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Introductory Summary:

Though Sun Quan had claimed the imperial title in 229, and made some pretence of establishing the forms of an imperial court, the government of Wu continued to reflect the structure of a warlord state. In human terms, the time of the foundation of Wu was dominated by military commanders who held authority through their personal courage and energy, and were celebrated for their individualism, and it was no small achievement that Sun Quan was able to keep such a group under control.

Politics at court were largely dominated by the intrigues and conflicts of powerful individuals and families. In particular, unlike the bureaucracy of Han, substantial official positions, and particularly those involving the command of troops, were regularly transferred by inheritance from one generation to the next. In the course of time, however, there was a shift of influence in the central government from the first generation of men who had risen to power in the early years of the state, many of them from the north and all chosen for their personal ability and loyalty, to men from south of the Yangzi, whose families had prospered under the Sun regime.

Outside the court and the capital, moreover, great independent authority was held by these local families, which consolidated their power through the acquisition of tenants and other dependents who sought protection from the uncertainty of the times and the demands of government. This development, already begun in the time of Han, meant that the power of the central government was limited, and its capacity to exploit the resources of the state was heavily restricted. To a degree, the state of Wu was run for the protection and the benefit of the great families who were its nominal subjects.

In this respect, with the establishment of a separate state in the south, the produce and profits of trade were no longer drained away to the north, while the pressures of defensive war encouraged the colonisation of new territory. At the same time, the capital at Jianye was celebrated for its splendour, and scholars of Wu made substantial contributions to the culture of China as a whole. The ultimate achievement of Wu was the expansion of Chinese civilisation in the south, preparing that ground for centuries of independent survival after the non-Chinese seizure of the north in the early fourth century.

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The forms of government:

Internally, Sun Quan's regime made gestures towards the formalities of an imperial court. In 221, when Sun Quan was enfeoffed as King of Wu by Cao Pi, Sun Shao of Beihai had been appointed Chancellor, Gu Yong was made Prefect of the Masters of Writing,¹ and some appointments were made to the traditional ministries of Han. By 229, Sun Shao was dead and Gu Yong had succeeded him as Chancellor, with authority over the business of the imperial secretariat.

At the lower level of central government, though some names and appointments are given, there is not a great deal of detail in the texts. It appears, however, that Sun Quan established only six of the nine ministries which had been maintained at the imperial court of Han, and those posts were not always filled: the titles were used rather as supernumerary honours for men of political importance, sometimes with substantial duties elsewhere, rather than as part of a practical administration.²

One appointment should be noticed, that of the senior official and scholar Zhang Zhao. There had been surprise amongst the followers of Sun Quan when Zhang Zhao was not appointed Chancellor of the Kingdom of Wu in 221, and the post was given instead to the rather less distinguished Sun Shao, an immigrant from the north. Then, when Sun Shao died in 225, Zhang Zhao was again passed over in favour of Gu Yong. On the first occasion, Sun Quan explained that he was only doing Zhang Zhao a kindness, relieving him from the arduous responsibility; the second time he observed more specifically that Zhang Zhao was too strict and critical, and it would be embarrassing for both of them if he became the official head of the bureaucracy.³ In 229, however, we are told that Sun Quan was even more open, and that he had long held a grudge against Zhang Zhao for advising surrender to Cao Cao before the Red Cliffs:

When he had proclaimed himself Emperor, Sun Quan called an assembly of all his officials, and he attributed the accomplishment to Zhou Yu. Zhang Zhao held up his staff of office and prepared to recite the achievements and the virtues of the new Emperor. Before he had uttered a word, however, Sun Quan said, "If I had followed Lord Zhang's advice, I would now have been begging for my food." In great shame, Zhang Zhao fell to the ground, dripping with perspiration.⁴

As far as official ranks and titles go, Zhang Zhao had been named General Who Supports Wu, with status next to the Excellencies, and he held a marquisate valued at ten thousand households, but he resigned all his offices soon after the proclamation of the empire. If Sun Quan, the master he had served so long and so loyally, had indeed behaved in such boorish fashion, this is hardly surprising. Zhang Zhao died in 236 at the age of eighty. We

¹ Sun Shao has no regular biography in *SGZ*. The record of his death as Chancellor, however, appears in the chronicle for the year 225 in *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1131, and there is a brief biography for him, taken from *Wu lu*, in PC attached to that entry.

The biography of Gu Yong is in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1225-28. He was a man from Wu commandery, a pupil of the great scholar Cai Yong, and he had at one time held appointment as Assistant in Kuaiji commandery, acting as Grand Administrator for Sun Quan.

² The formal structure of the government of Wu is discussed in *Sanguo huiyao* 9 and 10, in the various chapters of *Lidai zhiguan biao*, and in the compilation of Hong Yisun in *ESWSBB* II. *ESWSBB* II also contains tables of the senior civil and military appointments in Wu, compiled from the scattered references in *SGZ* by Wan Sitong and Huang Dahua.

³ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1221; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 183.

⁴ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1222 PC quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*.

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are told he devoted himself to scholarship, though he sometimes returned to court and quarrelled with Sun Quan, who would apologise and show him honour once more. It had always been an uneasy relationship.

The highest military commander of Wu was the Supreme General-in-Chief Lu Xun, with concurrent appointment as Chief Protector on the Right, giving formal responsibility for military discipline and court martial, and specific command of defences on the middle Yangzi. His headquarters were at Wuchang, and in the ninth month of 229, when Sun Quan moved his capital from Wuchang back to Jianye, Lu Xun was left with administrative and military responsibility for Jing province and the region of Yuzhang, the whole western part of the empire of Wu.⁵

Next after Lu Xun was the General-in-Chief and Chief Protector on the Left Zhuge Jin, with headquarters at Gonggan, on the Yangzi south of Jiangling, and a watching brief to the west against Shu.⁶ Lu Xun's position as forward commander on the north and west was taken by Bu Zhi, General of the Elite Cavalry based at Xiling, close to the border with Shu through the Gorges and to the frontier against Wei.⁷ Also in Jing province there were armies under the General of Chariots and Cavalry Zhu Ran, concurrently Protector of the Army on the Right, and the General of the Right Pan Zhang.⁸ The region required serious occupation.

In the east, besides the forces under Sun Quan's direct command at Jianye, and the local troops which could be raised from Danyang, Wu and Kuaiji, the fortress of Ruxu, on the northern bank of the Yangzi, was commanded by the General of the Van Zhu Huan, who had succeeded Zhou Tai about 220, and who bore the Staff of Authority as a reflection of his responsibilities for that exposed garrison.⁹ Until his death in 228, the Governor of Yang province had been Lü Fan, veteran servant of Sun Ce and Sun Quan, who had also been granted title of honour as Commander-in-Chief.¹⁰ For the next several years, however, there appears to have been no appointment to that position, presumably because of the re-establishment of the capital at Jianye, from where the territory could be supervised directly by Sun Quan's own staff.

In the far south, subject to the supervision of Lu Xun in Jing province, the territory of Jiao province was still controlled by Lü Dai, holding title as General Who Maintains the South in Peace. Lü Dai's special status gave him authority over the whole region as a single unit, but elsewhere, in the rest of Wu territory, the commandery was the basis of civil government. The critical decisions of the state, however, were based on military considerations, and the essential posts were those of the generals in their various strategic garrisons.

This, indeed, is what one might expect of a warlord state. There was no way that a regional power such as Wu would find it appropriate or desirable to reconstruct the massive bureaucratic apparatus of the now deceased Han. Wei, in the north, had slightly higher pretensions, and the structure of government, to some extent taken over from Han, is better documented and was certainly more complex. But all three states were brittle,

⁵ *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1135, and *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1349.

⁶ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1232 and 1235.

⁷ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1237. Xiling was the new name given to the city of Yiling in Yidu commandery after the victory over Liu Bei in 222: *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1126.

⁸ *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1306, and *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1300.

⁹ *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1313-14.

¹⁰ He was awarded the title in 228, but died before he received the insignia: *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1311.

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dependent upon continuing success, or at least competence, in war, and constitutional formalities were a luxury. The fall of Han demonstrated how much that dynasty had depended upon military force, but the long reign of the house of Liu had allowed a thick layer of civilian velvet to cover the iron hand of power; among the new states of the Three Kingdoms, the reality of war was too immediate to be concealed so effectively.

On the other hand, though policies were largely determined by men in military commands, those of more clerical or scholarly abilities still had a role to play. All armies had a need for administrative support, and some men known for their scholarship were also recognised as practical counsellors, regardless of their fighting prowess or their ability to command troops in the field. Sun Quan himself needed advisors and secretaries to maintain the links of his power, while for the sake of prestige in dealing with his rivals and allies he also maintained a form of imperial government. And there was some prestige and influence to be found in appointment as an envoy.

Relations between the contending parties of the Three Kingdoms were not maintained by long-term resident ministers: the conventions of modern diplomacy are a Western development, which can be traced to the rival states of Renaissance Italy but which were never approved in traditional China.¹¹ On the contrary, if the servant of one state spent too long at the court of another, he faced the possibility of suspicion that he had changed sides, or at least suffered undue influence. Zhang Hong was suspect for some time in Wu on account of his service at the court under Cao Cao's control.¹² And Zhuge Jin, minister of Wu but a brother of Zhuge Liang in Shu, had to behave with great circumspection lest he be suspected of private dealings with the rival state.¹³

It was the normal pattern, therefore, that envoys were sent from one court to another on individual missions of limited duration, and this system was maintained even between allies. Though Wu and Shu exchanged regular embassies, neither of them kept an accredited minister at the court of the other, so information on policy was not assessed day-to-day, but only on the discrete reports of individual visitors.¹⁴

The very nature of these embassies, moreover, tended to set them into a pattern of hostile repartee. When Xing Zhen came as envoy from Cao Pi for the enfeoffment of Sun Quan as King of Wu, he sought to enhance the status of his master by failing to get down from his carriage when he met with Sun Quan, but he was faced down by Zhang Zhao and publicly abused by Xu Sheng.¹⁵ For the return embassy, ostensibly to give thanks, Sun Quan dispatched a certain Zhao Zi from Nanyang, who was known as a learned man of quick wit and repartee, and we are told that Zhao Zi debated with Cao Pi in his own

¹¹ See, for example, Mattingley, *Renaissance Diplomacy*. On the Chinese pattern maintained at a different time but in comparable circumstances, see Franke, *Diplomatic Missions*, discussing the exchange of envoys between the Song dynasty and its northern rivals the Liao and Jin from the tenth to the thirteenth century.

¹² See Chapter 4.

¹³ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1231-32, tells how Zhuge Jin was sent as an envoy to Liu Bei in 215. Liu Bei was then an ally of Sun Quan, but Zhuge Jin spoke with his brother only in public assemblies, never meeting him in private (de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 488). In 221, however, when Zhuge Jin wrote to Liu Bei to urge that he should give up his plan of attacking Wu, he came under suspicion of dealing privately and treacherously with the enemy: *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1232-33, and PC note 2 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 50-52 and 74-75.

¹⁴ See, for example, *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1145, where we are told how visitors returning from Shu in 244 forecast a break in the alliance, but Sun Quan rightly assessed the information as mistaken.

¹⁵ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1221, and *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1298; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 58-59 and 88.

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court, extolling the merits of Sun Quan and the capacities of his servants.¹⁶ A few months later, when Cao Pi sought further tribute and also required Sun Deng as hostage, another ambassador, Shen Hang of Wu commandery, also noted as a scholar, was sent to bring the goods, but also to make apologies for not sending Sun Quan's heir. He was similarly tested by Cao Pi, and emerged with credit.¹⁷

In many instances, these envoys were not of great rank or significance in the politics between states. There was, of course, the example of Zhuge Liang in 208, persuading the court of Sun Quan that it was possible and sensible to defy Cao Cao. Despite the eulogies of later romance and drama, however, Sun Quan and his advisers were well able to determine their own policy, and they were not to be convinced against their best interests.¹⁸ Again, the embassy of Deng Zhi, sent by Zhuge Liang from Shu in 223 to establish an alliance with the Wu against Wei after the death of Liu Bei, was an occasion for delicate high-level negotiation,¹⁹ and that of Chen Zhen in 229, recognising the imperial claim of Wu, was an important formal occasion.²⁰ On the other hand, when Sun Quan sent Zhang Wen on the return embassy to Shu, he apologised for giving him such a lowly task;²¹ while Shen Hang, when asked whether Sun Deng would indeed be sent to Wei, avoided the question by saying that he was not of sufficient rank to be informed about Sun Quan's true plans - hardly the statement of a man with plenipotentiary authority. And there was the embarrassment of Hao Zhou, the officer of Wei who was convinced Sun Quan would honour his agreements and send Sun Deng as hostage, and who offered Cao Pi the lives of his family in pledge of his faith. In the event, of course, such confidence proved quite misplaced, and although Hao Zhou's family was spared, his political career was ended.²²

Even between allies, however, the game of one-up-man-ship appears as an essential part of the ritual of embassies. We are told there was one occasion a messenger from Shu-Han to Wu was particularly arrogant and boastful, so that Sun Quan, embarrassed and at a loss, wished for the wit of Zhang Zhao to combat such a turbulent envoy.²³ And in the biography of Xue Zong we are told how the envoy Zhang Feng from Shu was making fun of ministers at the court of Wu until Xue Zong observed:

What is Shu? When it has a dog, it is independent;
when it has no dog, it is Shu.
A sidelong eye and a bent body,
and a worm going into its belly.

Zhang Feng challenged him to analyse the character Wu, and Xue Zong replied:

With no mouth, it is Heaven;
when it has a mouth, it is Wu.
Its lord can deal with all nations,

¹⁶ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1123 and PC note 4 quoting *Wu shu*; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 59 and 88-89.

¹⁷ SGZ 47/Wu 2, 1123 and 1124 PC note 6 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 60-61 and 92-93.

¹⁸ See Chapter 4.

¹⁹ Chapter 7, and the biography of Deng Zhi in SGZ 45/Shu 15, 1071-72; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 144-145 and 162-163.

²⁰ Chapter 7.

²¹ SGZ 57/Wu 12, 1330; on the embassy, see below.

²² See Chapter 7 at note 35.

²³ SGZ 52/Wu 7, 1222; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 293-294.

