large area in north-western China (at its peak): Gansu, parts of Ningxia, Shaanxi, Qinghai and Xinjiang. Western Liang centered around Duhuang area and occupied Western Gansu and part of Xinjiang.

⁹⁶ *JS* served as one of the genealogical links for Taizong who was struggling to promote the prestige of his clan. Similarly, while earlier versions of the *JS* were privately composed, the historian had to consider requests from their patrons and officials in power to not only whether to include their family accounts or not but also in what light to present those accounts.

⁹⁷ Feng Peihong 馮培紅, "Dunhuang dazhu yu Qian Liang wang guo" 敦煌大族與前涼王國, *Nairiku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 內陸アジア言語の研究 24 (2009): 93-129 paper on establishment of prominent families in the area.

To sustain this structure, it was important for the Western Liang to create a sense of continuity between the two regimes. While Han ancestry and ties to Li Gao mattered to Tang Taizong, ties to locally established prominent Zhang family similarly mattered to Li Gao in order to establish his prestige and solidify his presence in the area. In the records of Western Liang deeds of Zhang Gui and benefits that he brought to the region are mentioned several times. Li Gao acknowledgement of Zhang Gui's meritorious service also implied loyalty to Jin dynasty and adherence to and continuation of Chinese values and customs.⁹⁸ The predecessors of Li Gao served Zhang family and by including that connection Lis of Western Liang provided another piece of evidence to their right to rule.⁹⁹

Many officials and associates of Li Gao were *houyi* 後裔 (descendants) from Former Liang regime: representatives from Song, Suo, and Guo families were one of the most prominent who served both of the regimes.¹⁰⁰ Majority of them were Dunhuang natives who strove for power and prestige. There is not much information on them in the *JS*. Their biographies are scattered among three composite chapters in the *JS*: *JS* 89 "Zhongyi" 忠義·(Loyal and Righteous),¹⁰¹ *JS* 94 Yinyi

⁹⁸ continuing Zhang Gui's legacy/following his example: 張王之業. *Wei shu* actually focuses on Zhang Zuo, so King Zhang might refer to the later. Connection was also made to Zhang Liang 張良 (250-185 BCE), one of the closest associates of Liu Bang 劉邦 who assisted in establishing Han dynasty. "To continue Zifang (Zhang Liang) legacy" 納子房之妙算. *JS* 87.

⁹⁹ *JS* writes that Li Gao's grandfather Li Yan 李弇 served Zhang Gui as Wuwei jiangjun 武衛將軍 [according to Wu Liang shitan also as taishou of Tianshui 天水 and 封安世亭侯], *Wei shu* notes that he served Zhang Zuo 張祚 (d. 355), great-grandson of Zhang Gui, not Zhang Gui. Zhang Zuo was actually an usurper who officially broke away from the Jin government. Potentially, it might be the reason why the *JS* editors did not want to include the connection. Li Gao's father, Li Chang 李昶, had a good reputation as served for Former Liang as 世子侍講.

¹⁰⁰ For example, Song Yao 宋繇 (d. 448), Li Gao's step brother, was a descendant of Song Pei 宋配 who, in turn, was a main associate of Zhang Gui.

¹⁰¹ For example, the biography of Song family representative, Song Ju 宋矩 who served for Former Liang. *JS* 89.2320.

隱逸 (Recluses),¹⁰² and *JS* 95 “Yishu” 藝術 (Arts).¹⁰³ Judging from the nature of the latter two chapters, a number of them were famous geomancers. As they were proficient in the reading of celestial signs as well as divining with *Yijing* 易經 that some of them ended up being local record keepers and historians.¹⁰⁴

