

A GOVERNMENT IN VERSE:
BUREAUCRATIC AESTHETICS AND VOICE
IN HAN AND POST-HAN ADMONITIONS (*ZHEN* 箴)

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In mid-Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220 CE), the “admonition” (*zhen* 箴) began to emerge as a recognized form of verse, with several prominent men at court writing admonitions, eventually included in a 2nd century CE compilation entitled *Bai guan zhen* 百官箴 (*Admonition of the Many Offices*).¹ Almost invariably, however, the admonitions received a much more ancient pedigree. The *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (*The Literary Mind and Carved Dragons*; ca. early 6th century CE), for instance, following many statements from earlier texts, located the origins of the admonitions in high antiquity:

斯文之興，盛于三代。夏商二箴，餘句頗存。周之辛甲，百官箴闕，唯虞箴一篇，體義備焉。

This literature rose and flourished during the Three Dynasties. As for the admonitions of the Xia and the Shang, some spare verses are still to a certain extent preserved. With Xin Jia of Zhou, the many offices offered admonitions of [the king’s] faults, but only with the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” (*Yu zhen* 虞箴) were the proper standards of the form complete.²

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1 There is no obvious line between the admonitions as a particular form of verse, the subject of this article, and wider practices of remonstrance and critique in the early imperial court, partly because early sources use the same rhetoric to describe the function of both. The problem, addressed only obliquely in this article, is complicated and merits a separate study (for the pre-imperial period, see Schaberg 1997). Notwithstanding statements about the purpose of the admonitions, however, it is worth noting that no clear evidence shows authors of admonitions submitting their verses to the throne, in the same way that officials submitted remonstrative memorials to the throne to critique court policies or actions. Rather, the admonitions seem to have circulated among officials at court, as suggested not least by descriptions of the compilation of the *Bai guan zhen* during the Eastern Han (see below). Perhaps rulers read them, but probably not because they were submitted through official bureaucratic channels (for which see Giele 2006).

2 “Ming zhen” 銘箴, *Wenxin diaolong* 3.11, 477. The text follows the Tang-period Dunhuang manuscript, which matches a citation in the *Taiping yulan* (984 CE).

Continuing its narrative, the *Wenxin diaolong* states that the admonitions were cut off and abandoned during the Warring States (Zhanguo 戰國; 475–222 BCE). By late Western Han 西漢 (206 BCE–9 CE), however, the influential exegete and polymath Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53–18 BCE) “started with the model of the ‘Admonition of the the Overseer Hunts’” (始范虞箴) and composed a body of twenty-five admonitions. Then, a trio of Eastern Han 東漢 (25–220 CE) writers further “supplemented and composed” (補綴), producing a compilation of verses “collectively entitled [*Admonitions of the*] *Many Offices*” (總稱百官). According to the *Wenxin diaolong*, the text “was a work that captured Xin Jia for later dynasties” (攀辛甲于后代者也). These writers included Cui Yin 崔駟 (d. 92 CE), his son Cui Yuan 崔瑗 (77/78–142/143), and Hu Guang 胡廣 (91–172 CE), all of them prominent and influential men of letters during Eastern Han.³

The poems included in the *Bai guan zhen* compilation earned praise for using “language of high erudition and beauty” (文甚典美).⁴ After the collapse of Eastern Han, post-Han poets continued to write admonitions, and the genre never entirely disappeared, with authors composing admonitions through the Qing 清 (1644–1911) period.⁵ Despite its evident importance, the form in general, and the *Bai guan zhen* in particular, has been almost entirely neglected in modern secondary works, particularly scholarship written in English.⁶ As always, no doubt a primary reason for this scholarly lacuna is the fragmentary nature of the evidence. The full text of the *Bai guan zhen* is lost. Most of its ad-

3 The *Wenxin diaolong* does not mention Liu Taotu 劉騶騶 (fl. ca. 110–125), who according to a fuller account of the *Bai guan zhen* in the *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 also contributed poems to the text. See *Hou Hanshu* 80.1511.