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and it is the capital of the world.²⁴

Xue Zong had a gift for exchanging riddles in this fashion, and he was, more substantially, a long associate of Lü Dai in Jiao province and responsible for an important memorial on the history and on appropriate policy in the far south.²⁵

One may doubt whether these exchanges did anything to improve relations, to encourage trust or to exchange useful information between allies, but perhaps we mistake the point: literary repartee was a part of Chinese tradition, and it formed an established genre in collections of anecdotes.²⁶ Displays of extempore wit enhanced the prestige of the ambassadors and of the scholars who debated them, they added a touch of liveliness and entertainment to the court, and they demonstrated the courage of the debaters and the tolerance of the ruler. The very presence of such guests from an alien power, received with courtesy and granted a patient hearing, at least showed a common interest and humanity - and one must assume that, outside the public displays of court and banqueting hall, some proper discussion took place.²⁷

From the patterns of appointments and influence described, however, the government of Wu had comparatively small concern for civil affairs. As one example, by contrast to the state of Wei, there was no serious attempt to establish a program of agricultural colonies which might rival the achievement of the enemy along the Huai. We do have reference to the appointment of Lu Xun to supervise the agricultural colonies at Haichang county near Hangzhou,²⁸ and there was at some time a special agricultural region at Piling, along the southern shore of the Yangzi estuary. It seems likely that both these territories were the scene of colonisation: at Haichang there was opportunity for land reclamation and for production of salt from the sea, and at Piling there was marsh-land which offered room for the extension of irrigation agriculture. These, however, were local developments, and we may note that in 202 the county of Piling, together with three neighbouring counties, was granted as personal appanage to Zhu Zhi, general and Grand Administrator in Wu commandery. Later, in 222, Zhu Zhi was enfeoffed as Marquis of Piling, and during the last years of Wu the same title was held by a grandson of Lu Xun, so the government of Wu gained limited advantage from any special measures in that region.²⁹

In 226, following the death of Cao Pi and the easing of military threat from the north, Sun Quan issued a proclamation urging that the people should be encouraged to develop the work of agriculture. Lu Xun presented a memorial suggesting that military commanders should be involved in the colonisation of arable land, and Sun Quan issued

²⁴ SGZ 53/Wu 8, 1250-51, and PC note 2 with text criticism by Pei Songzhi. The first stanza plays with the character *shu*, referring first to its extension, with the addition of the "dog" radical, into *du* "independent," and then to its component parts; the first, second and fourth lines rhyme. The second stanza refers to the component parts of the character *wu*; the second and fourth lines rhyme.

²⁵ SGZ 53/Wu 7, 1251-53, and see note 84 to Chapter 5.

²⁶ One may consider the examples in *Shishuo xinyu*, translated by Mather, and particularly section 25, "Taunting and Teasing."

²⁷ Franke, *Diplomatic Missions*, at 16 and 17, emphasises the importance of ritual and "play" as a means of controlling and civilising human and inter-state conduct.

In more modern terms, it is generally accepted in a democracy that the futile hostilities of public and parliamentary debate are marginal to real negotiations between different parties and political interests.

²⁸ See Chapter 5 at note 78.

²⁹ On the establishment of the area subordinate to the Colonel Director of Agriculture for Piling, see Wu and Yang, 2938/1, and *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* III, 26-27. On the appanage and later fief of Zhu Zhi, see SGZ 56/Wu 11, 1303-04. On the marquissate of Piling held by Lu Jing, see SGZ 58/Wu 13, 1360.

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an enthusiastic response, announcing that he and his sons would personally take part in such work. The Treatise of Economics of *Jin shu* tells us that the state of Wu was thenceforward dedicated to agriculture and the raising of grain,³⁰ but this is surely an exaggeration, for the government was always concerned rather with military expansion than with agriculture. Some years later, in 240, when there was a severe famine, Sun Quan was compelled to recognise that the demands of the army and of corvee work were interfering with farming, and he urged restraint on his military commanders and his local administrators.³¹

For the situation south of the Yangzi was different to that of the north. Cao Cao and his successors in Wei had been faced with the problems of a settled society which had been disrupted by civil war. Agricultural colonies brought the vagrant people under a new pattern of administrative control, and did much to ensure the supply for operations against enemy forces with comparable difficulties.

In their frontier region of the south, however, the major concern of Sun Quan and his government was not so much to restore stability in Chinese settled areas, but to increase the numbers of people and the amount of farmland under their control. Their chief interest and advantage lay in aggressive action beyond their immediate borders, not, as in the north, in settlement and defence of people who were already under their rule. Their military activity certainly relied upon a reasonably effective agricultural base of supply, but this was not the top priority: at the simplest level of calculation, there was more advantage to Sun Quan in the conquest and colonisation of a village or settlement which had been outside the control of his government than there was in the marginal improvement of yield in some territory that was already settled and obedient.

So the situation of Wei called for effective mobilisation of the resources of land and people in a large but limited region, but the best plan for Wu was to increase those resources by expansion against an open frontier. There was no need for a sophisticated program of political and economic development, for the commandery and county structure of Han, suitably amended and intensified, allowed for consistent local aggression against the Chinese and non-Chinese people of the hills and valleys, and this steady pressure could be backed, where necessary, by particular military force. As each advance was made, the people were placed under the control of new counties, they were registered as citizens and subjects, and their human and economic resources were made available for further expansion against their neighbours or for defence across the Yangzi against the north. The development and maintenance of the state of Wu were neatly linked in a traditional policy of warfare and colonisation.

It is difficult to assess the speed of this expansion. We have noted the campaigns of He Qi, extending authority from the isolated coastal counties by present-day Fuzhou up the valleys of the Min River into present-day Jiangxi and southern Zhejiang,³² while Lu Xun, Quan Zong and others gained control over the upper Zhe River south of the Huang Shan mountains.³³

³⁰ Sun Quan's published statements are recorded in *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1232-33, with reference to Lu Xun's intervention. Cf. *JS* 26, 782-83; Yang, "Economic History," 159. Indeed, Lu Xun's proposals may be interpreted not so much as giving priority to agriculture, but simply encouraging military commanders to pay at least some attention to it, in addition to their more obvious responsibilities.

³¹ *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1144.

³² See Chapter 5.

³³ See Chapters 5 and 6.

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In 234, at the instigation of the energetic and ambitious Zhuge Ke, eldest son of Zhuge Jin, a new assault was launched against the hills people of Danyang. Zhuge Ke was made Grand Administrator of the commandery, and was empowered to co-ordinate operations in the whole region. The citizens were held in a system of fortified villages, all communication with the hills was forbidden, troops were sent to collect any grain that was sown outside the area of control, and at the same time he offered amnesty to those who surrendered. We are told that forty thousand people were starved into submission, and the new recruits were divided among the various military commanders. This operation gave the final consolidation to Chinese authority in the Huang Shan region between the Yangzi and the Zhe River,³⁴ but the process continued elsewhere on the open frontier, sometimes by official campaigns, regularly by informal, undocumented, private enterprise.

The best method to assess the expansion of Wu is by comparison of the counties listed at the time of the census of Later Han, about 140, with those which appear in the Treatise of Geography of *Jin shu*, compiled soon after the conquest in 280. Since the Jin dynasty figures for population are based upon a taxation list, they cannot be taken as a full census, and it is not meaningful to make comparison at that level. The existence of a county, however, is good evidence of Chinese control.

On this basis, the change is remarkable. Between 140 and 280, within the territory of Wu south of the Yangzi, the number of counties had doubled, and they occupied territories where no such establishment had been seen before.³⁵ There were recognised settlements in present-day southern Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Fujian, there was strong development in the far south along the West River and the coastal route from Guangzhou towards the Red River delta in Vietnam, and all the former frontier region south of the Yangzi was now consolidated under central government. Though initiative for that achievement came from the needs of the state of Wu, it was Jin which received its chief benefit: at the beginning of the fourth century, when that dynasty was driven from the north, the émigré court found refuge and eventual security in the lands which had been held and developed under Sun Quan and his successors.

³⁴ The biography of Zhuge Ke is in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19, 1429-42, and the account of the campaign against the hills people of Danyang in the middle 230s is at 1431-32; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 441-442, and 519-520. The precise date of the program is given by *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, which records (at 1140) Zhuge Ke's appointment in 234 and (at 1142) his successful return in 237. See also note 38 below.

³⁵ The accompanying map is based upon research discussed in de Crespigny, "Prefectures and Population." See also the work of Bielenstein, "The Chinese Colonisation of Fukien," 103-106.

The map shows county establishments of Later Han and Western Jin for the region of Wu from the Yangzi south to the Red River delta. In this territory, the number of counties had doubled, from 160 to 322. In Shu-Han during the same period, the number of counties increased by only 20 per cent, from 117 to 141 and some expansion to the far south was balanced by withdrawal in the west.

On the lists of commandery and county units in the *Xu Han shu* of Sima Biao, now forming the Treatise of Administrative Geography attached to the *Hou Han shu* of Fan Ye, see Chapter 1 at note 10. The arrangement of *Jin shu* 14-15, the Treatise of Geography, is similar, and relates to the early years of the Taikang period, which was proclaimed after the conquest of Wu in 280. The list of counties is generally reliable, but the figures for population are given only by households, and these are low and summary. Bielenstein, "Census," 154-155, argues that they are taxation figures, numbering only able-bodied males, and they cannot be usefully compared to the figures for Later Han, which reflect a complete poll-count.

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Patterns in the later history of Wu (230-280):

Sun Quan, born in 182, was a little under fifty years old when he took title as emperor. He died in 252, at the age of seventy *sui*,³⁶ and the empire of Wu lasted fifty years, until the conquest by Jin in 280. In a sense, Sun Quan's proclamation of 229 may be regarded as a mid-point in the imperial history of his family, from the first achievements of Sun Jian in the 180s to the fall of dynastic fortune a hundred years later.

In the early years after the claim to empire, Sun Quan attempted to expand his ambitions to an imperial scale. Besides his interests in the south, where he re-established a Chinese presence on the island of Hainan,³⁷ there were emissaries from Funan and other countries beyond the southern seas.³⁸ In 230 Sun Quan despatched a force to take control of non-Chinese people on the island of Taiwan, and he sought diplomatic

³⁶ *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1147.

³⁷ The conquest of Hainan in 241, and the restoration of the Han territories of Zhuyai and Dan'er, is recorded in *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1145 (*cf.* Chapter 1 at note 70). We are told, however, that the expedition required thirty thousand troops.

³⁸ An embassy from King Fan Xun of Funan is recorded in the chronicle for 242, just after the conquest of Hainan: *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1145. *Liang shu* 54, 783, also tells us that the envoys Zhu Ying and Kang Tai were sent out on courtesy visits. On their return, both men wrote accounts of Funan, and fragments of the work of Kang Tai have been preserved. They were surely also given instructions to examine the strength of the kingdoms to the south, but the Wu government was evidently persuaded that Funan could not be brought under direct control. See Wang, "The Nan-hai Trade," 33, and Hall, *Maritime Trade and State Development*, 38, 48-68, also Chapter 1 and Chapter 7.

Liang shu 54, 798, also says that in 226 a merchant from Daqin named Qin Lun came to Jiaozhi and was sent on to the court of Wu. It is generally accepted that the name Daqin indicated the Roman empire, though details of the route there and the significance of the Chinese descriptions of that region have long been a source of controversy. The basic Chinese texts for this period are *HHS* 88/78, 2919-20, and *SGZ* 30, 860-62 PC quoting *Wei lue*.

The surname for Qin Lun is surely an ethnicon, in the same fashion as that of the celebrated Buddhist missionaries An Shigao, a man from Parthia (Anxi), and Kang Senghui, whose family came from Sogdiana (Kangju): see, for example, Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 26 and 47. It may even be that the whole name of Qin Lun should be understood as "Discussant of [Da]qin."

HHS 7, 318, and *HHS* 88/78, 2920, record an earlier mission from Daqin, also approaching by the southern sea route, which was received at the court of Emperor Huan of Han in 166. It is, of course, most unlikely that these earlier visitors were accredited envoys; one must assume that they too were enterprising merchants, from whatever real place of origin, who sought prestige and profit from the trade and generosity of the Chinese court.

There is, moreover, some difficulty with the dating given by *Liang shu* 54 for the visit by Qin Lun. The year is named specifically as Huangwu 5, equivalent to 226, but we are told that Qin Lun was first received by the Grand Administrator of Jiaozhi commandery, Wu Miao. 226, however, was the year Jiaozhi was seized from the Shi family by Lü Dai, we have a detailed account of the appointments in that important region during that year, and Wu Miao is not mentioned (Chapter 7 at note 61). Moreover, the record goes on to tell how Qin Lun was at the court of Sun Quan when Zhuge Ke returned from his expedition of colonisation and expansion in Danyang: he brought back some dwarf men, or at least people of small stature, presumably aborigines of the hills, and Qin Lun remarked that he had not seen people like that before. Yet we know Zhuge Ke began that campaign in 234 and did not conclude it until 237, and it is most unlikely that Qin Lun stayed at the court of Wu for ten years.

Despite the uncertainties, I believe the visit did take place, probably in the 230s. Admittedly, Wu Miao is not mentioned anywhere in the records of *Sanguo zhi*, but it is possible that there was a Grand Administrator of that name in Jiaozhi some time after the conquest by Wu, while the date 226 appears a natural error: it was the time that the authority of Sun Quan first extended over the whole of south China, and was thus an obvious, though mistaken, date for a later writer to identify.

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relations and an effective alliance with the Gongsun state in Liaodong, present-day southern Manchuria. Neither of these initiatives was successful.

The history remarks succinctly of the expedition to Taiwan that the gains did not repay the costs,³⁹ and the contact with Gongsun Yuan, north across the Yellow Sea, was made difficult and ultimately impossible by the dangers of the weather off the Shandong peninsula, interference and ambush by the naval forces of Wei, and a lack of any firm commitment on the part of Gongsun Yuan himself. Eventually, in 238, armies of Wei under Guanqiu Jian and Sima Yi destroyed Gongsun Yuan and incorporated his state into the northern empire. Sun Quan could do nothing to help his erstwhile vassal.⁴⁰

Indeed, behind these imaginative enterprises, the formal military history was not impressive. Despite several attempts, the armies of Wu were unable to break the defences of Wei in the region of Hefei, and those defences were confirmed by the construction of a "New City" at Hefei during the 230s.⁴¹ Perhaps the greatest opportunity, and the greatest failure, occurred in 255, when Guanqiu Jian and others seized the city of Shouchun in a rebellion against the political dominance of the Sima family in Wei. They asked for help from Wu, but the southerners were unable to provide effective assistance, and Guanqiu Jian was destroyed. In 257, another general of Wei, Zhuge Dan, likewise rebelled at Shouchun and also sought assistance from the south, but the city was recaptured in the following year and the northern hold on the line of the Huai was confirmed.⁴²

In similar fashion, though more understandably, given the geographical and political difficulties, the state of Wu could make no gains in the west towards present-day Sichuan and the state of Shu-Han. As early as 234, the death of the great minister and general Zhuge Liang brought the signs of potential disorder in Shu, and the court of Sun Quan contemplated intervention but could not arrange a program.⁴³ Still more seriously, in 263, when the armies of Wei began their final attack on the west and the government of Shu asked aid from Wu, there was little they could do. Rebellion in Vietnam prevented a full

³⁹ On this project, and the objections offered by Lu Xun and Quan Zong, see *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1136, *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1350, and *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1383; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 314, 323-326 and 337.

