

AN OUTLINE OF THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE LATER HAN EMPIRE

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The first emperors of China ruled over a state which had an area of more than a million square miles, primitive communications, and a population of some fifty million people on a subsistence economy. Though the imperial bureaucracy was essentially civilian, the authority of the emperor was based on military power, and the ruler had to achieve a balance between the requirements of effective administration, the variations of local interests, the acceptance of government among the people, and the maintenance of imperial control in every part of the empire.

The government of Later Han was designed to deal with these problems and conflicts, and there were three different types of offices in the local administration. At the lowest level, the people in the villages and in the country-side were left very much to the care of their own leaders within their own districts; the local chiefs were recognised and supervised by the imperial administrators, but they were given considerable freedom in dealing with the everyday life of the people. At the next level, executive officials were appointed directly by the court and were set in charge of divisions and subdivisions of the empire; these officials were responsible for the organisation of taxation, labour services, legal administration and military control. At the third level, the executive officials were subject to a system of inspection by officers who were of lower rank but who had the right to make reports direct to the imperial secretariat.

This essay presents a summary of the offices and function of the government of Later Han in the lands of the empire outside the capital. Since this period, the first two centuries A.D., saw the final form of a long development of administrative techniques, it seems appropriate in describing the system to make some references to the origins and

development of the major institutions and offices.

Under the Later Han dynasty, the regional administration of the empire was organised by provinces 州 *chou*, commanderies 郡 *chün* or kingdoms 國 *kuo*, and prefectures 縣 *hsien* or marquises 侯 國 *hou-kuo*. Officials to govern each of these units were appointed by the central administration of the empire. Below the prefectural level, the smaller groups of population, districts 鄉 *hsiang*, communes 亭 *t'ing*, villages (or 'quarters') 里 *li*, and other settlements, were supervised by officers appointed by the prefecture or the commandery administration.

Both the commandery and the prefecture had been developed as administrative units in the last centuries of the Chou dynasty. The *hsien* was first recorded about 687 B.C., when the term was used to describe lands which had been conquered from non-Chinese peoples and which had been kept under the direct control of the government of the state. Later, the *hsien* system was used by the governments of various states to centralise their power at the expense of their vassals who held land by hereditary right. Thus in the state of Chin in 541 B.C., the lands of noble families were taken from them and made into *hsien*, and according to tradition, Shang Yang 商鞅, the great minister of the state of Ch'in, organised all the lands of that state into *hsien* in the fourth century B.C.¹

The essential feature of the *hsien* system was that the head of the administration was appointed by the ruler of the state and could be dismissed at will and unlike the general pattern of Chou government organisation, the officer in charge of a *hsien* had no hereditary right to his post.

The *chün*, which appears always to have been a larger unit than a *hsien*, first appeared in the period of the Warring States at the end of Chou, when commanderies were set up by rival states on their frontiers, either

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against barbarian peoples or against Chinese enemies. As in the *hsien*, the administration of a commandery remained in the control of the ruler, and the Administrator 守 *shou* was an appointed officer who could be dismissed at the ruler's pleasure. When Ch'in conquered the other states in the third century B.C., the whole of the empire was organised into thirty-six commanderies, and each commandery controlled a number of *hsien* prefectures.

Some of the more conservative members of the Ch'in court suggested that 'the reason why the Yin and Chou kings (held the empire) for more than a thousand years was because they gave fiefs to their sons, younger brothers and meritorious ministers, as branches and supporting props to themselves.'² The First Emperor of Ch'in replied: 'If the whole world has suffered from unceasing warfare, this comes from there having been feudal lords and kings . . . to restore (feudal) states would be to implant warfare.'³ However, when the Han dynasty took over from the wreckage of Ch'in, Emperor Kao-tsu followed the traditional policy and granted kingdoms and marquises to members of the imperial family and to his great ministers. Almost two-thirds of the empire was divided among the fiefs of the kings 王 *wang* and the marquises 侯 *hou*, and each of these rulers had great authority over the people within his territory.

In the first fifty years of Han, the dangers of this system became clear. By the end of Kao-tsu's reign, he had eliminated all the kingdoms except those of his own family, and although his Empress *née* Lü set up members of her own clan as kings during her reign, her relatives were destroyed after her death in 180 B.C. From that time on there were no more kings with surnames other than that of the imperial house, only the sons of emperors were made kings, and the size and independence of the fiefs were steadily reduced. In 154 B.C. the Revolt of the Seven Kings came as a reaction against the pressures which the imperial government was applying against the great fiefs, and after the revolt was crushed the power of the feudal lords was still more restricted. In 145 B.C. the Emperor took the appointment of royal

officials into his own hands, and by the end of Former Han, the rule of a kingdom was as much under the control of the central government as the administration of a commandery. The kings were required to live on their states and they were granted a proportion of the income from taxation of their fiefs, but they had no authority in government. Both a kingdom and a commandery were ruled by officials appointed from the capital: a Grand Administrator 太守 *t'ai-shou* was the head of the civil government of a commandery and a Chancellor 相 *hsiang* was in charge of a kingdom. Any commandery could be made a kingdom. Usually, when the son of an emperor was enfeoffed as a king, he would be given the title of one of the commanderies of the Yellow River plain, a Tutor 傅 *fu* would be appointed to supervise his conduct, he would be sent away from the capital to take up residence and establish his court in his own state, and the titles of some of the officials of the commandery would be changed to suit the protocol of a royal palace. When a kingdom was ended for want of a legitimate heir or on account of some wrongdoing, the former state was again called a commandery and the local government was again headed by a Grand Administrator. In effect, there was no real administrative difference between a commandery and a kingdom.

By the end of the Former Han dynasty, the thirty-six commanderies of the Ch'in empire had been divided and subdivided, some in the course of changes which were designed to weaken the large kingdoms,⁴ and some for administrative convenience. At the time of the census of 2 A.D., which is recorded in *Han shu* 28A and 28B (*ti-li chih* 地理志), there were eighty-three commanderies and twenty kingdoms. For 140 A.D., *Hou Han shu* treatise 19 to 23B (*chün-kuo chih* 郡國志) lists eighty commanderies and nineteen kingdoms. The number of prefectures in the Ch'in empire is not known, but there were 1314 in Former Han in 2 A.D. and 1180 in Later Han in 140 A.D.