4 *Ibid.*

5 For a synopsis of the major works, see Cao Dan and Zhang Enpu 2013, 76.

6 I am unaware of any detailed studies of the admonitions in English. No entries on the genre appear in Knechtges and Chang 2010–2014. The admonitions attributed to Han-period authors have been especially neglected. Based on a survey of scholarship databases, articles in Chinese on early admonitions are not numerous; usually they receive a short treatment in larger studies of Six Dynasties literature. See, however, the article by Cao Dan and Zhang Enpu cited above (n. 5) as well as Pei Chuanyong 1999 and 2000, and An Zuozhang 1998. Among Han admonitions, Yang Xiong’s have received the greatest attention, usually as annotated versions in larger collections of Yang’s work. See Zhang Zhenze 1993; Zheng Wen 2000, 280–305; Lin Zhen’ai 2001, 237–308. Zheng Wen’s annotations are the most detailed and valuable, not least because he includes explanations by the southern Song 宋 commentator Zhang Qiao 章樵 from Zhang’s commentary (ca. 1228–1233) to the *Gu wen yuan* 古文苑. Satō Tatsurō 佐藤達郎 has completed the most thorough study of Yang’s admonitions, published as a series of four articles which also include analysis of the Eastern Han office admonitions. Satō, however, did not include Yang’s admonitions of the Regional Commissioners (see below).

monitions have been transmitted only via collectanea (*lei shu* 類書) compiled centuries after the authors composed their verses. As a result, we often cannot be certain about authorial attributions, and many of our extant admonitions are marred by severe textual corruption.⁷ The terse and difficult language of the poems compounds such interpretive difficulties. Written in tetrasyllabic verse, and chock full of archaic terms, quotes from classical texts, and ponderous historical references, the admonitions make for slow reading. Meanwhile, compared to other, perhaps livelier subjects that have typically attracted scholarly attention (landscapes, the natural world, material items, famous events and figures, and so on), the government offices that comprise the primary subject matter of the poems are hard-pressed to avoid seeming dull.

Those studies that do exist have posited a shift from Han to post-Han times, when according to some critics the verses supposedly transformed from “office admonitions” (*guan zhen*) to “personal admonitions” (*si zhen* 私箴).⁸ According to this narrative, whereas Han and pre-Han admonitions offered critiques of the ruler based on the official duties of a particular office, in the post-Han period writers were comparatively unconcerned with the ruler, writing instead “self-admonitions” (*zi zhen* 自箴), a phrase lifted from Fu Xian’s 傅咸 (239–294) preface to his “Admonition on the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor” (*Yu shi zhong cheng zhen* 御史中丞箴) (see below). In a slightly different interpretation, Qian Zhongshu 錢鐘書 (1910–1998) characterized this change as a shift from “office admonitions” to “admonitions of offices” (*zhen guan* 箴官), with poems starting to focus on critiquing the offices and their incumbents. Combining observations by different writers, Qian provided one explanation for this change: since in the post-Han period there was no longer a large gap in status between officials and emperors, the former could explore new modes of poetic expression that had little to do with rulers.⁹

While Qian’s narrative avoids the anachronistic term “personal admonitions” (*si zhen*) and provides a helpful framework for understanding the development of the admonitions, his attempt to link institutional changes to shifts in literary form is not fully

7 Of course, the same could be said of most pre-Song literature. By this author’s count, Yan Kejun 嚴可均 (1762–1843) included more than sixty admonitions from various collectanea in his compilation of Han and Six Dynasties writing. Most collectanea quote the admonitions, often only excerpts, in sections about offices. They thus cited the admonitions not necessarily for their aesthetic worth, but as supplementary sources of information regarding the history and duties of individual offices.

8 The late Ming scholar Xu Shizeng 徐師曾 (1517–1580), in his *Wen ti ming bian xu shuo* 文體明辨序說 provided an early articulation of this idea. See Xu Shizheng and Luo Genze 1962, 141. My discussion here draws upon Cao Dan and Zhang Enpu 2013, 74.