The original commission called for the conquest not only of Yizhou, generally identified as the island of Taiwan, but also of Tanzhou, perhaps the Ryukyus. A few thousand people from Yizhou were brought back, but the expedition did not even get to Tanzhou, which was too far away. *SGZ* 58/Wu 13 remarks that the gains from the expedition did not make up for the costs, *SGZ* 60/Wu 15 says that eighty or ninety per cent of the expeditionary force died of illness, and *SGZ* 47/Wu 2 tells how the unfortunate commanders returned one year later, and were put to death for their failure.

⁴⁰ The biography of Gongsun Yuan, whom Sun Quan had sought to enfeoff as King of Yan, is in *SGZ* 8, 253-61. On the abortive relationship of the government of Wu with Gongsun Yuan, see Gardiner, "The Kung-sun Warlords II," 150-157, and, for example, *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1136, 1138 and 1139 PC note 3 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 375-376, 403 and 473-413.

⁴¹ On the building of the New City at Hefei, see the biography of the Wei general Man Chong in *SGZ* 26, 724-25; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 385-386 and 412. *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1136, appears to date the enterprise to 230, but the record in the biography of Man Chong appears more consistent.

The important point about the New City was that it was established some thirty *li* (twenty kilometres) from the nearest lake of the region, and was closer to Shouchun in the north. It could thus be supported by the land-based armies of Wei, and was more difficult for attack by the forces of Wu, which relied upon water routes.

⁴² The biography of Guanqiu Jian is in *SGZ* 28, and the account of his rebellion is at 763-66. The biography of Zhuge Dan is also in *SGZ* 28, and the account of his rebellion is at 770-73. On the course of the operations about Shouchun, see Fang, *Chronicle* II, 190-196, 259-264, and 290-294.

⁴³ *SGZ* 45/Shu 15, 1075-76, being the biography of Zong Yu, who was sent at that time as an envoy to Wu; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 441.

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military commitment elsewhere, and though the forces of Wu sought to mount attacks along the Han and across the Huai, they were not sufficiently energetic or successful to distract the armies of the north from their conquest in the west.⁴⁴ Again, after Shu surrendered, the Wu attempted to salvage something from the wreckage by an advance up the Yangzi to take over the eastern territories of their late ally, but they were blocked at the Gorges and gained nothing.⁴⁵

And in the end, after the Jin dynasty of the Sima family had taken over the government of Wei in 265/266, the sheer power of that new state, combining the north and the west of China, ensured that the independence of Wu could not long continue. Long-planned, the final invasion was made with overwhelming force and resulted in predictable triumph. Sun Hao, grandson of Sun Quan and last ruler of Wu, ended his days as a subject of Jin, with the title Marquis Who Returns to Obedience.⁴⁶

For the government of Wu, the long reign of Sun Quan provided a welcome stability and a contrast to the situation in Wei: there, after Cao Pi had reigned only seven years, his son and successor Cao Rui died in 239, leaving only an adoptive son, nine years old, and bringing thereby great weakness to the dynasty. In Shu-Han, though Liu Shan, son of Liu Bei, was sovereign from 223 to his defeat and surrender in 263, no-one regarded him as an effective ruler.

Sun Quan's very longevity, however, brought difficulties for his successors and misfortune at his death. His eldest son Sun Deng died in 241.⁴⁷ The next surviving son, Sun He, replaced him as Heir-Apparent, but his position was bedevilled by feuding between those who supported Sun He and another faction which encouraged his uterine younger brother Sun Ba against him. In 250 Sun He was deposed and Sun Ba was compelled to commit suicide,⁴⁸ and though the elderly Sun Quan later considered restoring Sun He, he was persuaded instead to allow the succession to pass to his seventh and youngest son, the seven-year old Sun Liang, under the guardianship of Zhuge Ke.⁴⁹

This was a recipe for further intrigue and instability. In 253, eighteen months after the death of Sun Quan, and following a disastrous attack against Hefei, Zhuge Ke was assassinated by Sun Liang under the influence of Sun Jun, a distant cadet of the imperial family, descended from the younger brother of Sun Jian. When Sun Jun died in 256, his cousin Sun Lin succeeded to his dominant position at a restless court.⁵⁰ Sun Jun's former ally Teng Yin, made an unsuccessful attempt at a coup against Sun Lin,⁵¹ and in 258 Sun

⁴⁴ See, for example, *SGZ* 48/Wu 3, 1161; Fang, *Chronicle* II, 405 and 411.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the biography of Luo Xian from *Xiangyang ji*, quoted in *SGZ* 41/Shu 11, 1008-09 PC; Fang, *Chronicle* II, 460-461 and 463-464. Luo Xian was a general of Shu who held back the advance of Wu at the border fortress of Yong'an on the Yangzi, and later surrendered to Wei.

⁴⁶ *SGZ* 48/Wu 3, 1177: the title *Guiming hou* may be understood more literally as "Marquis Who Turns to [and accepts] the Mandate [of Heaven awarded to the Emperor of Jin]."

⁴⁷ The biographies of Sun Deng and four of his brothers are in *SGZ* 59/Wu 14. The death of Sun Deng, aged in his early thirties, is recorded at 1365.

⁴⁸ See, for example, *SGZ* 59/Wu 14, 1368-69, and 1371-72; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 651-652, 682-685, II, 70-71

⁴⁹ *SGZ* 59/Wu 14, 1370 PC note 3 quoting *Wu shu*; *SGZ* 64/Wu 19, 1433-34 PC note 1 quoting *Wu shu*; Fang, *Chronicle* II, 86-88.

Zhugé Ke thus held comparable position to that of his uncle Zhuge Liang in Shu-Han a generation earlier. His record was less successful, but the family achievement was remarkable.

⁵⁰ Fang, *Chronicle* II, 134-137, and 240. The biographies of Sun Jun and of Sun Lin are in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19; that of Sun Jun is at 1444-46, and that of Sun Lin at 1446-51.

⁵¹ Fang, *Chronicle* II, 240-241. The biography of Teng Yin is in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19, 1443-44.

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Liang, now in his mid teens, sought to rid himself of the over-powerful minister, but was instead defeated and dethroned. Sun Lin replaced him with Sun Xiu, sixth son of Sun Quan and some twenty-two years old.⁵² A few months later, Sun Xiu arranged a successful coup against Sun Lin and took power himself.⁵³

Apart from this achievement, however, the government of Sun Xiu was not particularly effective, and his death in 264 came just at the time when the state of Shu had surrendered to Wei in the west. In that period of emergency, Sun Hao, son of the former Heir-Apparent Sun He and aged in his early twenties, was chosen as an adult ruler who might restore the fortunes and energies of the state.⁵⁴ He achieved, however, only limited success, and indeed in the long term there was little to be hoped for against the might of Jin.⁵⁵

So, after the three founders, Cao Cao, Liu Bei and Sun Quan, few of their successors in any of the rival dynasties were able to maintain real authority. It is possible that an energetic central government in Wu might have responded more effectively to the crisis of the 260s, but the confusions at court were a reflection of inherent weaknesses in the very structure of the state, and it is questionable if any later sovereign could have established real control.

Despite these internal problems, there was one basic reason for the long independence of Wu, and that was the notable difficulty of conquering the state, or even defeating it. The geography of the Yangzi, from the Gorges to the sea, presented a most effective barrier for defence; and military capacity of the time was not sufficient for any side in the civil war to win a decisive victory.

One can go further. There is no question that minor skirmishes and raids could be carried out with intense ferocity, and middle-range engagements, such as those of Sun Ce and Sun Quan against Huang Zu, when the fortunes of the nascent states within a particular region depended on the outcome, were often hard-fought and bloody.⁵⁶ Above this level, however, the armies and navies of the major contenders were neither trained nor equipped to inflict substantial damage on one another. Those masses of men were collected from a variety of different groups, there was no system of communication to co-ordinate their manoeuvres, and it was all their commanders could do to keep them together - frequently it proved to be more than they could do. Most great campaigns were stalemated, and a result was achieved only when one side or another suffered a break-down of control, a collapse of morale, and a panicked retreat.

Of the three most important engagements in this period, none was decided in simple combat. Instead, victory was achieved by the commander who maintained his own force intact while his enemy's disintegrated.

At Guandu in 200, Cao Cao set defence lines and held off an attack by Yuan Shao, then sent a raiding party which intercepted the enemy supply trains; and Yuan Shao's

⁵² SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1155; Fang, *Chronicle II*, 295-298.

⁵³ SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1157; Fang, *Chronicle II*, 301-302.

⁵⁴ SGZ 48/Wu 3, 1162; Fang, *Chronicle II*, 464-465.

⁵⁵ Sun Hao is commonly criticised as an oppressive ruler and a man of poor moral fibre. There is some evidence to support the argument, but his reputation suffers from the historical tradition that the last sovereign of a conquered state must, by definition, be lacking in virtue - and the difficulties of his situation might excuse some harsh and ill-considered words and deeds.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Descriptions of the battles may have gained from literary embellishment, but they were serious engagements, hard-fought on both sides.

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great army dissolved and fled.⁵⁷ At the Red Cliffs in 208, there was some indecisive early fighting, but Huang Gai's attack with fire-ships precipitated the retreat or rout of the invader.⁵⁸ In the campaign by the Yangzi Gorges in 222, Lu Xun refused battle against Liu Bei and waited until his enemy had become jaded and careless; then he launched an attack at one strategic point, and the whole of the Shu position collapsed.⁵⁹

One may argue exceptions to the general rule, and Cao Cao did achieve some remarkable successes in battle, as in his victory over the Wuhuan in 207,⁶⁰ and his destruction of the north-western warlords in 211.⁶¹ On both occasions, however, he was dealing with an unstable military alliance, and his success owed a great deal to the surprise effect created by his strategy of oblique approach. In ideal fashion, the enemy was demoralised by manoeuvre before the armies made physical contact.⁶²

There is an occasion that one reasonably coherent Chinese army defeated another in combat, and that is the campaign in Hanzhong commandery during 219: Cao Cao's general Xiahou Yuan was defeated and killed in a substantial encounter at Dingjun Mountain, and Liu Bei took Hanzhong commandery. Cao Cao's forces, however, were rallied by Xiahou Yuan's lieutenant Zhang Ge, and they held their ground for several more months. In the end, it was the difficulty of supply through the Qin Ling passes, coupled with an increasing desertion rate among his troops, which compelled Cao Cao to order retreat.⁶³ The death of Xiahou Yuan was a notable event, and the achievement of Zhang Ge is a tribute to his own abilities and to the coherence of the army, but the example tests and proves the rule: the final result of the campaign was not determined by a single battle, but by more general questions of strategy, supply and morale.

For the armies of this time were ramshackle affairs. The regular forces of the Han dynasty, professional soldiers based at the capital and experienced troops on the northern frontier, were well-disciplined and efficient, comparable to, though not necessarily of such a high standard as, the legionaries of contemporary Rome.⁶⁴ From the end of the reign of Emperor Ling, however, the mobilisations required to deal with rebellion and civil war brought vast numbers of men to the competing banners, and there were neither time nor resources to train them properly. Many men with experience in the old imperial army gained advancement as commanders of the new recruits, but their units were overwhelmed by the hordes of newcomers, and the traditions, skills and discipline were lost.

There was some minimal organisation in the armies of the contending warlords, such as the obvious division between horsemen and foot-soldiers, and we have observed that a commanding officer would surround himself with a core of Companions, skilled soldiers

⁵⁷ A description of the battle of Guandu, taken from a number of texts, appears in *ZZTJ* 63, 2032-35; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 283-289. See also de Crespigny, "Civil War in Early China," and Leban, "Ts'ao Ts'ao," 316-381.

⁵⁸ See Chapter 4.

⁵⁹ See Chapter 7.

⁶⁰ See de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 408-411.

⁶¹ See de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 163-165.

⁶² One should not forget that Cao Cao wrote a notable commentary to the *Book of the Art of War of Sun Wu*.

⁶³ See Chapter 6. A description of the campaign in Hanzhong commandery, taken from a number of texts, appears in *ZZTJ* 68, 2156-58; de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*, 524-527.

⁶⁴ On the regular military organisation of Later Han, see Chapter 1, de Crespigny, *Northern Frontier*, 45-52, and the Introduction to de Crespigny, *Establish Peace*.

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who owed him personal allegiance and served as body-guard. As for equipment, uniforms, supply and general co-ordination, however, the texts indicate either that they were completely lacking or, when they were present, it was considered exceptional. For the most part, these armies were simple armed mobs, with soldiers driven variously by loyalty or fear of their commanders, by personal desperation, and by the hope of plunder to enhance their miserable lives. And they were accompanied by a mass of camp-followers - sometimes these were wives and children, but more normally they were cooks and prostitutes, peddlers and gamblers, and a few who specialised in care of the sick and wounded.

The command structure and fighting techniques of these armies were based upon small groups of men dependent upon individual leaders. The heart of each unit of battle was the commander himself, supported by his Companions, and the most important tactic was expressed in the common phrase "break the enemy line." In aggressive action, the commander and his Companions acted as spearhead for a drive at the enemy array, and if they were successful they could hope to be followed by the mass of their followers, spreading out to exploit success and to attack the broken enemy from the flank and the rear.

As a technique of battle, such a system is well known. It was certainly used by Alexander the Great, and in sophisticated form it was the essence of German *Blitzkrieg* in the Second World War: concentration of overwhelming force at a particular point, breakthrough by shock, and swift exploitation to roll up the enemy positions left and right and disrupt their lines of supply. In earlier modern times, one may observe a similarity with the "forlorn hope," establishing a position within the enemy defence line as preparation for a full assault.⁶⁵

Though the tactics are the same, however, the method is disconcertingly different when it is used by men without the advantages of armoured transport or the confidence of disciplined support behind them. For a primitive army, such a style of attack requires immense courage by the leader and his immediate followers, and a high level of personal authority to attract the main body of his men to follow in the charge.

In one of Sun Jian's earliest engagements, the attack upon Wan city at the time of the Yellow Turban rebellion, we have a description of this form of attack against fortifications:

Sun Jian himself was responsible for one side of the siege. He climbed the wall and was the first to get in. The soldiers swarmed like ants to follow him, and because of this they completely defeated the enemy.⁶⁶

The story may over-emphasise Sun Jian's achievement, but the position of leader and followers is well displayed. And there are repeated accounts of personal heroism by the commanders of one side or another during later years. We may call to mind the gallant attack of Dong Xi and Ling Tong against the defences of Huang Zu at Xiakou in 208 and, from the other side, the sortie of Zhang Liao and his men which humiliated Sun Quan's army before Hefei in 215.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ The English expression is a corruption of the Dutch *verloren hoop* "lost troop." This body of picked men, generally volunteers, was sent to establish a position within enemy lines, particularly inside the breach of a wall, and the main body of attackers would then seek to exploit this initiative.