In 106 B.C., the whole empire, commanderies and kingdoms, with the exception of the imperial capital district, was divided into thirteen circuits 部 *pu*, each headed by

an Inspector 刺史 *tz'u-shih*, who was appointed and controlled directly by the imperial secretariat and charged with the general supervision of the local government. The introduction of this system of circuits, which were also known as provinces 州 *chou*, brought the kingdoms under direct imperial control and increased the central supervision of the commanderies. However, an Inspector, with a salary of Six Hundred Piculs, did not hold very high rank, and he was only given the power to supervise the administration of his region and to report to the throne. An Inspector could not take action on his own initiative, and the Grand Administrators and Chancellors, who received salaries of Two Thousand Piculs and were officials of higher rank, could dispute and often defy his authority.⁵

In order to strengthen the provincial governments, in 8 B.C. the title of Inspector was changed to Governor 牧 *mu*, and the salary of the post was raised to Two Thousand Piculs. In 5 B.C. the title was changed back to Inspector and the salary was reduced, but in 1 B.C. the office of Governor was restored. Under the reign of Wang Mang and in the early years of the Later Han, Governors continued to be appointed, but the system of Inspectors was restored by Emperor Kuang-wu in 42 A.D. Later, as the power of the central government became weaker towards the end of the second century A.D., the prestige and authority of the Inspectors that served it steadily declined. In 188, Liu Yen 劉焉, the Grand Master of Ceremonies 太常 *t'ai-ch'ang*, recommended that Inspectors should be replaced by Governors, and that Governors should be chosen from among the ministers or the chiefs of the imperial secretariat. As Grand Master of Ceremonies, one of the nine ministers (九卿 *chiu-ch'ing*), Liu Yen received a salary of Fully Two Thousand Piculs and held higher rank than any Grand Administrator or Chancellor. The court accepted his proposal, and three Governors were appointed. Liu Yen himself became Governor of Yi 益 Province, and the two other Governors who were appointed had also held ministerial rank. In other provinces, the inspectorate system, although weak, was

retained and for the rest of the dynasty, according to conditions, the administration of a province could be headed either by a Governor or by an Inspector.⁶

According to legend, the Great Yü, founder of the Hsia dynasty, had established nine provinces, and both the Shang and the Chou dynasties followed the principle; *mu* was the title of the provincial officer at the beginning of Chou. Under the Han dynasties, the inspectors in the provinces were also empowered to settle the local disorders and rebellions by organising a more centralised military force and by co-ordinating the efforts of the governments of the commanderies and kingdoms. The appointment of a Governor was intended to strengthen administrative unity within the province still further, and as a result the provinces became recognisable political entities. Where individual heads of commanderies or local bandits had defied the government, the great provincial administrations tended to eliminate these fragmentary rebellions. However, the provinces in their turn often became organised rivals to the power of the central government.

Throughout the Later Han dynasty, seven of the commanderies about the capital were organised as a separate province, which was under the control of the Colonel Director of the Retainers 司隸校尉 *ssu-li hsiao-wei*. Under the Former Han, in 91 B.C., the Colonel Director of the Retainers had been granted credentials 節 *chieh* to decide criminal cases within the capital district and to carry out judgment on his own initiative, but in 45 B.C. the extra authority ceased to be granted and the Colonel Director of Retainers, like the provincial Inspectors, could only report wrong-doing and had no authority to take direct action. At the beginning of Later Han, the Colonel Director of the Retainers was put in charge of the area of the capital and the neighbouring commanderies, which were grouped together as a province called Ssu-li 司隸. Of the seven commanderies in Ssu-li, three of them, Ching-chao 京兆, P'ing-yi 馮翊 and Fu-feng 扶風, had been the imperial capital district of the Former Han about Ch'ang-an 長安, and those lands were still important

to the Later Han on account of the traditional respect for the earlier capital and for the tombs of the earlier emperors.⁷ The other four commanderies, Ho-nei 河內, Ho-tung 河東, Hung-nung 弘農 and Ho-nan 河南, were in the area of the capital district of the Later Han, and Ho-nan commandery contained the capital city of Lo-yang 洛陽. Under Later Han, the Grand Administrator of Ho-nan commandery was known as the Intendant 尹 *yin* of Ho-nan, and he was given a higher salary.⁸ The general administrative arrangements of Ssu-li were much the same as those of any other province, but with a salary of Equivalent to Two Thousand Piculs, the Colonel Director of the Retainers held higher rank than an ordinary provincial Inspector. Although he too had powers only to inspect and to report on administrative wrongdoing, he could investigate any member of the government or of the court, including the highest ministers, members of the imperial house and relatives of the emperor by marriage, and all other people that were in the capital province. In 189, after the death of Emperor Ling, Yüan Shao was appointed Colonel Director of the Retainers and was granted credentials, and he was the first to hold the position with this authority since the beginning of the Later Han. After this, during the last years of the dynasty, in the reign of Emperor Hsien, the title was awarded sometimes with the credentials and sometimes without them.

The Colonel Director of the Retainers and the Inspectors or Governors of the provinces each had their own staff and offices of administration. According to the Treatise of Officials in *Hou Han shu*, the chief members of the staff of the Colonel Director of the Retainers were the Attendant Officials 從事 *ts'ung-shih*, who included the Attendant over the Officers of the Capital 都官從事 *tu-kuan ts'ung-shih*; the Officer of the Department of Merit 功曹從事 *kung-ts'ao ts'ung-shih*, who was responsible for the supervision of the common people of the province and also for recommendations for official rank; the Aide-de-Camp 別駕 *pieh-chia ts'ung-shih*; the Officer of the Department of Accounts 簿曹 *pu-ts'ao ts'ung-shih*; and the Officer of

the Department of Military Equipment 兵曹 *ping-ts'ao ts'ung-shih*. Besides these, other Attendant Officials were sent out to act as the representative of the head of the province at the capital of each commandery. There were lesser officers called Associates 假佐 *chia-tso* at the provincial headquarters and also posted to the commanderies; they were responsible for reports and correspondence, and some were also appointed to assist with the accounts, with the supervision of education and recommendations for office, or with such matters as the ritual sacrifices, the arrangement of legal administration, or the supervision of the guards at the gate of the provincial headquarters. The office of a Provincial Inspector was organized in much the same way as the office of the Colonel Director of the Retainers. However, in the provinces, there was no need for a *tu-kuan ts'ung-shih*, and the official responsible for the recommendations for official rank was known as Attendant Official at Headquarters 治中從事 *chih-chung ts'ung-shih* instead of Officer of the Department of Merit. The headquarters of each province was established in a prefectural city, which was sometimes, but not always, the capital of a commandery or kingdom.