The mystic aura of Dunhuang area, as reflected in *JS* 94 and *JS* 95, famous for its geomancers reflected in the content of the Former Liang and Western Liang chapters. There are numerous examples of narratives reflecting on portents and signs. The Tang editors edited out most of the strange stories from the biographical section of the *JS*, and in the structure of the *JS* those accounts were most prevalent in the “Chronicles” section. Majority of predictions, myths, and unusual occurrences migrated from the *SLGCQ*. Likewise, chapters eighty-six and eighty-seven are abundant with descriptions of auspicious and inauspicious events that correlated with major political events, especially rise or fall of the rulers of the area. The records of which were meticulously preserved.¹⁰⁵ Reigns of both Zhang Gui and Li Gao were prophesied based on the unusual symbols. For example, in case of Li Gao:

Guo Nun¹⁰⁶ rose and said to Song Yao: “You, my Lord, shall occupy the highest rank among the subjects, and Lord Li (Li Gao) will have a portion of the state land. When a household has yellow dun mare bear a colt with a white forelock this is when it happens.”

¹⁰² For example, Song Xian 宋纖. *JS* 94.2453.

¹⁰³ For example, Suo Dan 索統. *JS* 95.2494-5. He retreated from the official service after disturbances in the country and was famous for his dream interpretations which were always correct. *JSCD*, p. 465.

¹⁰⁴ Suo Sui 索綏 appears in Suo Dan’s biography. Suo Sui was a record keeper and one of the purported compilers of Former Liang records. *Shitong* 史通 notes that in the fifteenth year of Zhang Jun (338), he assigned a skillful writer/fine talent Suo Sui 索綏 to compile “Spring and Autumn Annals of Liang” in 50 *juan*. 前涼張駿十五年，...以付秀才索綏，作《涼國春秋》五十卷。Pu Qilong 蒲起龍 (1679-ca. 1761), annot., *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2009), 12.333. *SLGCQ* has a similar record.

¹⁰⁵ Mysterious light, sweet dew, trees Li Gao was asked to allow historians to record it and he allowed it. 神光、甘露、連理、嘉禾眾瑞，請史官記其事，玄盛從之. *JS* 87.

¹⁰⁶ Guo Nun served as a minister of Lü Guang 呂光 (338-399), ethnically Di, a founder of Later Liang 後涼 (389-403). Guo Nun was also known for his prophecies. Biography in *JS* 95.

[郭]麋起謂[宋]繇曰：「君當位極人臣，李君有國土之分，家有騶草馬生白額駒，此其時也。」¹⁰⁷

As Li Gao rose to power, another family became prominent in the area. Li's wife, Lady Yin 尹, served in a role similar to ruler's adviser.¹⁰⁸ While not explicitly mentioned in *JS* 87, her contribution was so noticeable that she earned a separate biography in *JS* 96 "Lie nü" (Exemplary Women).¹⁰⁹ In her account there is a record on significance of hers and her husband's influence: "Therefore, there was a saying: 'Li and Yin rule Dunhuang.'" 玄盛之創業也，謨謀經略多所毗贊，故西州諺曰：「李、尹王敦煌。」 Eastern Jin had a similar expression in circulation: "Wang and Ma together rule the world" 王與馬，共天下. It referred to Wang Dun and his cousin Wang Dao both assisting Sima Rui, when he became in charge of the military operations in Langye in 307.¹¹⁰ The rule by means of the established family name was a well-used mechanism during the time.

The area of Liangzhou and western regions were also known for their adherence to Buddhist beliefs. As mentioned in the previous section, the religious affiliation was also closely interlaced with the ethnic origins. The *JS* happened to be rather silent on the mentions of Buddhism. As the

¹⁰⁷ *JS* 87.2257.

¹⁰⁸ As Li Gao's son, second ruler of the Western Liang, Li Xin 李歆 (d. 420) was preparing for a military campaign (that turned out disastrous for Western Liang) against Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜 (368-433), a ruler of the Northern Liang 北涼 (397-439), she along with his closest advisor, Song Yao, were advising him against it. Li Xin still attempted it, and Juqu Mengxin took over Western Liang. 尹氏固諫，不聽，宋繇又固諫，士業並不從。 *JS* 87.2270. Lady Yin's biography in *JS* 96 recorded her entire argument in which she showed her perspicacity and good judgement of the situation. *JS* 96.2526.