⁶⁶ SGZ 46/Wu 1, 1094; de Crespigny, *Biography*, 32-33. I suggest in Chapter 2, however, that the account of the campaign in Sun Jian's biography is certainly simplified, and the description of his achievements may be exaggerated.

⁶⁷ See Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

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This reliance upon leadership, mass and morale is a natural technique for dealing with the problems of an ill-disciplined force, and the approach can be identified in the pre-Qin book of *Mozi*.⁶⁸ For more recent times, Huang has given a similar description of the armies of the late Ming dynasty operating against the Manchus. We are told that Western observers regarded the Chinese forces as being of poor combat quality, and they sought to make up for this by simple numerical strength. The clumsy mass could not be manoeuvred, but

It needed an elite corps of highly seasoned fighters to open up avenues of attack so that the bulk of the soldiers could then swarm in behind them, sustain the momentum of the attack, and exploit the results. These battle formations were nonetheless commanded by men of courage, who were themselves versed in the martial arts and who personally led their soldiers in valiant charges.⁶⁹

Inevitably, the role for the high command of such an army was very limited. A major force, perhaps thirty thousand men, occupied a great area of ground, and placed heavy demands on the resources of an even wider territory. It was composed of disparate units with individual leaders, a great part of whose time was spent in foraging, while the poor techniques of communication limited all attempts at control and manoeuvre. And the cohesion of such a mass was particularly at risk when on the move: if an advance or an attack was checked, a notable leader discomfited or slain, numbers of men would be confused and uncertain, and they could rapidly fall into panic and flight. There was small opportunity for sophisticated tactics or strategy, there must have been a constant concern about morale, and every general had to recognise that the mass of troops and weapons at his command was both brittle and volatile

So great advantage lay with the defence, and the sensible plan was to wait for the enemy to commit himself, to hope and expect that he would suffer some check, and to strike then at his most vulnerable point. Such a program, to wait for the right moment, to identify it, and to seize it, called for swift judgement and considerable moral courage, but in general terms the situation favoured the defence and, so long as there was no excessive commitment to any particular sortie, a minor set-back could usually be restored. In effect, a well-conducted and determined defence would expect to hold out for a substantial length of time, and there was always the possibility that the attacker could be caught off balance and driven to utter ruin.

These comments apply with still greater force to the naval defence of the Yangzi. As we have discussed, in the aftermath of the Red Cliffs, Cao Cao lost possession of Jiangling and the fleet that was based there. Thereafter, ships could be prepared in the north for an expedition down the Han River, but the route led through swamp and marsh-land, it was vulnerable to flank attack, and the state of Wu could make full preparations to greet the invaders. Otherwise, for the whole length of the Yangzi from the Gorges to the sea, the Wei had no position on the bank and no water-borne access, and although Cao Pi made several attempts to cross the lower Yangzi, the difficulties proved insuperable. Without a permanent base on the river, his ships had to be brought from the Huai by portage or canal, and it was quite out of the question that they could rival those of Wu. From Jiangling, Wuchang, Ruxu and Jianye, the defence could move to cover any incursion - and they had, of course, ample warning of the advance. So long as the fleet of Wu remained in being, no attack from the north had any prospect of success.

⁶⁸ See, for example, the chapter *Bei yifu* of the book of *Mozi*.

⁶⁹ *Cambridge History of China* 7, 579-580 [Huang, "The Lung-ch'ing and Wan-li reigns, 1567-1620"].

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In corollary, despite many efforts and several opportunities the men of Wu failed to gain any position beyond the Yangzi. The forward defences of Wei, at the New City of Hefei and the strategic base at Shouchun, remained unattainable to the southern armies, and most of the region between the Yangzi and the Huai was a no-man's land between two rivals - with raids and destruction from both sides, neither could establish a settled presence. In the long run, from the point of view of population and expansion, this stalemate worked to the disadvantage of Wu, but the final conquest took place only after the fall of Shu-Han in Sichuan, when the forces of Jin could mobilise a massive fleet on the upper Yangzi, sail it through the Gorges, and demolish the navy of Wu on their own home waters.⁷⁰

The social and economic structure of Wu:

We have considered the proclamation of empire as a mid-point in the history of the dynasty of the Sun family and their state of Wu, and although the date itself is not critical, it may be looked upon as one marker in the steady transition from an aggressive military regime to a less ambitious regional government. To put it another way, from the 190s to the 220s Sun Ce and Sun Quan had been the leaders of a dynamic enterprise which sought successfully to extend its power from the lower Yangzi westwards into Jing province and then across the far south. After that time, however, following the defeat of Liu Bei in 222, the northern and western frontiers of the state were largely fixed, and despite Sun Quan's ambitions and efforts, they did not develop any further. It was not so much that there were no more worlds to conquer, for indeed there were; but the power of Wu had reached the limits of its capability. The resources of the south had shown themselves sufficient to maintain a state of independence, but they were by no means adequate for the conquest of the other great regions of the old Han empire, and the days of heroic expansion were over.

In these circumstances, and with the lapse of time, one may also observe a change in the nature of the state itself. In discussion of Wu, the modern scholar Tang Changru has described the Sun family as little more than the leaders of an alliance of clans. Emphasising the local status of the Sun in their home county of Fuchun, he suggests that though the family was of minimal national importance it was nonetheless powerful in that locality.⁷¹ Tang observes also that the groups which joined the alliance under the Sun may be classified into two: those which were indigenous to the south, particularly to the region of Kuaiji, Wu and Danyang, and those who had come as emigrés from the north of the Yangzi. And he points out that although the northerners occupied important positions in the regime during its early years, by the closing period of Wu the high positions of state were held by men whose families had been established in the south since long before the end of Han.⁷²

On his own terms, Tang is correct. The last men of northern descent to hold substantial power in Wu were Zhuge Ke, the powerful minister assassinated in 253, and the

⁷⁰ For earlier discussion of this question, see *Some Notes on Ships and Naval Warfare* in Chapter 4, also *The Defences of Yang province* in Chapter 5 and *Security in the North* in Chapter 7. On the campaign of the admiral Wang Jun in 280, see his biography in *JS* 42, 1208-10, translated, summarised and discussed by Needham, *Science and Civilisation IV*:3, 694-695.

⁷¹ Tang Changru [1955], 19.

⁷² Tang Changru [1955], 23.

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unsuccessful Teng Yin, destroyed in 258. From that time the government was essentially in the hands of the cadets and relatives of the Sun clan and other men from the south.

However, when we consider the origins and early history of the state, it is less easy to look upon Sun Ce and the young Sun Quan as no more than leaders of a gentry alliance; or, if we are to do that, there remains the question why it was the Sun family which succeeded where so many others of potentially greater power and authority had failed.

It is, for example, perfectly true that Sun Jian and his sons were of some local status, but it is difficult to argue convincingly that medium prosperity in an outlying area gave them rank and authority that would be recognised by any truly powerful clan in Kuaiji commandery as a whole, and I have sought to demonstrate in earlier chapters that Sun Jian and Sun Ce were consistently placed at disadvantage by their lack of real social standing. Whether we consider the relationship of Sun Jian with Yuan Shu, or the impossibility of Sun Ce making a serious attempt against Cao Cao's hold of the emperor in 200, we are surely dealing with men who would, at best, have been regarded as parvenus by their competitors for power.

And this picture is confirmed by the origins of the commanders who followed Sun Jian and his son during the 180s and 190s. Han Dang, for example, came from Liaoxi commandery in the northeast; he was favoured by Sun Jian for his fighting skills, but he had gained no advancement in the regular imperial army because he was not a man of great family position.⁷³ Zhu Zhi of Danyang was probably one of Sun Jian's first followers, and was certainly in his service by 188,⁷⁴ while Huang Gai, commander of the fire-ships at the Red Cliffs, was a man from Lingling who joined Sun Jian in Changsha at the beginning of the civil war.⁷⁵ Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai from Jiujiang, Chen Wu from Lujiang and Lü Fan of Runan were fighting men who chose to follow Sun Ce at the very beginning of his career in the early 190s.⁷⁶ None of these men came from Kuaiji, and they joined Sun Jian and Sun Ce because of their personal authority and ability, not because of family or local connection.

Even in his nominal home country south of the Yangzi, moreover, Sun Ce had to face two dangerous sets of rivals: at one level, there was the Governor Liu Yao and the grand administrators such as Xu Gong and Wang Lang, all men of rank and family; and at the same time there were many local magnates who had no respect for the pretensions of the young warlord, and who were only brought to heel by battle and death. Eventually, when the conquest was complete, the great clans of the region were compelled to accept the hegemony of the Sun, but that leadership amongst the gentry was neither willingly granted nor easily achieved, and the first notable recruits to the cause were men such as Dong Xi of Kuaiji, a big man noted for his skill at arms,⁷⁷ Ling Cao of Wu commandery, who is described specifically as soldier of fortune,⁷⁸ and Xu Sheng who had come to Wu commandery as a refugee from Langye.⁷⁹

Sun Ce and his companions, indeed, may better be regarded as vagabond adventurers than as recognised gentry. Certainly Zhou Yu and others came from notable families, but

⁷³ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1285 and 1286 PC note 1 quoting *Wu shu*.

⁷⁴ SGZ 56/Wu 11, 1303.

⁷⁵ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1284.

⁷⁶ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1286, SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1287, and SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1289.

⁷⁷ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1290.

⁷⁸ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1295.

⁷⁹ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1298.

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they were entering a time of civil war, they realised the dangers and the opportunities, and they resolved to take their chances with a young and energetic commander. So the allies with which Sun Ce and Sun Quan first established their position were serious military men, whose position as members of the gentry at one level or another gave them the means to gather troops - retainers or vassals or fellow-refugees - but whose fortunes thereafter would not be based upon birth but upon personal achievement in political and military conflict.

Again, among the chieftains who served Sun Quan in his early days, men from the north played an all but dominant role. Of the two commanders against Cao Cao at the battle of the Red Cliffs, Cheng Pu came from Youbeiping, near present-day Beijing, and Zhou Yu came from Lujiang, north of the Yangzi. Zhou Yu's successor Lu Su was a man from Xiapi, or Linhuai, also north of the Yangzi, and Lü Meng, commander against Guan Yu, came from Runan, north of the Huai. It was only with the appointment of Lu Xun of Wu commandery to command the defences against Liu Bei in the early 220s that a man from south of the Yangzi rose to comparable position. And on the civilian administrative side, the veteran Zhang Zhao was a man from Pengcheng, again north of the Huai, Sun Shao the first Chancellor came from Beihai, on the Shandong peninsula, and Zhuge Jin, who became General-in-Chief when Sun Quan proclaimed his empire, and who was the brother of Zhuge Liang the Chancellor of Shu-Han, was a man of Langye. The second Chancellor, Gu Yong, did come from Wu commandery, and he was succeeded by Lu Xun, but Bu Zhi, conqueror of the far south, who became Chancellor briefly in his old age, was another man from Xiapi/Linhuai.

There were, of course, important and trusted commanders and officers from south of the Yangzi, notably the Lu from Wu commandery, the two Zhu clans from Danyang and from Wu, Quan Rou from Qiantang in Wu, and He Qi and Yu Fan of Kuaiji.⁸⁰ The point is, however, that in the early years of the state the struggle for power was a career open to talent. As Sun Ce said to Taishi Ci, who came from Donglai on the north of the Shandong peninsula, "The only thing that concerns me is whether a man can prove himself to be of service."⁸¹ There was no distinction of family background or place of origin.

From this open beginning, however, the structure of the state became steadily more restricted. In particular, it was established principle that when a man died the right to command his troops was transferred to his son. Sun Ce himself had first gone to Yuan Shu to seek command of his father's men, and the core of that force was indeed composed of family retainers and others brought into service by Sun Jian.⁸² These were personal regiments, and they were regarded as a military appanage which it was only right should be inherited. So the young Sun Shao was granted his father's garrison command after the assassination of Sun He, and Ling Tong, at the age of fifteen *sui*, succeeded to his father's position as a colonel after Ling Cao was killed in battle.⁸³ Still more specifically, when

⁸⁰ *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1343, *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1303, *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1312, *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1381, *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1377, and *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1317.

⁸¹ *SGZ* 49/Wu 4, 1186.

One may observe the similar policy of Cao Cao, placing emphasis upon practical achievement rather than family background or formal moral quality. See his ordinances of 203, 210, 214 and 217: *SKC* 1, 24, 32, 44 and 49-50 (the first and last citations being in PC quoting the *Wei shu* of Wang Shen).

⁸² See Chapter 2.

⁸³ See Chapter 4 at note 46.

Later, when Ling Tong died, Sun Quan took his two sons under personal protection, and when they came of suitable age he gave them command of their father's troops: *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1297.

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there was a proposal to augment the personal following of Lü Meng by adding the troops of three officers who had died, Lü Meng himself objected, arguing against the injustice to the three men's sons. It was certainly possible for Sun Quan to make changes in command on the basis of military reason, and Lü Meng benefited from the process when other men's troops were allocated to him on account of his superior ability. But that was at an early stage, and represented an executive decision rather than a matter of inheritance.⁸⁴ Basically, except for cause, a man's troops remained with him and his family.

This, of course, meant that the military units were themselves hereditary: the warlord armies were maintained by marriage and breeding, so the veterans of each generation handed on their duties to the young men of the next. And to bring the model of feudalism still closer, we have the allocation of territory and people as private appanages to supply a general and his troops, so that when Lu Su succeeded to Zhou Yu's position as commander in Jing province, he also acquired the civilian resources of the four counties which supported that post. The system of semi-feudalism continued and developed: in 234 the commander Chen Biao was admired for the fact that he chose out able-bodied men from his personal appanage of two hundred families and returned them to the government to serve as soldiers; but the implication of such a story is that a considerable part of the economic and human resources of the state were being alienated to individuals and their families.⁸⁵

Despite the principle of military inheritance and appanage, however, there were still restrictions on the possibility of a family thus involved in the army and the court maintaining high position for very long. The basic inheritance of a father's troop did not guarantee a high command, nor even secure status in the government. We are told that the son of Lu Su did rise to high rank, and a grandson inherited his fief and held command of troops.⁸⁶ On the other hand, while the daughter of Zhou Yu was married to the Heir-Apparent Sun Deng, one of Zhou Yu's two sons died young, and the other, though likewise married into the imperial clan, was later found guilty of some crime and was exiled to Luling. He was later brought back to court, and the prestige of the family was to some extent maintained through Zhou Yu's nephew and great-nephew, but the Zhou family were now only on the margins of power.⁸⁷ Similarly, the son of Cheng Pu was made marquis of a village at the time of the empire in 229, and the son of Lü Meng succeeded to his father's fief, with income from three hundred households and fifty *qing* of land, but neither of them achieved distinction of their own.⁸⁸

For those who were at first more successful, affairs of state produced their own dangers. We have noted the fate of the high-flying Zhuge Ke. Gu Tan, grandson of the Chancellor Gu Yong, and Zhang Xiu, son of Zhang Zhao, were both noted supporters of the Heir-apparent Sun He: when Sun He was dismissed, Gu Tan was exiled to the south and Zhang Xiu was compelled to commit suicide.⁸⁹ Lü Ju, son of Lü Fan, held high command in the army, but he rebelled against Sun Lin in 256 and was destroyed.⁹⁰

⁸⁴ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1275; *cf.* *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1273, and Chapter 4.