The Grand Administrator of a commandery or the Chancellor of a kingdom was responsible for the administration of all the prefectures under his control, and also for the maintenance of a military force. He established his headquarters at one of the prefectures of his territory, and he had two assistants appointed by the central government. The Assistant 丞 *ch'eng*, was responsible for the civil administration, and the Commandant 尉 *wei* was in charge of the military arrangements. In a kingdom and also in commanderies on the borders of the empire, the assistant was given the title Chief Clerk 長史 *chang-shih*, and in the border commanderies the commandant was known as Chief Commandant 都尉 *tu-wei*; in a kingdom the commandant was called Commandant of the Capital 中尉 *chung-wei*.

The appointment of a chief commandant, as distinct from the usual commandant or capital commandant of a commandery or kingdom, emphasised the military aspects

of the local administration. It was established practice for the border commanderies to have chief commandants, but even within the empire itself, where there was particular trouble with unrest and rebellion, chief commandants could also be appointed. In this way, in the reign of Emperor An, because of raids from the Ch'iang 羌 barbarians, chief commandants were appointed to the two commanderies of Ching-chao and Fu-feng.⁹ In the reign of Emperor Huan, chief commandants were appointed to the kingdom of Lang-yeh 琅邪 and the commandery of T'ai-shan 泰山 because of difficulty with banditry in that region;¹⁰ and when the revolt of the Yellow Turbans broke out in 184, chief commandants were appointed to guard the approaches to the capital.¹¹

In most cases, when a chief commandant was appointed to a commandery, he remained an official of the commandery headquarters and took responsibility for the military control of the whole territory. However, in several of the commanderies where communications were difficult or the people were particularly restive, the area of the commandery could be divided among several chief commandants, each responsible for one region, but all under the authority of the Grand Administrator of the commandery. Thus there were, for example, chief commandants of the eastern region 東部 *tung-pu* and of the western region 西部 *hsi-pu* of K'uai-chi commandery.¹² In much the same way, chief commandants were appointed to supervise 'dependent states' 屬國 *shu-kuo* of surrendered barbarians.

The system of dependent states had begun in the time of Emperor Wu of Former Han, in 121 B.C., when a great number of Hsiung-nu 匈奴 barbarians who came to surrender were settled in lands outside the Great Wall in the northwest of the empire. They were organised in dependent states, and chief commandants were set up to keep each group under surveillance.¹³ During Later Han, the system was continued, and in the reign of Emperor Ho, dependent states were set up in the commanderies of Shang 上 and Hsi-ho 西河.¹⁴ In this way, for the purposes of local administration, a chief commandant could be appointed as assistant

to a Grand Administrator or Chancellor at the capital of a commandery or kingdom, or a chief commandant could act as military governor of one region or of one group of barbarians within a commandery. In each case, the chief commandant acted as one of the officials of the commandery and was under the control of the Grand Administrator.

However, in the reign of Emperor An, there were established the dependent states of Liao-tung 遼東, in the northeast; of Chang-yeh 張掖 and of Chü-yen in Chang-yeh 張掖居延 in present-day Kansu; and of Shu 蜀 commandery, of Kuang-han 廣漢 and of Chien-wei 犍爲 in the west. Each of these dependent states was under the control of a chief commandant, but the government of the six territories was made independent of the Grand Administrators in the neighbouring commanderies.¹⁵ Instead of prefectures, a dependent state was organised by marches 道 *tao*, and the chief commandant of the dependent state was responsible for keeping the non-Chinese people under control and gradually incorporating the territory into the prefectural system of the rest of the empire.

This rise in the status of some dependent states to be comparable to a commandery did not indicate any expansion of the borders of the empire; in fact, all the marches listed in the census of *Hou Han shu* had been listed as prefectures in *Ch'ien Han shu*. The dependent state of Shu commandery, for example, had been formed from the prefectures which had formerly comprised the territory of the Chief Commandant of the western region of that commandery, and the dependent state of Liao-tung was formed partly from prefectures formerly in Liao-tung 遼東 commandery and partly from prefectures formerly under Liao-hsi 遼西. Whereas in the past these lands had generally been subject to the same civil organisation as the rest of the empire, the Later Han government was under pressure from border tribes, and it now recognised the weakness of these territories and established military governors to administer them.¹⁶

Besides the local administration of commanderies and dependent states, the

court also appointed special officers to deal with particular tribes on the northern and north-western borders of the empire. The great barbarian peoples which faced the empire in the region of the Great Wall were the Ch'iang 羌 in present-day Kansu and Tibet, the Hsiung-nu 匈奴 in northern Shensi, the Hsien-pi 鮮卑 about the borders of Mongolia and Manchuria, and the Wu-huan 烏桓 in southern Manchuria. During the reign of Emperor Kuang-wu, a combination of famine and a succession dispute had brought a division of the Hsiung-nu empire. The Han court recognised one of the rival claimants as Southern *Shan-yü* 南單于 and allowed part of the horde to settle on Chinese territory within the northern loop of the Yellow River; in return, the Southern *Shan-yü* was to give one of his sons as hostage each year, to keep peace on the borders, and to supply troops for the imperial armies. A General of the Gentlemen of the Household Emissary to the Hsiung-nu 使匈奴中郎將 *shih-Hsiung-nu chung-lang-chiang* attended the court of the Southern *Shan-yü* and kept watch on his movements. As well as this, a General Who Crosses the Liao River 度遼將軍 *tu-Liao Chiang-chün* was in command of military garrisons to keep watch on the southern Hsiung-nu and the Hsien-pi tribes, and a Colonel Protector of the Wu-huan 護烏桓校尉 *hu-Wu-huan hsiao-wei* and a Colonel Protector of the Ch'iang 護羌校尉 *hu-Ch'iang hsiao-wei* were responsible for those two peoples. In the Western Regions (西域 *hsi-yü*) beyond Kansu in present-day Sinkiang, Chinese control was maintained by military agricultural colonies 屯田 *t'un-t'ien* under the command of Wu and Chi Colonels 戊己校尉 *wu-chi hsiao-wei*,¹⁷ and some officers, with the title Protector-General 都護 *tu-hu* could be sent out to the small kingdoms of that territory to observe their behaviour.¹⁸ Thus the lands on the outskirts of the empire were organised with a local administration of commanderies and dependent states, reinforced by military and civil commissioners to observe particular peoples and places, and maintained by garrison troops. In normal times this system of supervision and control was sufficient, but titles and appointments could vary from

time to time and from place to place, according to the situation, and in times of emergency imperial armies were raised from China itself to deal with major incursions of the great barbarian tribes.¹⁹