9 See Qian Zhongshu 1979, 964. Qian cited interpretations from Ye Shi 葉適 (1150–1223) and Guang Congxie 光聰諧 (active 1839).

convincing: as Michael Loewe has shown, for instance, the “personal powers of the emperor” were in decline long before the post-Han period.¹⁰ Moreover, by lumping together the pre-imperial and early imperial eras, Qian ignored significant transformations in government, rhetoric, learning, and literary production that unfolded over the centuries of the Western and Eastern Han periods. Many of these transformations occurred in the final decades of Western Han, precisely the period when Yang Xiong composed his admonitions.¹¹ As the *Wenxin diaolong* passage above states, Yang Xiong does seem to have modeled his verses on “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts. This essay starts, however, by noting that Yang actually departed substantially from “Overseer,” since he focused not only on criticizing the ruler but also on tracing the history and duties of individual offices and presenting an overall model of effective government. Yang’s poems thus preserve a place for the ruler: even if faded into the background, he is still present as head of government, the one ultimately responsible for all appointments. Some of the Eastern Han admonitions by the Cui men and Hu Guang, however, move further away from the ruler, who in their verses seems to have almost vanished, even from the background.

By the time Fu Xian wrote “Admonition of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor,” this trend had gone further, with the admonitions becoming less concerned with the particular histories and duties of the offices that were their putative subject. Not long after, and perhaps in response, Pan Ni 潘尼 (ca. 250–311) wrote an “Admonition of the Emperor” (*Cheng yu zhen* 乘輿箴) in a self-professed effort to reorient the genre back toward what he emphasized was its proper admonitory object: the ruler. Rather than actually critiquing the ruler, however, Pan Ni ventriloquized the imperial throne, in the same way that his predecessor poets ventriloquized bureaucratic offices. Through close readings of all of these verses, then, this article charts nuanced rhetorical shifts in the tradition over the course of the early imperial and post-imperial periods: the admonitions moved from outlining an ideal model of government (Yang Xiong), to articulating an official voice increasingly untethered from actual bureaucratic practice (the Cui men, Hu Guang, and eventually Fu Xian), to reasserting the ruler’s importance (Pan Ni) in a way that still borrowed from the valorization of office-holding that was central to the genre. While the decline of the ruler and the concomitant rise of the official provides one common narrative of early imperial history, the admonitions allow us to trace a much subtler cultural history of officialdom in a changing institutional context. The rise of the admonitions provided not just more possibilities for critique, but also for careful displays of erudition and assertions of status in the tense and potentially dangerous arenas of the Han and post-Han imperial courts.

10 Loewe 1994, 86.

11 For perspectives on the institutional, social, and intellectual transformations of late Western Han, see the essays assembled in Nylan and Vankeerberghen 2015.

The Model: “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts”

While the *Wenxin diaolong* claimed that the admonition arose in high antiquity, it also states the form was only resurrected when Yang Xiong used an “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” as a model for his verses. Other early accounts of the admonitions make the same claim.¹² What was this admonition and why might Yang Xiong have appreciated it? The *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (comp. late 4th century BCE?) includes a verse entitled “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” (called *Yu ren zhi zhen* 虞人之箴 and *Yu zhen* 虞箴).¹³ Yang Xiong possibly encountered “Overseer of Hunts” outside of the *Zuozhuan*, but some people, perhaps as early as Eastern Han, already assumed he read it in the *Zuozhuan* (see below). Regardless, in the *Zuozhuan* the admonition is embedded in a much longer speech, given by Wei Jiang 魏絳 to the lord of Jin 晉.¹⁴ In the speech, Wei warns the lord against a preemptory attack on the Shanrong 山戎 by referring to the cautionary example of Hou Yi 后羿, a legendary ancient Xia 夏 minister who indulged in hunting after he deposed the Xia ruler. According to Wei, a cunning minister subsequently murdered Hou Yi, and the Xia ruling line was restored only when another group defeated the murdering minister’s sons. After completing the story, Wei Jiang recites the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts,” which also invokes the cautionary tale of Hou Yi:

虞人箴	Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts
芒芒禹迹	Vast and far-reaching were Yu’s tracks!
畫為九州	He demarcated the nine provinces,
經啟九道	Laid out and opened up the nine paths.
民有寢廟	People had their coffin chambers and shrines,
獸有茂草	Beasts had their luxurious grasses.
各有攸處	Each had their proper abodes,
德用不擾	Their essential qualities thereby not disordered.
在帝夷羿	When Hou Yi was ruler,
冒于原獸	He rushed out to the beasts of the plains,
忘其國恤	Forgetting the concerns of state,
而思其麀牡	He thought only of does and stags.
武不可重	The martial must not be emphasized,
用不悛于夏家	His government was not more exalted than the house of Xia. ¹⁵
獸臣司原	The manager of beasts, in charge of the plains,
敢告僕夫	Dares to notify the groom. ¹⁶

12 E.g., *Hanshu* 87b.3583; *Hou Hanshu* 44.1511.

13 *Zuozhuan* Xiang 4.7; Yang Bojun 1981 (2009), 3.938–939; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 3.917–919.

14 *Zuozhuan* Xiang 4.7; Yang Bojun 1981 (2009), 3.936–939; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 3.915–919.

15 Durrant, et. al. 2016 translated this line as “the Xia patrimony abjured greatness” (3.919).

The poem opens with grand praise for the legendary sage king Yu (using phrases from the *Shijing* 詩經¹⁷), before moving on to three rhymed couplets that build upon the opening encomium. They describe a perfect spatial division between humans and animals, with a corresponding functional division (people in settled areas making offerings at their shrines, animals sleeping and eating in their “luxurious grasses”), all the result of Yu’s demarcation of the nine provinces. The next couplets go on to describe the destructive actions of Hou Yi, who transgressed Yu’s boundaries when he “rushed out to the beasts of the plains.” In so doing, Hou Yi neglected state duties back in the human realm of his court. This inappropriate obsession with hunting ultimately brought about his destruction. By citing “Overseer of Hunts” in his *Zuozhuan* speech, then, Wei Jiang underscored his criticism of the martial instincts of the Jin lord.

Wei Jiang did not cite the admonition alone, but also highlighted the circumstances under which the poem was composed. According to Wei, “Overseer of Hunts” was composed not during the time of the legendary Hou Yi and the Xia, but much later: the waning days of the Shang 商 (traditionally 1600–1050 BCE). During that time, Wei Jiang states, a minister named Xin Jia 辛甲 “commanded the many officials, according to the duties of their offices, to admonish the king’s faults” (命百官，官箴王闕).¹⁸ The admonition, then, was in theory a critique of the Shang king, drawing upon the older story of Hou Yi and the Xia. As David Schaberg rightly noted, the end result is the literary equivalent of a Russian doll, with the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts,” directed against the last Shang king, and Wei Jiang’s speech, directed against the lord of Jin, together forming “a nested structure of citation and admonition.”¹⁹ This structure is perhaps even more complex than Schaberg allowed, for the *Zuozhuan* explicitly states that Xin Jia did not compose the poem. Rather, he ordered officials to compose verses offering cri-

16 *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang 4.7; Yang 1981, 3.936; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 3.919.

17 Two *Shijing* poems, “Xuan niao” 玄鳥 (#303) and “Chang fa” 長發 (#304), contain the phrase “vast and far-reaching” (*mangmang* 茫茫). In “Chang fa,” *mangmang* describes the floodwaters before Yu “disposed” (*fu* 敷) of the land. See Waley and Allen 1996, 320–322.

18 *Zuozhuan* Lord Xiang 4.7; Yang Bojun 1981 (2009), 3.938; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 3.917. A fragment of the *Bie lu* 別錄 (Records in Separate Categories) by Liu Xiang 劉向 (79/78–8 BCE), cited in Pei Yin’s 裴駰 (5th century CE) commentary to the *Shiji* 史記, states that Xin Jia remonstrated to the last Shang king seventy-five times, to no avail. He finally fled to the Zhou 周, where King Wen 文王 endowed him with a title and fief, on the recommendation of Lord Shao 召公 (*Shiji* 4.116). The “Treatise on Arts and Letters” (Yiwen zhi 藝文志) in the *Hanshu* 漢書, under the “Dao jia” 道家 section, lists a text entitled *Xin Jia* 辛甲 in 29 *pian* 篇 (*Hanshu* 30.1729). Yang Xiong possibly encountered “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” in that text, rather than in the *Zuozhuan*, as some later commentators assumed.