⁸⁵ *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1290. Chen Biao was the son by a concubine of Chen Wu, former general of Sun Quan, on whose unusual funeral see Chapter 6 at note 33.

⁸⁶ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1273.

⁸⁷ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1265-67.

⁸⁸ *SGZ* 55/Wu 10, 1284, and *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1280.

⁸⁹ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1230-31 and 1225.

⁹⁰ *SGZ* 56/Wu 11, 1312.

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So the fortunes of politics were not sufficient to ensure the survival of an immigrant family in a leading role within the state of Wu, and once the fluctuations and uncertainties of the early years were passed, and the situation on the frontiers had settled, there was small occasion for new men to appear at the court. The defeat of Guan Yu and the conquest of Jing province in 219 produced only one man of note, Pan Jun: he had earlier served Liu Biao and then Liu Bei, and he was later given substantial office by Sun Quan, proving himself particularly effective in dealing with the barbarians to the west of his own commandery Wuling.⁹¹

As a result, by virtue of attrition amongst their émigré rivals, it was the clans from the south of the lower Yangzi which came to dominance in Wu during the generations which succeeded the first years of foundation. In part this was because of their natural connection to the heart-land of the state and their early history of support for the Sun family - and there were many families which picked the wrong side in the civil war and which were not heard of again - but the important thing for the leading families of local origin was that they had a base upon which they might maintain their power.

At the end of the third century, when Zuo Si composed his "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu," he referred to the four leading families of that state and territory, being the Yu and the Wei, the Gu and the Lu. All of them possessed great mansions in Jianye, and they were accompanied on their tours of the city and surroundings by bands of armed retainers:

Prancing horses follow track upon track;
Vermilion wheels join rut upon rut.
With armament displayed, they return to their homes,
Where weapon-racks and crossbow frames are installed.⁹²

All four families came originally from the southeast, the Yu and the Wei from Kuaiji, and the Gu and the Lu from Wu county, present-day Suzhou, in Wu commandery.

The Yu family owed its fortunes in the state of Wu primarily to Yu Fan, minister and adviser to Sun Ce and Sun Quan. Yu Fan was a contradictory man. As member of gentry family, he had held senior position on the local staff of the Grand Commandant Wang Lang, but he readily joined Sun Ce when he came to Kuaiji. He was a scholar and debater of considerable skill and reputation,⁹³ and he showed useful loyalty to Sun Quan from the beginning of his succession to power.⁹⁴ He also held and expressed many unpopular opinions, frequently justifiably and correctly, he was often drunk, and there must have been times when he was extremely irritating. He was eventually sent away to the far south for his rudeness to Sun Quan and to Zhang Zhao, and he died there in exile in 233.⁹⁵

⁹¹ See Chapter 6.

⁹² *Wen xuan* 5, 1141, from "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu," translated by Knechtges at 399. On this work, see below.

⁹³ Yu Fan had joined Sun Ce at the time of his attack against Wang Lang in Kuaiji, and he persuaded Hua Xin to surrender Yuzhang to Sun Ce.

In scholarship, Yu Fan was admired by Kong Rong for his commentary to the *Book of Changes* (SGZ 59/Wu 12, 1320), and he also wrote on the *Daode jing*, on the *Analects* of Confucius, and on *Guo yu* (SGZ 59/Wu 12, 1321-22).

⁹⁴ See note 7 to Chapter 4.

⁹⁵ SGZ 57/Wu 12, 1320, refers in general terms to Yu Fan's frequent arguments with Sun Quan and 1321 tells of his exile. For the particular occasion he was nearly killed outright by Sun Quan at a banquet, see below.

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He was survived, however, by several sons, and many of them became distinguished and held high rank.⁹⁶

Gu Yong, as we have seen, became Chancellor of the empire under Sun Quan. His family had held substantial position under Han, and when he was young he was recognised and admired by the great scholar Cai Yong.⁹⁷ Gu Yong's sons and grandsons continued to hold significant office in Wu.⁹⁸

And the Lu family, which we have noted at intervals during the history of this period, was long-established indeed. *Hou Han shu* refers to their lineage in the southeast from the time of Former Han. Lu Hong became Prefect of the Masters of Writing under Emperor Guangwu, founder of Later Han, and his grandson Lu Xu was implicated in the suspected treason of Liu Ying, King of Chu, during the reign of Emperor Ming.⁹⁹ Lu Kang, Grand Administrator of Lujiang and enemy of Sun Ce, was the grandson of Lu Xu. The general Lu Xun, long a dominant figure in the state of Wu, was a great-nephew of Lu Kang, while Lu Xun's younger brother Lu Mao and Lu Ji, son of Lu Kang, both also held high office.¹⁰⁰ Their descendants continued this prosperity, combined with considerable literary achievement, through the last years of Wu and into the Jin.¹⁰¹

Yu Fan later sent in a memorial protesting at the plan for alliance with Gongsun Yuan. When the project did fail Sun Quan remembered his words and sought to recall him, but Yu Fan had already died: *SGZ* 59/Wu 12, 1324 PC note 1 quoting *Wu shu* and *Jiangbiao zhuan*.

⁹⁶ *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1327, and PC notes 1 to 4 quoting *Kuaiji dianlu*.

Later descendants of Yu Fan held position under the Jin, and Yu Xiaofu was a favourite of Emperor Xiaowu and held high office in the early fifth century: *JS* 76, 2012-15, and *cf.* Zhou Mingtai at 2716, who traces the lineage only to Yu Fan's grandson.

⁹⁷ *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1225 and 1226 PC note 2 quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan* and *Wu lu*. *Jiangbiao zhuan* says that Cai Yong gave Gu Yong his own personal name as sign of his respect and affection.

SGZ 52/Wu 7, 1225 PC note 1 quoting *Wu lu*, says that Gu Yong's great-grandfather had been Grand Administrator of the important commandery of Yingchuan. We are not told of the intervening generations, but Gu Yong held commissioned office as magistrate of various counties while he was still young, so it would appear the family had maintained status.

⁹⁸ Gu Rong, grandson of Gu Yong the former Chancellor of Wu, after a dangerous career at the court of Western Jin became a senior assistant to Sima Rui, founder of Eastern Jin: *JS* 68, 1811-15. His descendants held more junior office, though it appears the family maintained their position for some further generations into the Liu Song dynasty of the fifth century. See the *Shishuo renming pu* "Register of personal names in *Shishuo xinyu*" compiled by Wang Zao of Southern Song, and claimed to be based upon family registers, 62a-66a, and Zhou Mingtai, *Sanguo zhi shixi biao*, at 2712.

⁹⁹ The biography of Lu Xu, which refers to Lu Hong and to the status of the family in the southeast, maintained for generations past, is in *HHS* 81/71, 2682-83, the Chapter on Men of Unusual Conduct. When Liu Ying was accused of plotting rebellion, Lu Xu and a number of his colleagues were arrested and put in prison. When food was sent in to them, Lu Xu wept at the sight of it, and explained that he recognised the way in which his mother cut the pieces of meat and onion. On the basis of this display of filial sympathy, the case was re-examined, and Lu Xu and his colleagues were released, albeit under life-long proscription from further official appointment. On Liu Ying, see *Cambridge Han*, 258 [Bielenstein, "Wang Mang, the restoration of the Han dynasty, and Later Han"].

¹⁰⁰ On Lu Ji, see below.

¹⁰¹ Of four grandsons of Lu Xun, two were killed fighting the invading forces of Jin in 280, but the two younger, Lu Ji and Lu Yun, received patronage and favour at the northern court, and were distinguished as scholars and men of letters: *SGZ* 58/Wu 13, 1360-61 PC note 2 quoting *[Lu] Ji [Lu] Yun biezhuan*, also their biographies in *JS* 54.

Lu Xun's lineage appears to have died out with Lu Ji and Lu Yun, but the record continued through descendants of Lu Xun's brother Lu Mao. Lu Mao's grandson Lu Ye was a minister under the Jin, and Lu Ye's younger brother Lu Wan was a leading figure in the first generation of exile in the early fourth century. Lu Wan's son Lu Na was also a senior official, and Lu Na's nephew Lu Daosheng was minister of justice of

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In contrast, however, though the Wei are listed among the four great clans of the state, the family does not play a notable role in the history recorded by Chen Shou, nor in the works quoted by Pei Songzhi. Wei Lang, a gentleman from Kuaiji, had been involved in the Faction affair against the eunuchs of the court of Emperors Huan and Ling at the end of the 160s, and he committed suicide in 168.¹⁰² His grandson Wei Teng held office as a local magistrate in several counties, and became Grand Administrator of Poyang, but his chief claim to remembrance is an occasion that Sun Quan was angry with him. Wei Teng was in serious danger of being put to death, but his friend Wu Fan, who came from the same county and was recognised at the court of Wu as a expert in calendrical calculations and in divination by the wind, pleaded successfully for his life.¹⁰³

In this respect, the reference to the Wei family by Zuo Si provides an insight to the structure of the state of Wu. Though Wei Teng served as a Grand Administrator, such position was not of itself worthy of notice by historians concerned with the mainstream of political history, and the Wei family, in contrast to the Yu, the Gu and the Lu, played no great part in the central government of Wu. They were, nevertheless, established and maintained as a great clan.

The great Wei family, as described by Zuo Si, is a notable example of the manner in which a clan could maintain high status without any close connection to the court or the government. There were, however, large numbers of families in a comparable position at the lower levels of society and the economy. Throughout the lands of the southeast, those local leaders who supported Sun Ce and Sun Quan in the early years had gained immediately at the expense of their rivals, and they also obtained influence in the developing imperial state. With the effluxion of time, their positions as local magnates were increasingly well secured, and they could not readily be overthrown by the chances of politics. Besides, this, in acceleration of a process which can already be observed during Later Han, these local men of power attracted numbers of people into their service. Many of their followers came voluntarily for protection, others found their direct and personal protection more attractive and secure than the risks of individual enterprise and the demands of taxation, and there were also, of course, those men and their families originally conscripted or recruited for official military service who later transferred allegiance to their personal commander and his family.¹⁰⁴

These leading local families could be and were kept under control, not only by the threat and reality of the military force available to central government, but also by a system of internal hostages. The process was not necessarily onerous, and relatives of

Jin in the early fifth century: *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1339 PC note 1 quoting *Wu lu* and *Jin yangqiu*, and *JS* 77, 2023-27. *Shishuo renming pu*, 27a-31a, continues the genealogy for another four generations, to Lu Shan who held high rank at the court of the Chen dynasty in the latter part of the sixth century (see also Zhou Mingtai at 2717-20).

¹⁰² The biography of Wei Lang is in *HHS* 67/57, 2200-01, the Chapter on the Proscribed Party. *SGZ* refers to him as a member of the list of worthy men praised by the dissident students of the time, and there is passing reference to him in *Kuaiji dianlu*, quoted in *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1325 PC.

¹⁰³ *SGZ* 63/Wu 18, 1422-23. 1423 PC note 1 quoting *Kuaiji dianlu*, has a short biography of Wei Teng, describing him as the grandson of Wei Lang. Cf. the commentaries at *Wen xuan* 5, 1141-43, and the note of Knechtges at 398.

On Wu Fan and the divination by wind, see Chapter 1.

¹⁰⁴ On local leaders and their attraction of tenants and retainers through commendation, see, for example, *Cambridge Han*, 627-630 [Ebrey, "Economic and Social History of Later Han"], and on the privatisation of official recruits, see Yang Chung-i, "Evolution of the status of dependents," summarised in Sun and DeFrancis, *Chinese social history*, at 144-145, and Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, 503 note 458.

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powerful families might hold pleasant positions at court, but there was a general requirement in Wu, as in the other states of the Three Kingdoms, that men who held strategic or politically sensitive positions should guarantee their loyalty in this form.¹⁰⁵ Such forced obedience, however, is not the same as willing effort for the cause of the state, and it was the lack of commitment by the great families of the region, rather than their active disloyalty, which limited the energies of Wu.

Indeed, many local magnates had no interest or concern with the politics of the state of Wu. Most of the records have been written in terms of dynastic or imperial history, but the bulk of the population was occupied with more local business. If a great family such as the Wei could remain largely outside the affairs of court, we can be sure that other groups of middling gentry were similarly independent, and were content not to be noticed by the central government and its chroniclers. In effect, the apex of government in Wu, recorded by the histories with tales of generals and ministers and intrigue at court, rested upon a broad class of village and county gentry, who might accept office in one commandery or another, but who had small interest or concern with the politics of the capital. From this point of view, one may suggest that the same pattern was maintained as in the last years of Later Han: basic dues were paid to the imperial government, but so long as it remained intact the details of its activities were largely irrelevant to local power, influence and survival.

Years earlier, this attitude had been summed up by the argument of Lu Su in 208, when he encouraged Sun Quan to reject the advice of his more conservative advisers and defy the claims of Cao Cao:¹⁰⁶

I could accept Cao Cao, but someone in your position cannot do so. Let me explain.

If I received Cao Cao, he would send me back to my home district, he would have me graded by name and rank, and I would do no worse than be appointed as a junior official.¹⁰⁷ I could ride in a carriage drawn by oxen, with an escort of soldiers, and I could mingle with the gentry. I would be given promotion, and I would certainly finish with a province or a commandery.

But if you receive Cao Cao, where would you go?

Sun Quan might have hopes of imperial state, but his subordinates had more limited ambitions, they could expect to maintain some position under any regime, and they had no particular commitment to the fortunes of Wu.

Even on such basic matters of coinage and taxation, moreover, the government of Wu had limited authority. One of the most significant changes, for the immediate fortunes of the state of Wu and also for the historical development of later centuries, was an increasing tendency to economic regionalisation and the growth of local interests. For the time of Han, there is evidence of widespread trade and exchange of goods, based to a

¹⁰⁵ The clearest statement is in *SGZ* 48/Wu 3, 1177 PC quoting *Soushen ji*, where it is said that "Because Wu was a new state, it had not established a firm basis of trust. The administrators and military commanders of positions on the frontiers were all required to send their wives and children, and these were known as *baozhi*." Although this statement is only preliminary to an anecdote of the supernatural, there is no reason to doubt its basis of fact.