Within the empire, in the settled provinces, the civil administration of a commandery or a kingdom was carried out by departments 曹 *ts'ao*, which were staffed by Head Clerks (掾 *yüan* or 史 *shih*) and by Clerical Assistants (書佐 *shu-tso*). The two most important departments were the Department of Merit 功曹 *kung-t'sao*, for recommendations of candidates for imperial office, and the Department of All Purposes 五官曹 *wu-kuan ts'ao*, which, as the name implies, could be required to take part in any aspect of the commandery administration. The other departments at headquarters, which were set up and maintained according to need, generally included a Department for Memorials 奏曹 *tsou-ts'ao*, a Department of Granaries 倉曹 *ts'ang-ts'ao*, a Department of the Populace 戶曹 *hu-ts'ao*, and often a Department of Police at the Gate 門下賊曹 *men-hsia tse-ts'ao*.²⁰ On occasion, there could also be departments for sacrifices, legal matters and coinage, and for military supplies and protection. The office of the Grand Administrator or Chancellor also had a treasury, a staff of accountants, and a secretarial section which was headed by a Master of Records 主簿 *chu-pu*.

Outside the central administration at the capital of the commandery, the subordinate prefectures were supervised by Investigators 督郵 *tu-yu*. These officers, sent out by the commandery office to act as inspectors in the prefectures, had originally been appointed to attend to the communication of orders between the commandery and the prefectural offices. By the Later Han, the duties of the office had gradually come to include the general supervision of the administration of the prefectures, and also, by extension, the arrangements for taxation, labour services, military recruitment and action against banditry. For this purpose, all commanderies were divided into circuits 部 *pu* and the *tu-yu* of each circuit was the chief agent of the commandery administrator in maintaining his control over his territory.

Besides the essential local administration of the empire, the commanderies and kingdoms of Later Han could also be given responsibility for particular public works in their territory. During the Former Han, the offices of the state monopolies of salt and iron had been under the control of the Grand Minister of Agriculture, 大司農 *ta-szu-nung* who was the public treasurer of the empire and one of the nine ministers of the central administration in the imperial capital. After the restoration of the dynasty, the organisation of these offices was handed over to the local authorities of the commanderies and the prefectures. Where the situation warranted it, there would be appointed a salt office 鹽官 *yen-kuan* to take charge of the revenue and duties on the salt, and in places where iron was mined in quantity, an iron office 鐵官 *t'ieh-kuan* was set up to supervise smelting and casting. There could also be local offices of public works 工官 *kung-kuan* and water boards 都水官 *tu-shui-kuan*, and besides these, the imperial granaries in each part of the empire appear to have been under the control of the local administration. Under the Later Han dynasty, responsibility for many of the specialist offices of the government, which had been in the hands of the central administration during Former Han, was now transferred to the commanderies and prefectures.

Both in the commanderies and in the prefectures, the head of the administration, his assistant and his commandant were all officials appointed by the central government. The lower officers of the administration of a commandery or of a prefecture, and the chiefs of smaller districts and villages, were chosen from among the people of the region themselves, and were not directly appointed by the court. Thus the prefectures *hsien* were the smallest units of local government which were directly under the control of the central administration.

A prefecture was headed by a Prefect 令 *ling* or by a Chief 長 *chang*, and the title and salary of the head of a prefecture varied with the size of his district. When the population of a prefecture was more than ten thousand households, the head of the prefecture was called a Prefect, when the population was

less than ten thousand households, he was called a Chief and he received a lower salary. In the same way as a commandery could be awarded as a fief to a king, so a prefecture could be given as a fief to a marquis. When a prefecture was made a marquise, the chief of the administration was always given the title Chancellor 相 *hsiang*, but his salary also varied with the population of the fief. While marquises were awarded to great ministers, to junior branches of the imperial family, and to members of the clan of the empress, there were also certain prefectures which were granted as estates 邑 *yi* to princesses 公主 *kung-chu* of the imperial house. Apart from the different titles, the administration of a marquise and of an estate was the same as that of a prefecture, but a proportion of the taxation revenue was given as a pension to the holder of the fief. As with the kingdoms, these lower enfeoffments gave no real territorial power.

The administrative offices of a prefecture were arranged like those of a commandery. The Prefect or Chief had an Assistant *ch'eng* and a Commandant *wei* as his chief subordinates in civil and military affairs, although in larger prefectures, or where the need arose, two commandants were sometimes appointed. The prefectural offices also contained a Department of Merit 功曹 *kung-ts'ao* for recommendations to official rank, and the prefect had his own secretariat, headed by the Master of Records 主簿 *chu-pu*. The departments of the prefectural offices, which were responsible for such matters as granaries and the supervision of agriculture, legal administration and police work, were organised in the same way as their counterparts in a commandery, although on a smaller scale. However, in a prefecture, the duties of the Department of All Purposes 五官 *wu-kuan* of a commandery administration were carried out by the Clerk of the Department of Justice 廷掾 *t'ing-yüan*, who also arranged for the inspection and supervision of the territory of the prefecture in the same fashion as the investigators *tu-yu* of the commandery. In prefectures at the borders of the empire, a Commandant of Border Defences 障塞尉 *chang-sai wei* was appointed to guard against barbarian raids.