¹⁰⁹ Her biography is last in *JS* 96. Zhong Shulin 钟书林, "Bei yiwang de shencai, Li Gao qi Yin shi yu Wei Jin xianyuan fengfan" 被遗忘的神采，李暠妻尹氏与魏晋贤媛风范, *Wenshi zhishi* 3 (2018): 56-59. *JS* 96 included a number of spouses of illegitimate rulers. In addition to wives of Former Liang's rulers, Zhang Mao and Zhang Tianxi, the chapter also included Liu Cong's wife, Murong Chui's wife and Fu Jian's concubine. Potentially, an interesting device from the Tang editors: a positive evaluation of the women might highlight the shortcomings of these rulers and further degrade them.

¹¹⁰ Zhao Xiangqun 趙向群, *Wu Liang shitan* 五涼史探 (Lanshou: Gansu renmin chubanshe, 1996), p. 150. *JS* 98. See above on more detailed information on Wang Dao, Wang Dun, and Sima Rui.

idea of Buddhism did not receive much welcome in the early Tang official rhetoric it was redacted quite extensively in the written records. Therefore, in one of the examples above, when Li Gao sent a Buddhist monk Faquan on a tributary mission to the Jin court, seemed to be a rare exception. While the area for known for its Buddhist practices the content of the *JS* and chapters on the area did not reflect it. The scarce mentions served as another clue that some parts of the *JS* did not undergo the editing of the original content. More explicit confirmation is found in the parallel records on Former Liang in other official records. Buddhism seemed to be widespread in the area that Former Liang and Western Liang occupied. *Wei shu*¹¹¹ records:

Liangzhou had, since Zhang Gui through the generations believed the Buddhist teachings. Dunhuang abuts the western regions, and the clergy and laity both attained the old fashions. The villages and towns each had many stupas and temples. During the Taiyan reign period (435–440 C.E.), Liangzhou was pacified and the people of its state were transferred to the capital areas. Both śramaṇas and Buddhist practices came eastward, and the images and doctrine prospered. Then, because the śramaṇas were so numerous, an edict was issued that those under age fifty would be defrocked.¹¹²

涼州自張軌後，世信佛教。敦煌地接西域，道俗交得其舊式，村塢相屬，多有塔寺。太延中，涼州平，徙其國人於京邑，沙門佛事皆俱東，象教彌增矣。尋以沙門眾多，詔罷年五十已下者。¹¹³

Regardless of Tang Taizong's idealized picture of ethnic Han occupying the area to support his narrative of ethnic legitimacy. As Dunhuang and its surroundings were much more variegated:¹¹⁴ ethnically, culturally, and on religious level it was different from the simplified connection that Tang was making.¹¹⁵ Not only the Han ethnic roots were under question as the

¹¹¹ The section on the sixteen states in the *Wei shu* for the most part drew from the *SLGCQ* records.

¹¹² Translation from Nina Duthie, "Origins, Ancestors, and Imperial Authority in Early Northern Wei Historiography" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2015), p. 160.

¹¹³ Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572), *Wei shu* 魏書 (Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 114.3032.

¹¹⁴ Yang Shao-yun talks about bicultural identity for Chinese elite families in Dunhuang between Tibetans and Tang rule. "Stubbornly Chinese," p. 185.

¹¹⁵ The narrative of Dunhuang staying native Chinese despite the outside and local influences is perpetuated throughout the dynastic histories. And it has been reflected in some modern studies of the area. "[d]espite the mixed character of its population and its nearness to foreign countries, Dunhuang remained stubbornly Chinese." Arthur Waley, *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang*, Abingdon, Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2005 [1960], p.240.

people from Dunhuang were a majority in *SLGCQ* “Five Liang” accounts,¹¹⁶ but also was the purported loyalty to the imperial Jin regime as well as local beliefs.