See also Yang, "Hostages in Chinese History," particularly at 50-53, and Pong Sing-wai [1964].

¹⁰⁶ *SGZ* 54/Wu 9, 1270.

¹⁰⁷ The reference to grading by name and rank is identified by modern scholars with the recruitment system of nine categories (*jiu pin*), administered by the officials known as Impartial and Just (*zhongzheng*), which was developed in the state of Wei by Cao Cao and his son Cao Pi. See, for example, Holzman, "Système médiévale des fonctionnaires," 392-393.

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considerable degree upon a monetary economy. The years of disturbance, however, had brought disruption of commerce across the whole of China, and by the third century, at every level of the economy, those families which had maintained their landed estates were increasingly concerned with their own self-sufficiency.

Currency and inflation problems had already appeared during Later Han, but at the beginning of civil war, when the government of Dong Zhuo replaced the traditional *wu-shu* coinage with smaller units it destroyed the monetary system of the empire, and in 221 the government of Cao Pi formally declared that grain and silk should be the official means of exchange in Wei. The coinage was later revived in the north, and was maintained in formal circulation by the government of Jin, but official economy still relied upon commodity exchange. Similarly, though Sun Quan attempted in 236 to establish an official currency of large coins, with a monopoly of copper and prohibitions against private minting, the policy was a failure and the project was ended in 246.¹⁰⁸

As a result, just as the great families could hold their private followers from the direct control of government, so, throughout the countryside, local magnates could deal with their tenants and dependents in a system of barter and exchange of service. There was no opportunity for the government to obtain profit from the monopoly of minting and the enforcement of tax payments in cash,¹⁰⁹ and it was difficult to obtain information or enforce demands. Taxation and other levies were obtained rather by negotiation on the basis of quotas than by formal assessment of value and obligation, and the greater part of economic activity in the community remained beyond the reach of government.

Behind the military stalemate along the Yangzi, therefore, the social and political structure of the south was based on low-level control by leading families, monopolising the infrastructure of local administration, and maintaining a sensible distance from the court and the capital. The formal histories do not often refer to the men of such families, but it was that network of local power, colonisation and demographic expansion, which confirmed the development of Chinese authority in the south under the superficial auspices of the state of Wu. And eventually, where Sun Ce and Sun Quan had held the initiative over their local allies, in later years the local families, with their private armies of retainers, and their resources of agricultural land and vassals to work it, gained dominance in the state as a whole and over the policies of the court.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ The coinage policies of this period are described in *CS* 26, 794-5; Yang, "Economic history," 191-2. See also the article of Ho Tzu-ch'üan, "Manorial economy," summarised in Sun and DeFrancis, *Chinese social history*, at 140. On the large coins of Wu, and the attempt to enforce a monopoly of minting, see *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1140, 1142 and 1146 PC quoting *Jiangbiao zhuan*.

¹⁰⁹ On the Han governments' monopoly of minting, and the compulsory payment of taxation in cash, see *Cambridge Han*, 587-589 [Nishijima, "Economic and Social History of Former Han"].

¹¹⁰ Ebrey, *Aristocratic Families*, has traced the Cui lineage, from the northern territory of Boling, through the vicissitudes of the period of division which succeeded the fall of Western Jin at the beginning of the fourth century, and Johnson, *Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*, has shown that the great families of Tang were concerned to claim descent from Han, Three Kingdoms and Jin. Grafflin, "Great Family," points out, however, that three of the five so-called "super-elite" clans of the aristocracy traced their prosperity to association with the Sima government of Jin, and they suffered considerably from the misfortunes of that dynasty at the beginning of the fourth century and again at the beginning of the fifth, while the remaining two houses did not in fact appear on the national stage until the fourth century.

As Grafflin observes, at 65-66, and as Fogel discusses in his introduction to Tanigawa, *Medieval Chinese Society*, xvii-xxix, the question of the hereditary aristocracy and gentry in the Chinese society of the Period of Division has been a feature of Japanese intellectual debate particularly since the time of Naito Konan in the first part of the present century. Miyakawa [1956] and Utsunomiya [1962] are regarded as members of the Kyoto school which follows the basic arguments of Naito, while Tanigawa and Kawakatsu Yoshio are

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The personal authority of Sun Quan had to some extent concealed this situation, but after his death in 252, in a time of younger, weaker rulers, it became very clear. We have noted the argument of Tang Changru, that the conflicts at the capital, of Zhuge Ke against Sun Jun, and of Teng Yin against Sun Lin, represent a transfer of power in the central government from the men of the north to those of the south. As Deng Zhi of Wei observed to Sima Zhao after Zhuge Ke's failed attack on Hefei in 253, the great families of Wu, relying upon their military strength and their retainers, now held the real power of the state, and without support from an established ruler the minister Zhuge Ke would not survive their hostility. And indeed he proved to be correct.¹¹¹

less committed to the approach. Kawakatsu, in particular, has published detailed analyses of the structure of elite leadership in the third century, [1970] and [1974], and subsequent periods, and more recently in [1982]. See also the discussion of Naito and his school by Fogel, and his review article "New Direction."

It is a matter of only marginal concern to the history of the state of Wu in the third century, but there is some interest in tracing the later histories of the leading families of the south. Though his research is not entirely comprehensive, the study is made very much easier by Zhou Mingtai's *Sanguo zhi shixi biao*.

Rather as one might expect, though three of the four great families of Wu, as listed by Zuo Si in his "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu," and discussed above, showed remarkable longevity, many of those whose members held power in Wu failed to maintain their prominent position after the conquest by Jin in 280, and the turmoil which accompanied the exile of that dynasty to the south at the beginning of the fourth century.

As examples, *SSXY* B, 68b-69a [VIII.142]; Mather, *New Account*, 243, refers to four old families of Wu commandery which had been prominent in the past, being the Lu and the Gu, the Zhang and the Zhu, and in another passage, *SSXY* B, 50a-51a [VIII.20]; Mather, *New Account*, 217, six names are given, being the same four together with a member of the Wu clan and a member of the Yan.

Of these families, Zhang Yan was a minister of Wu, his son Zhang Bo was author of *Wu lu* (see Chapter 9), Zhang Bo's brother Zhang Chang was praised in *SSXY* for his moral qualities, and another brother Zhang Han was a respected poet and had a short official career towards the end of Western Jin: *JS* 92, 2384. Zhu Tan, Wu Zhan and Yan Yin all retired from public life after the fall of Wu, and no member of their families has a biography in *Jin shu*.

In similar fashion *SSXY* B, 62a [VIII.85]; Mather, *New Account*, 232, and *JS* 78, 2062, refer to the four leading families of Kuaiji in the middle of the fourth century. The Yu are included, but the Wei [as in Cao Cao's state of Wei] of the third century had been replaced by another clan, whose surname is written with a different character ["surround"] but is likewise transcribed as Wei (see also the anecdote in *SSXY* B (8), 65b [VIII.112]; Mather, *New Account*, 238, which refers to the decline of the first Wei clan: Mather has made a slight mistake in his note, for he identifies the declined Wei with the prosperous Wei; cf. his correct analysis in the Biography section at 598 and 599). Of the two other families, the Kong came from the north at the end of Later Han, but do not appear to have risen to prominence until the latter part of the Wu period (*JS* 78, 2051), while the Xie came to the south at the beginning of Eastern Jin (*JS* 49, 1377-79, and 79, 2069-90).

Though the He clan from Kuaiji, descendants of He Qi the conqueror of Fujian, are not mentioned among the elite group of four, He Qi's great-grandson He Xun was a high minister at the beginning of Eastern Jin, and other members of the family held substantial position in the southeast region for ten generations: *SGZ* 60/Wu 15, 1377-81, *SGZ* 65/Wu 20, 1456-59, *Renming pu* 55a-60a, and Zhou Mingtai at 2721.

Again, though *SSXY* and *JS* have no discussion of the leading families of Danyang, Zhang Kai, great-grandson of the veteran minister Zhang Zhao of Wu, held high office and was awarded a marquissate in the first year of Eastern Jin: *JS* 76, 2018-19.

In general, however, few of the families which held a leading political position in third-century Wu were able to maintain their status under later dynasties. The two chief exceptions are the Lu family, which, as we have seen, could claim distinguished lineage from the first century to the sixth, and the He of Kuaiji. Sadly enough, one family which largely disappears from history within a generation of the fall of Wu is the Sun - but that is another story.

¹¹¹ *SGZ* 28, 777. Several scholars, including Tang Changru [1955], at 22-23, and Miyakawa [1956], at 33, cite and discuss this passage. The expression "retainers" is here expressed by the phrase *buqu*: the compound originally referred to the units of the regular imperial army of Han, but by this time it may be

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Still more significantly, at these highest levels of the state, we may observe the growing, ultimately dominant, role of various cadet branches of the Sun clan, markedly aided by palace politics in which two daughters of Sun Quan, Sun Luban the Princess Quan and Sun Luyu the Princess Zhu, played a considerable part.¹¹² This constant conflict at the capital limited the authority of the ruler and the effectiveness of his government, and at the same time these personal factions and rivalries among members of the imperial clan, with no power base of their own among the general community, meant that the politics of the centre operated more and more in a closed system, isolated from and irrelevant to the interests of the provinces.

In these later years, the government was no longer that of an ambitious and expansionist state, but represented little more than a group of magnates concerned to maintain their own wealth and authority. Faced with such a collection of family interests, operating at every level from the court to the countryside, the Sun rulers were never in a good position to establish strong instruments of government, including the control and development of agriculture and the machinery of war, with which they might compete more efficiently against their rivals. And in the long run Wu was a marginal state, with a government which held power through its past military success, but which lacked the authority to establish coherent and effective policies against local interests.

On the other hand, through traditional historians of China may lament the division of the empire of Han, and may think less of the rulers of Wu for their failure to establish a truly imperial government, we should not assume that grand centralised authority was an advantage to the people or the culture of China. On the contrary, the break-up of Han and the limited power of Wu were of considerable advantage to the development of China.

In general terms, the independent existence of the state of Wu meant that the lands south of the Yangzi were no longer subject to exploitation for the irrelevant concerns of a central imperial government. During the Han dynasty, the wealth of the south, whether it was developed from the mines and fields within the boundaries, or acquired by trade beyond the seas, had been regularly removed to the profit of the court, or deployed to aid imperial ambitions along the northern frontier. For a government based upon the Yellow River and the Yellow plain, south China was always of secondary political importance, and was looked upon as little more than region for exploitation, with occasional difficulties from marginal rebellion.

From this perspective, the very existence of the separate state of Wu was an immediate gain for the people of the south. The long stream of the Han River, and the network of canals and waterways which led across the Huai to the north now gave a line of attack for armies to invade from the north, and the costs of maintaining defence along the Yangzi were considerable. But those waterways had formerly been a route by which prosperity was drained away and now, as communications to the north were broken, the wealth of the south remained in that region. The additional expenses of a local court and a regional

interpreted as a private military force, or even simply civilian dependents. See the classic article by Yang Chung-i on "Evolution of the Status of 'Dependents'," and note 104 above.

¹¹² Sun Luban, married to Quan Zong, was the elder full sister of Sun Luyu, married to Zhu Ju, whose biography is in *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1340-41. Sun Luban encouraged the dismissal of Sun He from the position of Heir-Apparent and later supported Sun Jun, who became her lover. Sun Luyu supported Sun He, and was later slandered by Sun Luban and done to death by Sun Jun. Sun Luban was eventually involved in the failed coup of Sun Liang against Sun Lin; her husband was killed and she herself was sent into exile. See Fang, *Chronicle* I, 683-684 and 690, II, 70-71, 86, 160, 181, 199, 228, 295-297 and 313.

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army could readily be absorbed in the profits to be made from the monopoly of southern trade and the reduced demands of tribute to the north.

In this context, it was in no sense necessary that the court and the capital should dominate the economic resources of the state, and the armed forces of the central government were most usefully deployed in formal defence along the Yangzi, and as an occasional support for large-scale enterprises of colonisation. Otherwise, the continuing development of the region was well assured by the individual enterprise of local leaders and commanders. They had no particular loyalty to the warlord state which shielded them, they offered little but exploitation and war to their poor dependents, and the non-Chinese people suffered desperately from their aggression, but it was the energy of these gentry magnates that developed the prosperity and the independence of the south.

The achievement of Wu:

Despite rhetoric and show, the empire of Wu was in no way a reconstruction of the fallen dynasty of Han. Much of the veneer which formerly covered the force of government was now gone, and there were times when men acted rather with haste than with dignity. We have, for example, the story of Sun Quan's gross discourtesy to Zhang Zhao at the very height of the enthronement ceremony, when he proclaimed aloud and in public that he owed his success to Zhou Yu, while Zhang Zhao's advice would have condemned him to beggary. The tale, of course, is too good to be entirely trustworthy, and one cannot be sure that that Sun Quan did indeed speak out in such shameful fashion.

On the other hand, Sun Quan could display a notable impatience with various attempts by worthy scholars to insist upon decorum at inappropriate times. There are a number of stories about how he would give a banquet and get drunk. On one occasion he was reprimanded by Zhang Zhao, who compared his conduct to that of the vicious and last King Zhou of the ancient Shang/Yin dynasty. In another story we are told that Yu Fan refused to return the royal toast: he lay down on the ground and pretended he could drink no more, then returned to his place after Sun Quan had passed him by. Sun Quan was furious at the insult and drew his sword to kill him. When his minister Liu Ji grasped him about the arms to hold him back, Sun Quan complained peevishly that Cao Cao had been allowed to kill Kong Rong, and why couldn't he kill Yu Fan? Liu Ji assured him that Yu Fan certainly deserved such a fate, but it might affect Sun Quan's own reputation, and Sun Quan was surely a better man than Cao Cao? So Yu Fan was spared, and Sun Quan issued orders that if in future, when he was drunk, he ordered a man to be killed, the execution should not be carried out until he had sobered up and thought about the matter some more.¹¹³

One has the impression that wild parties were a feature of court life at Wu, that there were times they resembled a croquet match in Wonderland, and that it was always dangerous to refuse a cup of wine.¹¹⁴

There are a number of other incidents which confirm Sun Quan as a man of energy and impetuosity, sometimes erratic in his behaviour, and on occasion discourteous and ungenerous. But he was surely a man of strong personality. This was, after all, a warlord

¹¹³ The stories are put together by *ZZTJ* 69, 2198-99; Fang, *Chronicle* I, 61-62. They are drawn from a number of sources, being the biographies of Zhang Zhao in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, 1221, of Yu Fan in *SGZ* 57/Wu 10, 1321, and of Liu Qi in *SGZ* 52/Wu 4, 1186.