Below the level of the prefecture, there were districts *hsiang* and communes *t'ing*. In his article on 'Les villes en Chine à l'époque des Han', Professor Miyazaki has suggested that *hsien* and *hsiang* and *t'ing* were all names for settlements, and that the three terms indicated their administrative significance, which was based primarily on their size. Thus *t'ing* was the term for a small town or village with the fields around it, and, again for administrative purposes, these *t'ing* were grouped together to form a *hsiang* district. The most important *t'ing* of each group would be made the *tu-t'ing* 都亭 chief commune, and this *tu-t'ing* was the capital of the whole district and the headquarters of the administration of the *hsiang*. Similarly, the districts were grouped together to form a *hsien* prefecture, and the *tu-t'ing* of the most important *hsiang* was also made the *tu-hsiang* and became the capital of the prefecture. Although, strictly speaking, the terms *t'ing* and *hsiang* and *hsien* referred to areas of land surrounding the centres of settlement and administration, as a general rule the term *hsien*, for example, could refer both to the territory of the prefecture as a whole and also to the capital city, the *tu-hsiang*, of that territory.²¹

The administration of a *hsiang* was headed by three officials: in large *hsiang* (with a population of more than five thousand households) a Petty Official with Rank 有秩 *yu-chih* was appointed by the commandery office, and in small *hsiang* a Bailiff 嗇夫 *se-fu* was appointed by the prefecture. The people of the district themselves were responsible for choosing a *San-lao* 三老 (Thrice Venerable) and also a Patrol Leader 游徼 *yu-chiao*. The officers appointed by the commandery or prefecture were responsible for the good order of the people and for their contributions of taxation and labour services, while the *San-lao* and the *yu-chiao* attended to the affairs of the district itself, the *San-lao* as an elder and an adviser, and the *yu-chiao* in charge of police services.

In each *t'ing*, the prefectural office appointed a Chief of the Commune 亭長 *t'ing-chang*, who was responsible for the control of robbers and bandits, for the maintenance of the imperial communications and trans-

port system, for the arrangement of labour services and convict guard, and also for the first hearing or summary decisions on local law-cases and petitions. His assistants were recruited locally. In many ways, the duties of a *t'ing-chang* were connected to a military administration, and one of his main tasks was the supervision of posting stations for imperial messengers; from an administrative point of view, a *t'ing* was not only a settlement of people, it was also a link in the chain of communications through the empire.

The common phrase 十里一亭 *shih-li yi-t'ing* can be interpreted in two ways: for the imperial communications service, ten *li* refers to the distance between one posting-station and the next; on the other hand, it can refer to the fact that ten communities, called *li*, were combined under the jurisdiction of a *t'ing*. In both cases, the character *shih* refers only to an indefinite number, not to the specific figure ten. At this time, *li* could describe either a measurement of distance or a settlement of people. In describing a settlement of people, the term *li* could refer to a quarter within a city or to a village in the open country. Although the administrative arrangements of the local government were based on the prefecture, the district and the commune, there were many smaller settlements which were scattered about between these larger centres of population some were called *li*, others were described as *chü* 聚 (agglomerations) or *lo* 落 (settlements).

Below the level of the *t'ing*, the administration was carried out by headmen or elders, whose position was recognised and supervised by the imperial officials, but who were not directly appointed from above. Thus a *li*, whether in the city or in the country, had a Headman 魁 *k'uei* (or sometimes *cheng* 正) and Elders 長 *chang* had authority over groups of families or the small villages. *Hou Han shu* treatise 28 mentions the arrangement of families into mutual responsibility groups of ten families 什 *shih* and five families 伍 *wu*, but this seems rather an administrative arrangement inherited from the government of Ch'in and was not necessarily effective in the time of the Later Han. As the units of administration become smaller, the local administration was more and more

left to the people, guided and supervised by officers who were responsible for seeing that the imperial taxation and labour services were carried out and that the imperial peace was maintained.

The *San-lao* occupied a special position. The annals of Emperor Kao-tsu of the Former Han record that in 205 B.C.,

Those among the people who were fifty years old and over, who had cultivated personalities, and who were able to lead the multitude and do good, he elevated to the position of *San-lao* – one in each district. One of the district *San-lao* was selected to be the prefectural *San-lao*, who was to serve as a consultant with the prefect. . . .²²

Under the Ch'in dynasty, *San-lao* had been appointed to each district, and Emperor Kao-tsu established the position for both the Former Han and the Later Han. While in theory the *San-lao* was chosen by the people from among the elders of the district, it is easy to imagine that in practice the wishes of the commandery or prefectural officials would carry a great deal of influence, once they were made known. In any case, each *San-lao*, as representative of the people, was entitled to take part in the effective administration of his district, one *San-lao* was appointed in each prefecture to join in the imperial administration, and there are several examples in the *Han shu* and the *Hou Han shu* where *San-lao* addressed memorials and recommendations to the Emperor himself.²³

In effect, below the level of the prefecture, local government was carried out by the local leaders. The headmen and chiefs of this basic administration were recognised by the imperial offices, and they were subject to considerable supervision and control. However, while the heads and chief assistants of commanderies and prefectures were appointed by the central administration, the members of their official staffs were all local people. Moreover, throughout the dynasty, it was the rule that a senior official of any commandery or prefecture must not be a native of the place that he served in. As a result, the imperial officials who headed the local administration had to place great reliance on their local staff, and in effect, so long as the country was quiet, the prefectural and commandery

administrations would tend to leave day to day government to the people themselves.²⁴

The primary objective of the local government of the Han empire was to maintain order. Imperial control throughout the empire was maintained by a system of inspection, carried out by provincial commandery and prefectural administrations. Local rebellions and banditry, depending on the size of the disturbance, were handled as a first resort by prefecture or commandery police forces. The collection of taxes, the arrangements for labour and military service, and the organisation of the imperial monopolies, were all carried out by the prefectures and the commanderies. From this system, the government of the empire gained revenue and kept the peace, and for the purposes of the imperial court, that was sufficient.

In the country itself, however, very real power remained in the hands of the people. Within the limits of good order and taxation, the routine administration of the empire was handed over to the established leaders of the community, and their leadership was strengthened by imperial authority. Members of the most wealthy and powerful families in any region would be recommended for office in the imperial administration itself, and these great local families would be able to deal with prefects and administrators and provincial governors on an equal footing; families of less wealth and power could arrange to enter the imperial service either as members of the staff of the prefecture or commandery headquarters, or else as recognised chiefs of communes or districts. In both cases, authority among the people which had been gained either by wealth or by influence was reinforced by the sanction of the imperial government. The wealth or the influence might have been gained by illegal means, and the imperial sanction might be used to support the petty oppression of a weak man by a powerful man, but so long as the imperial peace was not disturbed a large part of imperial government was exercised through the natural power structure of local communities.