Aside from the lineage considerations, the area of Hexi which included Dunhuang Commandery was of importance to early Tang as it provided a corridor to Central Asia. In 617, a distant relative of Li family, Li Gui 李軌 (d. 619), gathered an army in Wuwei 武威 Commandery (modern Wuwei, Gansu) and proclaimed himself King of Liang, bringing Hexi under his control. After the Tang dynasty was established in Chang’an, in 619 the court relied on the powerful Sogdian An 安 clan to destroy Li Gui’s rule from the inside. With this, Hexi was annexed to the Tang domain.¹¹⁷¹¹⁸ The importance of the area and having control over it comes up in the Li Gao’s biography as he is on his deathbed regretting that he was not able to unify the western side of the Yellow River (Gansu).

When I was young I was afflicted with great suffering, I experienced to the full hundreds of hardships. At the moment of death and disorder I subsequently was selected to serve this area, but my talents were weak and wisdom was shallow, and I was not able to unify the right side of the River...

吾少離荼毒，百艱備嘗，於喪亂之際，遂為此方所推，才弱智淺，不能一同河右。

¹¹⁹

Tang Taizong and Li Gao, Tang Taizong and Li Gao’s Son

While the chapter eighty-seven itself underwent few modifications, the historian’s comment in the end of the chapter written by the Tang editors explicitly recounted its significance and

¹¹⁶ “Dunhuang dazhi yu Qian Liang wang guo,” p. 94, n. 5.

¹¹⁷ Rong Xinjiang, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 32.

¹¹⁸ Fu Jian recognized the importance of the control over the area as the bridge to the Central Asian territories in 385 when he moved here ten thousand households of commoners from the Jiangnan 江漢 region in Southern China and over seven thousand from Central China. The migration of large numbers of intellectuals and commoners from Central China advanced agricultural development and boosted local economy. Rong Xinjiang, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang*, p. 25.

¹¹⁹ *JS* 87.2267.

likewise justified its placement in the “Biographies” section. The Tang editors of the *JS* reaffirmed Taizong’s lineage by claiming the continuity of the Tang regime to the Li Gao’s rule. The message was clear and straightforward as Li Gao was held in a very high esteem with a strong appraisal from the Tang historians. The comment emphasized Li Gao’s modesty and loyalty, describing his declaration of vassalage and tribute payment to the Eastern Jin’s Son of Heaven. According to the comment, Li Gao established the foundation of what later became the source of Tang Taizong’s enterprise.

With a handful of soil, he [gradually] established the foundation of Heaven, with scattered brooks he gave start to the dwelling encircled by the sea. Then it was gradual, now it is also in accord with it/consistent. This is to know that the Heavenly Mandate slowly returns, and it cannot arrive in one day. The source of accumulated merit and stored up blessings came a long way.”

覆簣創元天之基，疏涓開環海之宅。彼既有漸，此亦同符，是知景命攸歸，非一朝之可致，累功積慶，其所由來遠矣。¹²⁰

Moreover, Li Gao and Taizong appear to be similar as presented in their narratives. For example, both write poetry and engage in literary activities at the court. Both left legacies to their sons, the main principles of which were quite similar. In his legacy, Li Gao was urging his son, Li Xin, to have good relationships with the neighboring states, look for opportune moment, stop building and indulge in joy, urging him to cut unnecessary expenses.¹²¹ 願殿下親仁善鄰，養威觀釁，罷宮室之務，止游畋之娛。¹²² Likewise, Li Gao also advised that the ruler should listen to his advisors. Overall, the rhetoric was not too different from Taizong’s techniques in writing about his own rulership. Meow Hui Gong’s article about Han Wendi and Wei Wendi “Becoming

¹²⁰ *JS* 87.2271.

¹²¹ See Chapter Two on Taizong’s legacy to his son, Gaozong, in *Difan*.

¹²² *JS* 87.