¹¹⁴ In the later case of the unfortunate historian Wei Zhao, it was truly a fatal discourtesy. See Chapter 9.

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state, and it was essential for the ruler to maintain authority over a group of very tough military commanders.

In such circumstances, Sun Quan's conduct with regard to Zhang Zhao, and his outburst against Yu Fan, may reflect the tensions in the society which he ruled. During the time of Han, there were formal and official links to regulate personal and family alliances and rivalries, and set boundaries to individual conduct; even then, however, there were notable incidents of bloody vendetta, sometimes disguised as political protest, but frequently displayed as plain and brutal private feuding. Now, in time of civil war, that framework of conduct had broken down, and survival, let alone success, depended upon a man's personal qualities and the allies he could make to assist him.

So this was an age of the individual, one of the comparatively few periods in Chinese history that some people were able to escape from the traditional bonds of expected conduct, and could even be admired for their style and skill. Where the rulers of the end of Han, men such as Emperor Huan and Emperor Ling, are known to us only by the occasional slanted anecdote, judged from the viewpoint of their role in history rather than as men of personal character, and hemmed about by the demands of protocol and courtly debate, the warlords who took over their power, men such as Cao Cao, Liu Bei and Sun Quan, depended for success upon the strength of their personality and the force with which they expressed it.

In this, of course, we may see the attraction of the stories and plays which deal with the Three Kingdoms, and above all the splendid figure of Cao Cao, cynical strategist and brilliant villain. Though one must doubt some of the tales that are told, and even the general judgement of traditional historians, there are surely echoes of reality in the legends that gathered about him and about the other heroes.

In comparison with Cao Cao, Sun Quan presents a less impressive figure. He was fortunate enough to inherit the military base established by his elder brother, and the great victories of Wu were won by his generals, notably Zhou Yu, Lü Meng and Lu Xun. Sun Quan was not himself a great military commander, and he suffered some serious and embarrassing set-backs when he took the field in person. He was, nonetheless, a man of physical courage, large ambition, and surely a strong nerve. In the two great campaigns which established the state, the defence at the Red Cliffs against Cao Cao and the attack on Guan Yu and Liu Bei in Jing province, Sun Quan was prepared to make harsh decisions and act upon them with energy. His commanders at the front made the immediate tactical decisions, but he had the strength to back their judgement, and he would surely have shared their fate had matters gone awry.

And the generals who consented to serve him were men of character and style. Zhou Yu impressed all who dealt with him; Lü Meng first made his mark when he dressed his troops in smart red leggings, he turned himself into a passable self-taught scholar, and he was a man of trickery and a decided sense of humour. And there was the contrast between a man such as Jiang Qin, who lived in most humble fashion, with his mother and his concubines in simple dresses of plain cloth, until Sun Quan ordered that they should be dressed from his own palace wardrobe;¹¹⁵ and He Qi the conqueror of the southeast, who took particular pride in the splendour of his raiment:

By nature, He Qi was extravagant and gay, and he loved military affairs. His arms and his armour and his engines of war were always first-class, the ships that he rode in were engraved with red chasing, he had black umbrellas, screens of deep red, halberds

¹¹⁵ *SGZ 57/Wu 10, 1287.*

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and lances decorated with flowers and fruits, while the green hides which covered his warships looked from far off as if they were mountains.¹¹⁶

Gan Ning, we are told, had been the leader of a group of "knight-errants" when he was young, and he retained some of the same customs when he joined Sun Quan's service:

Gan Ning would kill for pleasure, and he gave outlaws refuge and lodging in his commandery offices. Whenever he went in or out, if he was on land there were horsemen and chariots drawn up in array, and if he travelled by water there were lines of small craft, all with followers in embroidered clothing. Wherever he halted he used a silken rope to moor the boat, and when he moved on again he cut the rope and left it, to show how little he cared.¹¹⁷

In real terms, reference to activity as a "knight-errant" may better be regarded as a euphemism for banditry or, at best, conduct as a masterless fighting man.¹¹⁸ Many of the Sun supporters, such as Zhou Yu, Lu Su, Cheng Pu, Lü Fan, He Qi and others, were men of family, who came accompanied by retainers or who had held some office or recommendation from the government, and we are told that Quan Zong, for example, took particular care to act as patron and attract refugees from the north into his service.¹¹⁹ There were, however, a number of others whose background was questionable. Ling Cao of Wu commandery, who appears to have been one of the hills people in that region, is described as a "wandering bravo," but he served Sun Ce and Sun Quan loyally as the leader of many attacks until his death at the hands of Gan Ning in battle against Huang Zu.¹²⁰ Pan Zhang, the man who killed Guan Yu, began as an impoverished drunkard: when creditors came to his gate he would merely assure them that one day he would be wealthy and powerful, and he would repay them then. Later, he became General of the Right under the imperial government, but he appears to have remained a ruffian, a scrounger and a scoundrel - in many respects an excellent commander for the time:

Pan Zhang was rough, fierce man, whose orders were always respected. He loved to play a fine part, and even when the soldiers under his command were no more than a few thousand he would always act as if he had ten thousand.

When he was on campaign and halted for camp, he would set up a market in the army [and draw commission on the sales], and if there was anything his troop lacked, he would look for the chance to take what as needed.

By nature, however, he was wasteful and extravagant, and in his later years he became even worse: if one of his officers or soldiers happened to be well off, he would sometimes kill him and take his property; and he often defied the law. When investigating officers sent in memorials about this, however, Sun Quan considered Pan Zhang's record, and he would make no further investigation.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ SGZ 62/Wu 15, 1380.

¹¹⁷ SGZ 57/Wu 10, 1292 PC note 32 quoting *Wu shu*.

¹¹⁸ The term *youxia* has been discussed by James Liu as *The Chinese Knight-Errant*, but the reality of most of the cases cited, even in literature, does not well reflect Western understanding of the English term. For a devastating, but to my mind quite reasonable, critique of these "heroes" in literature, see Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, 86-114, discussing *Shuihu zhuan*. On the concept and conduct of *youxia* in Han, see Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, 185-195.

¹¹⁹ See his biography in SGZ 60/Wu 15, 1381.

¹²⁰ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1295, and note 42 to Chapter 4. The phrase rendered as "wandering bravo" is *qingxia*, one of the alternative expressions for *youxia*: Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure*, 186. SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1297, refers to Ling Cao as a man from the hill country.

¹²¹ SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1300.

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Gan Ning, however, was perhaps the most spectacular of Sun Quan's military commanders. Originally from Nanyang, he migrated to the west, and besides his early experience as a knight-errant or bandit, briefly interrupted by a term as Assistant in Shu commandery, he later took up a serious interest in scholarship. He was certainly extremely brave, he is described as rough and fierce, but he was also open and friendly, good at planning, caring for his soldiers, thought little of personal property and always showed respect for scholars. There was, predictably, a permanent feud between him and Ling Tong, whose father he had killed, and Sun Quan took pains to keep them apart.

Lü Meng had admired and acted as patron to Gan Ning from the beginning, but that relationship also was sometimes strained:

One of the boys in Gan Ning's kitchen did something wrong and then ran away to shelter with Lü Meng. Lü Meng was afraid Gan Ning would kill him, so he did not immediately send him back. Later, however, Gan Ning brought a present for Lü Meng's mother, and came up into the hall to offer it. The kitchen boy came out and went to Gan Ning, and Gan Ning promised Lü Meng he would not kill the lad.

As soon as he got back to his ship, however, Gan Ning tied the boy to a mulberry tree and shot him with arrows till he died. Then he told his men to secure the mooring ropes, took off his clothes and went to bed.

Lü Meng heard about this and was furious. He beat a drum to gather his soldiers to attack Gan Ning. Gan Ning heard the noise, but he stayed in bed.

Lü Meng's mother came barefoot and said to him, "His excellency [Sun Quan] treats you like a brother and entrusts you with great affairs. How can you take the occasion of some private grievance to attack Gan Ning and seek to kill him? Should Gan Ning die, even if our master asked no questions about it, you would still be failing in your duty as his servant."

Lü Meng had always been very obedient to his parents. He attended now to his mother's words and abandoned at once his thoughts of vengeance. He went to Gan Ning's ship and he laughed and called out to him, "Xingba, my mother has a meal waiting for you; come quickly!"

Gan Ning wept and sobbed and said, "I let you down." And he went with Lü Meng back to visit his mother, and they made merry and feasted the whole of the day.¹²²

Such men as these were violent and emotional, their behaviour was often cruel and erratic, and it sometimes passed even the lenient bounds of the time. In 237, the general Zhu Huan quarrelled bitterly with his commander-in-chief Quan Zong, killed numbers of his attendants, and then "pretended he was insane," left the army, and returned to Jianye for a cure. He probably was suffering from a bout of homicidal mania. Sun Quan, however, soothed him down, treated him with honour, and sent him back to the front with a largely independent command. Zhu Huan remarked that now he had the opportunity to return to active service, his ailment would cure itself.¹²³

There is, of course, one central reason for these frequent descriptions of extravagant conduct, and that is the military techniques which we have considered above: if the coherence of an army depends upon the confidence which ordinary soldiers hold for their commanders, and aggressive action depends upon the personal courage of these men, to "break the enemy line" and have that success followed up by their companions, then a flamboyant style and strong, even brutal, personality, are important and indeed essential

¹²² SGZ 55/Wu 10, 1295. Xingba was the style of Gan Ning.

¹²³ SGZ 56/Wu 11, 1314; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 551-553.

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attributes of military achievement. Conduct as a gaudy hero or swashbuckling bully was part of a military leader's stock-in-trade, and one cannot ignore the nervous tension required by any man who must maintain his authority by regular personal defiance of an enemy array.¹²⁴

So the needs of warfare in that heroic age tended to produce leaders who were arrogant, aggressive and occasionally hysterical, and this military egocentricity had inevitable influence on the political and social structure of the state as a whole. Since these were the sort of people that Sun Quan was dealing with, one can understand occasional vagaries in his own behaviour.

In such a society of individual conduct, women had some opportunity to play a part for themselves. We are told of good advice being offered and accepted, as in the case of Lü Meng and his mother just cited above, the advice of Sun Ce's aunt on forcing the crossing of the Yangzi at the beginning of his campaigns, and the occasional comments of the Lady Wu, mother to Sun Ce and Sun Quan.¹²⁵ Sometimes, however, the women take a more active role, as did the widow of Sun Yi when she planned and executed revenge against his assassins.¹²⁶ Though very little is told of her, Sun Quan's sister, married for a time to Liu Bei, was a woman with considerable force of personality,¹²⁷ and we may also consider Sun Luban, eldest daughter of Sun Quan and wife of Quan Zong, who played a remarkable role in politics at court. She helped to engineer the dismissal of Sun He as Heir-Apparent, she became the mistress of the chief minister Sun Jun, and she was heavily involved in plans for the overthrow of Sun Jun's successor Sun Lin.¹²⁸ During the Han, though the imperial harem was generally less a haven of sensuality than a centre of desperate political ambition, the roles of women were circumscribed, and the patterns of their conduct were quite strictly laid down. By contrast, if the turmoil of the Three Kingdoms period gave opportunity for men of talent, there was also, unusually in traditional China, some room as well for women of enterprise and spirit.

On the other hand, though there were times that military tempers could be soothed or persuaded to listen to calmer counsels, there is little to show that the civil administration of the state was able to establish any real control. Perhaps the decisive example of this institutional weakness may be seen in the case of Zhang Wen and his associates soon after the establishment of the kingdom.

Zhang Wen was a man from Wu commandery, son of a clerical officer under Sun Quan.¹²⁹ He was soon recognised as a scholar and a man of the most upright morality, he was highly praised by the senior civilian officials Zhang Zhao, Gu Yong and Liu Ji, and he was admired by Zhuge Liang. In 224 he was sent on embassy to Shu, to reassure them that Sun Quan's negotiations with Cao Pi of Wei were not an indication of any lack of support for the alliance, but rather compelled by force of circumstances. Zhang Wen carried out the mission with success, but word came back to Sun Quan of the flattering terms with which he addressed the court of Shu, and Sun Quan was not entirely pleased.

¹²⁴ On such tactics, see above at note 69.

¹²⁵ As, for example, her appeals to Sun Ce to spare Wang Sheng and later Gan Ji in Chapter 3; and her reported encouragement to Sun Quan to defy Cao Cao in 208: note 21 to Chapter 4.

¹²⁶ See Chapter 4.

¹²⁷ See note 8 to Chapter 5.

¹²⁸ See note 112 above.

¹²⁹ The biography of Zhang Wen is in *SGZ* 57/Wu 12, 1329-33.

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Then, however, Zhang Wen took responsibility for recommending his fellow-countryman Ji Yan to be in charge of personnel.¹³⁰ Ji Yan, it appears, was a strict man, and he insisted on judging and demoting those who had done wrong. He was increasingly criticised, and several colleagues warned Zhang Wen against such a rigid policy. Lu Mao and Zhu Ju argued that:

... the monarchy has just lately been established, ... and this is the occasion one should give men employment ... by overlooking their faults. If we distinguish between good and bad ... and emphasise regular monthly criticism ... we would certainly improve custom and display a brilliant example. Unfortunately, however, such a program is not easily put into practice. It would be better to emulate the overflowing love of Confucius in ancient times, and follow the example of tolerance which was shown by Guo Tai in more recent days.¹³¹

The message was clear: it was not acceptable that strict standards of morality should be applied to the government of Wu. When Ji Yan ignored the warnings, and Zhang Wen failed to keep him in order, the trouble came to a head. Ji Yan was ordered to commit suicide, and Zhang Wen was reprimanded and dismissed. As Zhuge Liang is said to have remarked when he learnt of the crisis, "He sought to distinguish too sharply between good and bad."¹³² On such a precedent, there was no incentive to exercise censorial power, nor any serious supervision over practice of government.