The administration of the empire was organised to keep control of the empire

and to collect revenues for the government. In order to be effective, the imperial bureaucracy relied on the support of the leaders of the people in each part of the country. From the point of view of the government, peace and revenue could best be obtained by a conservative policy, reinforcing the power groups that already existed in the country and gaining their support. On their side, the leaders of any community, when they received imperial recognition, had good reason to govern their fellows in a reasonably competent and equitable fashion, in order not to cause such discontent as would encourage rebellion, banditry, or any other disturbance which would bring imperial punishment. At this level, the system of administration and recruitment strengthened the power of great families in their own lands, but if both the imperial government and the local magnates were interested in peace and stability, then the result of their co-operation could make imperial power effective throughout the empire.

A Note on Some General Terms for Local Officials:

In texts of the Han dynasty, the character *li* 吏 refers to a civil officer, whether in local government or in the capital; the character *chiang* 將 describes a military officer. In both cases, unless the text makes it clear that a high rank is in question, *li* and *chiang* may be understood to refer to civil officials of low rank and to junior officers of the army. In this usage, the term *li* does not always refer to a member of the clerical staff: in local administration, police officers at commandery or prefectural headquarters, patrol leaders in the districts, and the chiefs of communes would all be trained as soldiers, but since they were members of the civil administration, they were described as *li*.

Besides the general term *li*, there are some terms that were commonly used to describe groups of officials in the local administration:

erh-ch'ien-shih 二千石 Officials Ranking at Two Thousand Piculs:

For the local administration, this refers to the Grand Administrators of commanderies and the Chancellors of

kingdom; they were the only officials to hold this rank in the bureaucracy outside the imperial capital.²⁵

tso-kuan 佐官 The Assistant Offices:

The Assistant and Commandant of a commandery, the Chief Clerk and Palace Commandant of a kingdom, the Chief Clerk and Chief Commandant of a border commandery, and also the Assistant and the Commandant of a prefecture or marquisate.

chang-li 長吏 Senior Officers:

The chief officials of a prefecture or marquisate; the Prefect, Chief or Chancellor together with his Assistant and Commandant.

kang-chi 綱紀 Controlling Offices:

In a commandery or kingdom, the Department of Merit and the Department of all the Offices, together with the Master of Records; in a prefecture or marquisate, the Department of Merit and the Department of Justice, together with the Master of Records. Selection of officials was one of the chief functions of local government, the Department of All the offices organised all immediate administration, and the Master of Records was generally included in this group, as head of the secretariat of the administrator.

men-hsia 門下 Officers at the Gate:

The phrase *men-hsia* was sometimes added as a prefix to the title of certain departments (see note 20) and as a general term it referred to those offices whose work concerned the headquarters area of the commandery or prefecture, such as the secretariat, the treasury, the arsenal and the local guard, as distinct from the offices concerned with agriculture and public works, whose duties were outside the city.

Besides these phrases, there were others in common use: the departmental offices of commanderies and prefectures were often called *ts'ao* 曹 or *lieh-ts'ao* 列曹 without any

distinguishing prefix, and the attendant officials of a provincial administration are often described as *ts'ung-shih* without further definition. The local staffs were known as *shu-li* 屬吏 subordinate officers, *shao-li* 少吏 junior officers, and sometimes, as we have seen, simply as *li*. But this terminology is only generalisation, and frequently indicates no more than a lack of precise information on the actual office which is being referred to.

List of Official Titles of the Local Government of Later Han

Throughout this essay, in giving translations of titles of the Later Han empire, I have followed the system of Professor H.H. Dubs, who was the first scholar to prepare translations and English equivalents for the majority of the titles of the Han dynasty. Where Dubs has no translation for a title, I have followed his method of rendering it.²⁶ It seems unnecessary to make great changes in an established system of translation and to break up a convenient unity of form which has been largely followed by such scholars as Professor Hans Bielenstein and Professor A.F.P. Hulswé. In reality, the functions and duties of an office may have changed considerably in the four centuries from the beginning of Former Han to the end of Later Han, and there may be some cases where the translation of a title should be changed from Dubs's version, which is acceptable for the office at the time of the Former Han but which can be misleading as a description of the office at the end of Later Han. However, for the present purpose, Dubs's translations give a fair indication of the duties of the officials and a convenient rendering of the Chinese terms.

chang 長 Chief (of a prefecture)
chang 長 Elder
chang-sai wei 障塞尉 Commandant of Border Defences
chang-shih 長史 Chief Clerk
ch'eng 丞 Assistant (in a commandery or a prefecture)
chia-tso 假佐 Associates
chieh 節 Credentials
chih-chung ts'ung-shih 治中從事 Attendant Official at Headquarters

Ching-chao yin 京兆尹 Intendant of the Capital
chou 州 province
chou-mu 州牧 Governor of a province
chu-pu 主簿 Master of Records (in a commandery or a prefecture)
chung wei 中尉 Palace Commandant
chü 聚 agglomeration
chün 郡 commandery
fu 傅 Tutor
Ho-nan yin 河南尹 Intendant of Ho-nan
hou 侯 Marquis
hou-kuo 侯國 marquisate
hsi-yü 西域 the Western Regions
hsiang 鄉 district
hsiang 相 Chancellor (of a kingdom or a marquisate)
hsien 縣 prefecture
hu-Ch'iang hsiao-wei 護羌校尉 Colonel Protector of the Ch'iang
hu-ts'ao 戶曹 Department of the Populace
hu-Wu-huan hsiao-wei 護烏桓校尉 Colonel Protector of the Wu-huan
kang-chi 綱紀 Controlling Offices
kung-chu 公主 Princess
kung-kuan 工官 Office of Public Works
kung-ts'ao 功曹 Department of Merit (in a commandery or a prefecture)
kung-ts'ao ts'ung-shih 功曹從事 Officer of the Department of Merit
kuo 國 kingdom
li 里 village (or quarter)
li cheng 里正 Headman
li kwei 里魁 Headman
lieh-ts'ao 列曹 The Departments
ling 令 Prefect
lo 落 settlements
men-hsia 門下 Officers at the Gate
men-hsia tse-ts'ao 門下賊曹 Department of Police at the Gate
mu 牧 Governor
nan shan-yü 南單于 Southern Shan-yü
pieh-chia ts'ung-shih 別駕從事 Aide-de-Camp
ping-ts'ao ts'ung-shih 兵曹從事 Officer of the Department of Military Equipment
pu 部 circuit (see also *chou*) or region (within a commandery)
pu-ts'ao ts'ung-shih 簿曹從事 Officer of the Department of Accounts
san-fu 三輔 the Three Capital Districts