Wen”: polish Tang Taizong’s final writings as his final edict to form/solidify his image/justification (plus analysis of Li Gao’s final words)¹²³

Li Xin did not follow his father’s word of caution and in the historical tradition represented all of the typical characteristics of the last bad ruler. Li Xin engaged in incessant construction and delivered harsh punishments. The mistakes in the politics are further supported by signs from nature: disastrous events such as torrential rains. Li Xin was not heeding to his advisors who wanted to promote agriculture development as a way to overcome the crisis and to win in wars.¹²⁴ The final blow to Western Liang came when Li Xin did not heed neither his advisors nor his mother, Lady Yin to not engage Northern Liang’s leader, Juqu Mengxun. He was utterly defeated by him, who, in turn, entered the capital of Western Liang and occupied the area. Li Xin’s failures could have served as a very good negative example for Tang Taizong who was preoccupied with military activities.

However, the authors of the historian’s comment disregarded Li Gao’s heir or his other sons despite their accounts included in the chapter. Overall, the chapter eighty-seven did not mention as many defeats that Li Gao himself went through. Many of those though were described in *JS* 129, chapter on Juqu Mengxun 沮渠蒙遜 (368-433), who was a main threat to Western Liang and who finally overcame the area. When Mengxun entered the capital of Western Liang, Jiuquan 酒泉, he captured Li Xin’s mother, concubines, and ministers.¹²⁵ Eventually, Li family ended up in

¹²³ Meow Hui Goh, “Becoming *Wen*: The Rhetoric in the ‘Final Edicts’ of Han Emperor Wen and Wei Emperor Wen,” *Early Medieval China* 19 (2013): 58-79.

¹²⁴ 土業用刑頗嚴，又繕築不止 *JS* 87.2268. In his *Difan* Taizong mentioned similar strategies: strengthening the country (within) to counter the outside. But it is also ironic since Taizong did engage in some unnecessary construction in the second half of his reign. He was also keen on conquering Goguryeo despite protests of his officials.

¹²⁵ The parallel account in the chapter on Juqu Mengxun framed the entire situation in positive terms and emphasized how smooth the transfer of the power was both for the local officials and the people living

Northern Wei 北魏.¹²⁶ The final presence of Li clan in the north served as another justification for transfer of the rule from the Northern Wei and not from the southern dynasties.

The *Jin shu* did not have a clear-cut view on the foreigners. On the one hand, they were considered a threat: volatile and unpredictable, they were able to split the country apart (as it happened to the Jin dynasty). Therefore, any contact should be shunned and there should be a clear separation from them. But, likewise, those characteristics were valuable as the foreign population was considered an epitome of *wu* 武 (martial prowess) and were perfect warriors, invaluable asset for state's military campaigns. With that, they were deemed to have a potential to be integrated in the regime and be culturally assimilated in the Chinese tradition. In turn, the narrative tradition of the foreign states recognized the specific patterns that might grant acceptance to the sinosphere. And they used them to their own advantage as they incorporated them as their legitimization strategies. Chapters eighty-six and eighty-seven, while manipulated by the Tang editors, had also revealed that there was no consistency and uniformity within the groups of outsiders. As “Chinese” were defining the others, the others were also busy figuring out what they were, and how to keep peace with the ones in power.

The similarity between the two regimes that newly unified the country, Western Jin and Tang, and the precedents that brought down the Jin regime, sent a signal to the Tang government that wished to stay longer in power than its less fortunate “twin.” The hesitation and incoherence of judgement on the non-Chinese population reflected a possible dichotomy in Tang Taizong's own

there. “People in the area lived same as before, the army did not engage in plundering, and the officials were all offered positions.” 百姓安堵如故，軍無私焉 ... 士業舊臣皆隨才擢敘 JS 129.3198.