As Hsü Cho-yün has remarked, the rival states came of different origins. The government of Wei established by Cao Cao can be considered as a reconstruction of the imperial tradition in north China. The state of Shu-Han was based upon the take-over, through coup d'état, of the local government in Yi province, and it too represented the expectations of Han tradition, though on a smaller, regional, scale. The military enterprise of Wu, however, was built from nothing but the success and expansion of a warlord state. Where Cao Cao and Liu Bei may be said to have subverted the government institutions of Han, Sun Ce and Sun Quan achieved their power by replacing them with a new regime of their own. Naturally enough, the formalities of the new government paid lip-service to the traditions of the past, but the state of Wu, as Hsü has said, represented a new type of establishment, based upon force.¹³³

So it was no small achievement for Sun Quan, that he maintained authority for more than fifty years over such a collection of energetic, eccentric and frequently brutal individualists. The fourth-century commentator Sun Sheng disapproved of the usurpers of Wu, and looked with satisfaction at their eventual failure, but he did appreciate and recognise Sun Quan's personal qualities:¹³⁴

If we look at the way Sun Quan cared for his men, he inclined his heart and he gave his utmost consideration in order to obtain their strength even unto death. He wept for Zhou Tai's injuries,¹³⁵ he put the concubine into the grave with Chen Wu,¹³⁶ he

¹³⁰ The texts vary slightly, but it seems that Ji Yan became a member of the Masters of Writing, the imperial secretariat, with particular responsibility for selection of officials. The story appears in *SGZ 57/Wu 12*, 1330, *SGZ 57/Wu 12*, 1337, *SGZ 57/Wu 12*, 1340; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 167-168 and 175-179.

¹³¹ *SGZ 57/Wu 12*, 1337; cf. Fang, *Chronicle I*, 167. Guo Tai was a celebrated judge of character and capacity during the 160s: his biography is in *HHS 68/58*, 2225-31.

¹³² *SGZ 57/Wu 12*, 1333-34 PC quoting *Kuaiji dianlu*; Fang, *Chronicle I*, 167-168 and 175-179.

¹³³ Hsü [1967], 200.

¹³⁴ *SGZ 55/Wu 10*, 1297-98 PC note 1 *bis* quoting Sun Sheng (appended to the account of Ling Tong's two sons as cited in note 83 above).

¹³⁵ See note 23 to Chapter 7.

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prayed for the life of Lū Meng,¹³⁷ and he cared for the sons of Ling Tong: this was how he encouraged the resolve of his followers.

For this reason, though there was little to be said of his authority or his political virtue, his personal sense of affection so touched the people that he was able to keep Jing [province] and [the region of] Wu under his control, and that is why he was able to maintain his unlawful power for so long.

In the light of this background, however, it is not entirely surprising that the literary and scholarly achievement of the state of Wu compares rather poorly with that of the state of Wei under Cao Cao and his successors. Certainly, we are told that southern scholars such as Zhang Hong and Gu Yong were respected by expert critics, men such as Yu Fan and Xue Zong composed works of quality, and Sun Hao, last ruler of Wu, was a competent lyricist - but this cannot be compared to the galaxy of talent in the north. Cao Cao himself and his son Cao Pi were poets of ability, Cao Zhi, younger brother of Cao Pi, was one of the greatest in Chinese history, and they were supported by Wang Can and his colleagues, the so-called Seven Masters of the Jian'an period, followed by Ruan Ji, Xi Kang and the other Sages of the Bamboo Grove.¹³⁸ Similarly, in philosophy, though men of Wu wrote essays and commentary on the Confucian classics, including particularly the Book of Changes, and on classical Taoism, there was nothing to match the works of Zhongchang Tong, Xu Gan, Xun Yue and the remarkable Wang Bi and He Yan, combining Confucianism and Taoism in the Study of the Mysteries.¹³⁹

There is, however, one exception to the unfavourable comparison. Lu Ji and to Lu Yun, grandsons of the general Lu Xun, were both less than twenty years old at the time of the conquest of Wu by Jin, but both achieved distinction in the north.¹⁴⁰ In particular, Lu Ji was one of the leading composers of rhapsodies and lyric poetry in his day, and he was celebrated also for his "Rhapsody on Literature," a masterpiece of systematic criticism, and for commentaries to the classics.¹⁴¹ He is commonly classified as a writer of the Western Jin, and his works were indeed composed in the last years of the third century, but by background and youthful training he may be equally regarded as representative of a last flowering in the literary culture of Wu.

And in another field of scholarship, mathematics and astronomy, the men of Wu had a leading role. We have discussed the calculations of the independent calendar established by Sun Quan, and noted the contribution of scholars from the southeast such as Wang Fan and Lu Ji, the son of Lu Kang, who was compared to the great Zhang Heng of Later Han

¹³⁶ See Chapter 6 at note 33.

¹³⁷ See Chapter 6 at note 70.

¹³⁸ On Wang Can, see Chapter 4, and on the Seven Masters and the Cao family, see for example Miao, *Early Medieval Chinese Poetry*, and Frodsham, *Anthology*, 26-32.

On Ruan Ji, Xi Kang and their colleagues, see Holzman, "Les sept sages," *Vie et pensée*, and *Poetry and Politics*.

The poetry of Wu is collected in *Quan Han Sanguo Jin nanbeichao shi* 6.

¹³⁹ On the philosophy of this period, see for example *Cambridge Han*, 682 and 715 [Loewe, "The Religious and Intellectual Background"], 804-806 [Ch'en, "Confucian, Legalist and Taoist Thought in Later Han"], and 829-832 [Demiéville, "Philosophy and Religion from Han to Sui"].

"Study of the Mysteries" is Demiéville's rendering of the Chinese term *xuanxue*, and he observes that there were three "mysteries," the *Laozi*, the *Zhuangzi*, and the *Book of Changes* with its appendices.

¹⁴⁰ See note 101 above.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Frodsham, *Anthology*, 89-91, and Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 38, who observes that "If the size of his *Wen xuan* corpus means anything, Lu Ji was one of Xiao Tong's favourite poets. His fifty-two poems make up the largest *shi* selection in the anthology."

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and who, in similar fashion, constructed a working armillary sphere.¹⁴² There are frequent references in later texts to scholars of the imperial observatory of Wu, and Chen Zhuo, who had been chief of the observatory just before the conquest, repeated the lost work of the great Zhang Heng of Later Han and compiled a definitive map of the constellations at the beginning of the fourth century.¹⁴³ Though the men of Wu were perhaps no more than competent in traditional philosophy and letters, they could claim distinction in other branches of knowledge.

When Sun Quan appointed his eldest son Sun Deng as Heir-Apparent to the kingdom in 222, he arranged that he would have young men of good quality about him as personal friends and companions. The first chosen were Zhuge Ke, son of Zhuge Jin, Zhang Xiu, son of Zhang Zhao, Gu Tan the grandson of Gu Yong, and Chen Biao the son of Chen Wu. As Sun Deng grew up, this policy developed further, and a coterie of scholars was gathered about his personal court. According to later Buddhist texts, the translator Zhi Qian was recognised by Sun Quan as a man of wide learning and was attached to this group as an instructor to the Heir-Apparent.¹⁴⁴ Zhi Qian was a layman, not qualified to take up formal missionary activity, but his work of translation was not matched in south China until the end of the following century.

There was some knowledge and acceptance of Buddhism in China from at least the first century AD, and it seems very likely there was a Buddhist community in the area of the lower Yangzi. Liu Ying, King of Chu, had been recorded as a patron, we have observed the unfortunate case of the energetic but untrustworthy Zhai Rong,¹⁴⁵ and we are told that Zhi Qian worked on Buddhist scriptures that he found in that region, probably at Jianye itself.

In his study of the *Buddhist Conquest of China*, Zürcher gives some credence to the story of Zhi Qian's connection to the court of Sun Quan,¹⁴⁶ and he notes that Sun Quan's patronage represented an important development in the acceptance of Buddhism in China. In the north, during the second century AD, Emperor Huan of Han had sought to establish himself as a patron of Buddhism, but the official worship was confused with that of the Huang-Lao sect, and Buddhism at Luoyang remained on the margins of intellectual interest.¹⁴⁷ Concepts of Buddhism were influential in the philosophy of the gentry at the court of Wei, but their chief concern was given to the synthesis of Confucianism and Taoism which reached its fullest expression in the Study of the Mysteries.¹⁴⁸ Contact with the imperial family of Wu, and the support which was given to the work of

¹⁴² See, for example, Needham, *Science and Civilisation* III, 359 and 386, and also note 69 to Chapter 7.

Lu Ji the mathematician, son of Lu Kang, must be distinguished from his cousin thrice removed, the scholar and writer Lu Ji, who was a grandson of Lu Xun.

¹⁴³ See, for example, Needham, *Science and Civilisation* III, 264 and 387, also 100, 200, and 384-385.

¹⁴⁴ The biography of Zhi Qian is in *Gaoseng zhuan*, "Lives of Eminent Monks," 1, combined with that of Kang Senghui; Shih, *Biographies*, 20-31. *Chu sanzang ji ji*, "Collection of Notes concerning the Translation of the Tripitika," 13, has a more expansive account. See Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 49-50 and II, 335 notes 125 and 129.

¹⁴⁵ On Buddhism in Later Han, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 18-43. On Zhai Rong, see also note 22 to Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁶ On Buddhism in the Three Kingdoms period, particularly in the state of Wu, see Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 46-55.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 36-40, de Crespigny, "Politics and Philosophy," 72-75.

¹⁴⁸ See note 146 above, also Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 46.

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translation and exposition, meant that the doctrine was presented in coherent form for the contemplation and comprehension of a Chinese elite.

The leading figure in this process was the celebrated monk Kang Senghui, who came to the court of Sun Quan in 247. Though he traced his ancestry to Sogdiana, by present-day Samarkand, we are told that his family had been living for generations in India, and Kang Senghui was born in Jiaozhi commandery by present-day Hanoi. He joined the Buddhist order in his teens, and he acquired a good Chinese education as well as a knowledge of Sanskrit and the Tripitika. Under Kang Senghui's influence, and despite some later vicissitudes due to the hostility of Sun Lin and possibly of Sun Hao, the Buddhist church expanded its presence, and the Jianchu monastery was established and maintained under imperial patronage.¹⁴⁹

Despite his brother Sun Ce's fatal quarrel with Gan Ji, Sun Quan was seriously interested in metaphysical speculation, and his patronage of Kang Senghui may be seen as parallel to his cultivation of Taoist teachers and magicians. We have noted the influence of the diviner Wu Fan, and it may be observed that Yu Fan had been exiled from court because he made fun of Sun Quan and Zhang Zhao discussing questions of immortality.¹⁵⁰ In 241, even as Sun Deng was on his death-bed, he encouraged his father to maintain cultivation of the doctrines of Huang-Lao, and towards the end of his reign Sun Quan was impressed by the spiritual Wang Biao, who persuaded him to change the reign title in 251 to Taiyuan "Grand Origin," no doubt in hope of a revival of the state, and an extension of his own life.¹⁵¹

And finally we may consider the physical achievement of Sun Quan: the new capital of Jianye, founded upon ancient Moling. In the north there were the three great cities of Wei: Luoyang, Ye and Xuchang, each adorned and embellished by Cao Cao and his successors. In the west there was the old-established city of Chengdu. In culture and splendour, however, Jianye could rival each of these.

When Zuo Si of Jin composed his "Three Capitals Rhapsodies" at the end of the third century, he claimed in his Preface to have taken particular care that his descriptions of the regions and the metropolises of the three states should be true and accurate. He consulted maps and gazetteers, local custom and ancient tradition, and he rejected the hyperbole which his predecessors Sima Xiangru, Ban Gu and Zhang Heng had shown, introducing impossible plants and imaginary creatures into their romantic accounts of hunting parks, palaces and cities. So his "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu," one section of the Three Capitals Rhapsodies, should present a true picture, albeit enhanced, of Jianye and its imperial state, composed by a late contemporary.¹⁵² From his work, therefore, we may read how:

¹⁴⁹ Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 52. As Zürcher observes, one must be careful in accepting too much of the hagiography maintained in such stories, some of which claim even that Sun Quan was converted to Buddhism: *Buddhist Conquest* I, 278. It would seem, however, that the growth of Buddhism under the empire of Wu is well enough established.

Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* II, 335 note 129 notes a Buddhist tradition that the Lady Pan, mother of Sun Liang who became empress of Sun Quan, demonstrated her support of the doctrine by establishing a monastery at Wuchang in 229; there is, however, no early support for this statement.

¹⁵⁰ See above at note 95.

¹⁵¹ *SGZ* 59/Wu 14, 1365, and *SGZ* 47/Wu 2, 1148, discussed by Zürcher, *Buddhist Conquest* I, 53.

¹⁵² The biography of Zuo Si is in *JS* 92, 2375-77, and is summarised by Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 483-484. Zuo Si was born at Linzi in Qi, near present-day Linzi in Shandong, in 250 and he died about 305. Soon after the Rhapsodies were completed, at the end of the third century, commentaries were compiled for each of the sections: that for "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu" was written by the scholar Liu Kui.

CHAPTER EIGHT

They formed jasper and carnelian into terraces and chambers.
High gateways tower upward;
Through door after door chariots run side by side.
Vermeil watchtowers stand in pairs;
The imperial highway is as smooth as a whetstone.
Where it is planted with pagoda trees,
Crossed by clear streams,
Dark shade hangs heavy and thick,
A limpid current flows slow and easy.
Seven *li* of official stations all in a row
Are packed ridgepole to ridgepole along the southern road.
Military camps are arrayed like the teeth of a comb;
Offices and bureaus are scattered like chess-pieces,
At Hengtang and Chaxia,
The city houses are lavish and grand.
The Changgan settlements stretch long and far,
With soaring eaves adjoined one to another.¹⁵³

And how in the markets:

Merchants and pedlars huddle shoulder to shoulder.
Garbed in ramie and kudzu cloth,
Chaotically congested, they are massed and crowded together.
Light chariots, under slack rein, pass through the market streets;
Storied boats, sails unfurled, pass by the waterfront stalls,
Fruits and cloth gather here in ever constant supply;
Imported from afar are cone shells and glass.¹⁵⁴

Despite its pretensions, the imperial state of Wu was a limited and brittle structure. For the time it lasted, however, it was a splendid achievement, and we may fairly praise the manner in which Sun Quan pursued his opportunities, with imagination, taste and skill. He was a patron of the arts and of scholarship, the city of Jianye was his creation, and within his lifetime it became one of the great metropolises of China. Through the conquest of the far south and the control of overseas trade which accompanied that achievement, Sun Quan had access to the exotic riches of southeast Asia, and his state gained wealth as middle-man for the north.

In longer terms, the settlement of Chinese people and their culture in the south, already commenced during the Han period, was confirmed and expanded under Wu. In later times, from the fourth century to the sixth, while the north lay under the political control and cultural influence of alien occupation, the lands south of the Yangzi continued a Chinese tradition. In that respect particularly, Sun Quan deserves great credit. He inherited a provincial warlord state, he developed it to a centre of culture and power, and he laid new foundations for the future of China.

The "Three Capitals Rhapsodies" appear in *Wen xuan* 4-6, 865-1481. The Preface to Zuo Si's work [4, 865-79] is translated by Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 337-341. "Rhapsody on the Capital of Wu" [5, 1021-1258] is most elegantly rendered by Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 373-427.

¹⁵³ From Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 399.

¹⁵⁴ Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 401-403.