San-lao 三老 Thrice Venerable
se-fu 番夫 Bailiff
shan-yü 單于 see *nan shan-yü*
shih 史 Head Clerk
shih-Hsiung-nu chung-lang-chiang 使匈奴中
 郎將 General of the Gentlemen of the
 Household Emissary to the Hsiung-nu
shou 守 Administrator
shu-kuo 屬國 dependent states
shu-tso 書佐 Clerical Assistant
ssu-li hsiao-wei 司隸校尉 Colonel Director
 of the Retainers
t'ai-shou 太守 Grand Administrator
tao 道 march
t'ieh-kuan 鐵官 iron office
t'ing 亭 commune
t'ing-chang 亭長 Chief of a commune
t'ing-yüan 廷掾 Clerk of the Department of
 Justice
ts'ang-ts'ao 倉曹 Department of Granaries
ts'ao 曹 Department
tso-kuan 佐官 Assistant Offices
tso-p'ing-yi 左馮翊 The Eastern Supporter
tsou-ts'ao 奏曹 Department for Memorials
ts'ung-shih 從事 Attendant Official
tu-hsiang 都鄉 chief district

tu-hu 都護 Protector-General
tu-kuan ts'ung-shih 都官從事 Attendant
 over the Officers of the Capital
tu-Liao chiang-chün 度遼將軍 General Who
 Crosses the Liao River
tu-shui kuan 都水官 water board
tu-t'ing 都亭 chief commune
tu-wei 都尉 Chief Commandant
tu-yu 督郵 Investigator
t'un-t'ien 屯田 military agricultural colony
tz'u-shih 刺史 Inspector
wang 王 King
wei 尉 Commandant (in a commandery or a
 prefecture)
wu-chi hsiao-wei 戊己校尉 Wu and Chi
 Colonel
wu-kuan ts'ao 五官曹 Department of All
 Purposes
yen-kuan 鹽官 salt office
yi 邑 estate
yin 尹 Intendant
yu-chiao 游徼 Patrol Leader
yu-chih 有秩 Petty Official with Rank
yu-fu-feng 右扶風 The Western Sustainer
yüan 掾 Head Clerk

NOTES

- For a full discussion of the origins of *hsien* and *chün*, see Bodde, *China's First Unifier*, pp. 135-143 and 238-246.
- Bodde, *China's First Unifier*, p. 81.
- Bodde, *China's First Unifier*, p. 79.
- In 164 B.C., for example, the King of Ch'i 齊 died and the kingdom was divided into six parts to make a royal fief for each of his six sons.
- During the Han dynasty, officials of the imperial administration were ranked in accordance with the salary they received. Thus the highest officers of the state had the rank of Ten Thousand Piculs 萬石 *wan shih*, the next rank was Fully Two Thousand Piculs 中二千石 *chung erh-ch'ien shih*, then Two Thousand Piculs 二千石 *erh-ch'ien shih*, then Equivalent to Two Thousand Piculs 比二千石 *pi erh-ch'ien shih*, and so downwards. The real value of the salaries varied during the dynasty; Hsün Ch'o 荀綽, in his commentary to the *Chin po-kuan piao* 晉百官表, which is quoted in the primary commentary to *HHS* treatise 28, p. 15a, says that in 106 A.D. officers of Fully Two Thousand Picul rank were paid 9000 coins 錢 *ch'ien* and 72 bushels 斛 *hu* of husked rice 米 *mi* per month, officers of 'exactly' (眞 *chen*) Two Thousand Piculs received 6500 coins and 36 bushels, and officers of Equivalent to Two Thousand Piculs received 5000 coins and 34 bushels. Thus the distinction between the ranks was reflected by the salaries, although the amounts that were paid had little relation to the description of the rank. For a full discussion of the salary payments, see Swann, *Food and Money in Ancient China*, pp. 45-49.
- In the last years of the dynasty, as the warlords divided the empire between themselves, the greatest of them took the title of Governor: in this way, in 209, Sun Ch'üan 孫權 recommended Liu Pei 劉備 as Governor of Ching 荆 Province, and Liu Pei recommended Sun Ch'üan as Governor of Hsü 徐 Province. On occasion, where a general controlled more than one province, he might appoint a subordinate to govern part of his territory as Inspector: thus in 191 Kung-sun Tsan 公孫瓚, who was based on Yu 幽 Province, named T'ien K'ai 田楷 as Inspector of Ch'ing 青 Province, and when Yüan Shao 袁紹, who controlled Chi 冀 Province, attacked Kung-sun Tsan, he named his own son T'an 譚 as Inspector of Ch'ing.