¹²⁶ For example, Li Xin's son, Chong'er 重耳 temporally served Liu-Song 劉宋 and returned to Wei to become a prefect of Hengnong 恒農太守. JS 87.2271. Younger brother of Li Xin, Li Fan 李翻, and his son Li Bao 李寶 (407-459) managed to escape to Wei. At the same time, the last former ruler of Former Liang, Zhang Tianxi 張天錫 (346-406), despite first surrendering to Former Qin, found asylum in Eastern Jin and was granted entrance based on the Zhang's family service to Jin.

views and Tang politics on the non-Han Chinese. Taizong's personal situation and question of ethnic identity reflected a certain sensitivity in the discourse on the foreign people. Tang Taizong's unstable roots and question of self-identity, while unspoken, seemed to have driven much of his political decisions and statements on what the ruler should be.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing without the beginning,
 But few can have an ending.¹
 — *Shijing*

The dissertation proposed to read the official compilation of the dynastic history of Jin not only as a reflection of the time and circumstances it was composed at but as an active mechanism of manipulation by its compilers and instigators. In this case, second emperor of Tang dynasty, Tang Taizong, and his coterie of ministers and advisers, some of whom took part in the final compilation of the *Jin shu*.

The use of the *JS* as a creation of the specific image of the emperor and persuasion device for his ministers was one of the examples of manipulating textual tradition. In the *JS*, direct comments by the Emperor Taizong from the essays he wrote to evaluate four chapters or four figures in the Jin history and historian's comments written by his ministers were straightforward declaration of their intentions. Likewise, the indirect modifications included the choice and arrangement of the material as well as changes in the structure of the work.

Similarities in the dynastic rules (such as violent rise to power, problematic choice of heir and ambivalent relationships with foreign neighbors) of Jin and Tang negatively reflected on the rulers of Jin and, on the other hand, positively promoted the prosperity of Taizong's rule. The similarities helped me identify strings of comparison and likewise organize the chapters. The first chapter in analyzing the reasons for compilation as expounded by Taizong reflected on his purported views on history and historical writing and suggested potentially different

¹ 靡不有初，鮮克有終。James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics, Volume 4, Part 2, She King* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), "Greater Odes," "Dang" 蕩, p. 505.

motivation based on his background and events at the time. In the second chapter I looked in the beginnings of the new dynastic regime and what kind of strategizing went into legitimization process in case when the rule takeover did not follow the standard of dynastic succession. I looked at the role of the official history and the ways it was written and evaluated that reflected the ideas of what was considered acceptable, worth to be included in the narrative and how it was to be presented. To solidify the success and ensure the rule continuation the choice of the heir was also crucial, and, likewise, many times the irregular choice had to be justified in the historical account of the event. In chapter three I turned to the ministers' role, what was their perceived role and image and how they might have made use of the historical narrative as the creators and consumers. Last chapter looked at a specific case of both emperor and ministers interacting with the historical tradition to identify, prescribe, and adjust the role of foreigners in the current political climate.

In exploring the themes such as the motivation of the historical narrative, the role of the historical narrative in legitimization strategy and justification of political actions, and construction of the foreign and role of the "other" in political narrative I hope such a dissertation can contribute to the field and engage with the sinological community. Overall, the dissertation explored how those factors play in the construction of one's image, how the historical narrative was employed, and how imagination of the failed attempt of the past was used to build a particular image of the ruler at the same time revealing the insecurities and weaknesses of the one in power. With that I would also like to rethink the intended purpose of works such as *JS*: while the official history of Jin dynasty was written about the Jin times we can also learn about its compilers and commentators.

The Tang compilation of the *JS* in fact did not present a unique case of how history was written, was conceived and thought about. Instead, with this work I might suggest to reevaluate the categories of narratives in Chinese tradition of writing and thought. Dynastic histories did not just serve as a repository of historical facts, such as record of dates, places, and people. They were actively interacted with, underwent selection and modification. The peculiar circumstances of the *Jin shu* compilation and Taizong's background simply helped to open up potential spaces and irregularities of what the compilation of the history meant.

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