7. These three commanderies were known as the *san-fu* 三輔 'the Three Capital Districts', and the heads of their administrations were called Intendant of the Capital 京兆尹 *Ching-chao yin*, The Eastern Supporter 左馮翊 *tso-p'ing-yi* and The Western Sustainer 右扶風 *yu-fu-feng*.
8. In his translations of official titles of the Former Han dynasty, Dubs renders *yin* as 'Governor' and *chou-mu* as 'Shepherd of a Province'. The translation 'Shepherd', although close to the basic meaning of the character *mu*, seems rather a clumsy designation for the head of a large administration, and so I prefer to translate *chou-mu* as 'Governor of a Province'. For the title *yin*, I suggest the translation 'Intendant'.
9. *HHS* treatise 28, p. 5b, and *HHS* annals 5, p. 7b.
10. *HHS* annals 7, p. 7b.
11. *HHS* annals 8, p. 10b.
12. *HHS* annals 6, p. 6b and *HHS* 71, p. 6b. In the latter passage, it is recorded that the Chief Commandant of the western region of K'uai-chi (會稽西部都尉 *K'uai-chi hsi-pu tu-wei*) was acting (行 *hsing*) as Grand Administrator. From this and other instances it appears that a chief commandant could act as the head of a commandery when the Grand Administrator was away.
13. Dubs II, p. 62, and *Han-shu pu-chu* 6, p. 25b. These first dependent states were later made into full commanderies.
14. *HHS* annals 4, p. 3b.
15. It does not seem that all dependent states were made separate from commandery administrations. Yen Keng-wang in his *History*, Part I, pp. 164 and 165, lists ten dependent states which are recorded as existing under Later Han; six of them, the dependent states of Liao-tung, Chang-yeh, Chü-yen in Chang-yeh, Kuang-han, Shu and Chien-wei, were set up in Emperor An's reign. The dependent states of Hsi-ho and Shang commanderies which were set up in 90 A.D. may have comprised no more than one prefecture: in *HHS* treatise 23B, p. 6a, one of the prefectures in Shang commandery is called Ch'iu-tzu dependent state 龜茲屬國, and this probably comprised the whole command of the Chief Commandant of the dependent state in Shang commandery. Of the two other dependent states, one, that of Chiuch'üan 酒泉, is known only from a memorial of the year 123, quoted in *HHS* 78, p. 3b, and the other, that of An-ting 安定, appears in the histories and inscriptions throughout Later Han; neither of these dependent states are mentioned in the geographical treatise of *Hou Han shu*, but it is possible that they had been abolished for some time during the reign of Emperor Shun and so failed to be included in the list made for the census of 140 A.D.
16. The dependent state of Chang-yeh presents some difficulties. *HHS* treatise 23A, p. 40a, says that there were five cities (五城 *wu ch'eng*) in this region, and lists the following names: Hou-kuan 侯官, Tso-ch'i 左騎, Ch'ien-jen 千人, Ssu-ma kuan 司馬官 and Ch'ien-jen kuan 千人官. However, as the commentator Ch'i Shao-nan 齊召南 (1706-1768) points out, these are military titles rather than place names, and none of the five are listed as prefectures in Former Han. It seems possible that the five names refer to officers under the command of the Chief Commandant of the dependent state, and it may be that some garrison camps took their names from the rank of the commander. Possibly, in this region, the character *ch'eng* referred to a walled camp established in a territory of non-Chinese nomads.
17. *wu-chi hsiao-wei* could indicate either one or two officers; thus in 75 A.D. Keng Kung 耿恭 became *wu-chi hsiao-wei* and Kuan Ch'ung 關寵 became *chi hsiao-wei* (*HHS* 9, p. 13b). The *wu-chi hsiao-wei* held a roving commission in the western regions and had no fixed headquarters. In the cosmological speculations on the Five Forces (五行 *wu-hsing*) and their affinities, the combination of *wu* and *chi*, the fifth and sixth of the ten Celestial Stems (天干 *t'ien-kan*), is placed under the power of Earth (土 *t'u*). In relating the five forces to the points of the compass, Water corresponds to the north, Fire to the south, Wood to the east, Metal to the west, and Earth occupies the centre and influences all directions. From their general authority over the whole territory and their ability to move to any part of it, these officers were given the title of Wu and Chi Colonels. (See also *Huai-nan tzu* ch. 3 on T'ien-wen hsün 天文訓.)
18. For a full discussion, see Lao Kan on 'The Hsi-yu Tu-hu and the Wu-chi Chiao-wei of the Han Dynasty'.
19. The Northern Army (北軍 *pei-chün*), which was stationed at the capital, was the strategic reserve of the empire. Under Later Han, the five camps (五營 *wu-ying*) of this force were commanded by the Colonel of the Garrison Cavalry (屯騎校尉 *t'un-chi hsiao-wei*), the Colonel of the Elite Cavalry (越騎 *yüeh-chi hsiao-wei*), the Colonel of Footsoldiers (步兵 *pu-ping hsiao-wei*), the Colonel of the Ch'ang River Encampments (長水 *ch'ang-shui hsiao-wei*) and the Colonel of the Archers Who Shoot at a Sound (射聲 *she-sheng hsiao-wei*).
20. The prefix *men-hsia* 'at the gate' indicated that the department was concerned with the work of the commandery office: the *men-hsia tse-ts'ao* was responsible for guard and police duties at the capital of the commandery.
21. During Later Han and the Three Kingdoms period, there are several references to marquises

enfeoffed with *t'ing*, *tu-t'ing*, *hsiang* and *tu-hsiang* as well as with *hsien*. From Miyazaki's suggestion, it would follow that the fief of a *tu-hsiang* would be more valuable than a fief of a *hsiang*, since a *tu-hsiang* was by definition the most important *hsiang* of a prefecture, and included the capital of the prefecture; but a fief of a *hsiang* would be more valuable than a fief of a *tu-t'ing*, since a *hsiang* would include a *tu-t'ing* and several other *t'ing* as well. Miyazaki's theory is supported by evidence where marquises were raised in fief. (But compare Yen Keng-wang, *History*, Part I, pp. 49-50, where he suggests the same order of precedence, but follows the opinion of Ch'ien Ta-hsin 錢大昕, who says that the prefix *tu* indicates only that the *hsiang* or *t'ang* was near to a city (近郭 *chin-kuo*)).

22. Translated in Dubs I, p. 75.
23. The best-known example is recorded for the year 205 B.C., translated in Dubs I, pp. 75-76, where the *San-lao* of Hsin-ch'eng 新城 advised the future Emperor Kao-tsu to proclaim the justice of his cause against his enemy Hsiang Yü. But see also the examples cited by Yen Keng-wang in *History*: in each case the *San-lao*, on behalf of the people, is asking for the appointment or maintenance of a particular official who had proved his worth.
24. According to Yen Keng-wang, the system of appointment in provinces, commanderies and prefectures worked as follows:
- An Inspector did not come from the province he was appointed to; a Grand Administrator or Chancellor was not a native of the commandery or kingdom he governed, and none of the senior officers of a prefecture came from the prefecture they were appointed to, nor even from the commandery that the prefecture was in. Besides this, although the staff members of provinces and commanderies were chosen from the local people, when a provincial office sent an Attendant Official to watch over the capital of one of the commanderies or kingdoms in the province, he did not choose a man who came from that commandery or kingdom; and in the same way, when a commandery headquarters appointed an Investigator to supervise affairs in one part of the territory, the Investigator was not a native of that region. See 'The Institution of Local Administration in the Han Dynasty', p. 228, and also *History*, Part I, pp. 351 ff.
25. On the real value of the rank and the salary, see note 5 above.
26. There are two exceptions to this: Dubs's translations of the titles *mu* as 'Shepherd' and *yin* as 'Governor'. I explain in note 8 above my reasons for changing these to 'Governor' and 'Intendant'.

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