19 Schaberg 1997, 154.

tiques that were rooted in their duties, with the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” being just one of the resulting poems. It is no small matter, then, that the critique of the Shang king’s indulgence in hunting is offered by the “Overseer” who managed those hunts. As much as the poem’s actual content, the circumstances under which the verses were composed are just as rhetorically central to its admonitory message (not to mention Wei Jiang’s speech): the most proper admonitions are those offered against specific behaviors that fall within the province of the officials giving the critique. Far from a one-off criticism, the admonition is rooted in a larger structure of government and divisions of bureaucratic duties.

The final line, “dares to notify the groom” (*gan gao pu fu* 敢告僕夫), is no less rhetorically important, since it suggests that the poetic voice behind the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” was not speaking directly to the Shang ruler. “Dare to notify” is a phrase found in received and excavated texts alike. In his *Zuozhuan* commentary, Du Yu 杜預 (222–281) stated that the “dare to notify” line at the end of the poem was directed to the groom because the Overseer of Hunts “did not dare to censure the exalted” (*bu gan chi zun* 不敢斥尊).²⁰ For Du Yu, then, the groom served as a proxy for the ruler, who could not be addressed directly in such a manner. The precise nature of this “groom” (*pu fu*), is not apparent, though references to “grooms” in other early texts suggest that it could be interpreted as a specific office,²¹ in contrast to the pattern in many of the Han admonitions analyzed below.

Du Yu’s interpretation notwithstanding, the “dare to notify” statement at the end of “Overseer of Hunts” is ambiguous. True, several *Zuozhuan* stories would tend to support Du, since they depict people using the phrase “dare to notify” in order to signal their lower status (whether actual or for calculated rhetorical effect) vis-à-vis a higher-ranked interlocutor, including a ruler.²² In other cases, however, the various lords (*zhu hou* 諸侯) use

20 *Shisan jing zhushu (biao dian ben)* [hereafter, *SSJZS-BDB*], 7-2.840. Note that this explanation resurfaces in Pan Ni’s preface to his admonition (see below).

21 “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” provides the only mention of a “groom” in the entire *Zuozhuan*. Whether or not we should understand the groom to be under the direction of the “Overseer,” another official, or directly under the ruler himself, remains unclear. The *Shijing* poem “Chu ju” 出車 (#168) refers to grooms loading up the chariots of a nobleman after the Son of Heaven issues an order demanding assistance in the construction of a military fort (see Waley and Allen 1996, 141–142). The “Xia guan” 夏官 section of the *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*) lists a groom as one of the officials serving in the royal stables. See *SSJZS-BDB*, 4-2.859.

22 For instance, during the battle of An 鞏 between Qi 齊 and Jin 晉, when the Jin commander Han Jue 韓厥 apprehends a chariot that he believes to be carrying the prince (*hou* 侯) of Qi, he shows exceeding deference, concluding with: 臣辱戎士，敢告不敏，攝官承乏 “unworthy to be a warrior, I dare to notify (*gan gao*) you that I lack ability, as I provisionally take

“dare to notify” as a stock phrase in official announcements to other nobles.²³ A full discussion of “dare to notify” must remain outside the bounds of this essay, but evidence from excavated texts and the *Hanshu* indicate that the phrase was commonly used in bureaucratic communications between relatively higher ranked officials (e.g. commandery governors, county magistrates) of comparable salary grade.²⁴ As a statement used in official documents and statements, then, “dare to notify” could demonstrate shared membership within a status group while simultaneously indicating respect and, at times, subservience. In “Overseer of Hunts,” the phrase “dare to notify” humbly directed the poem’s critique toward the ruler, but in a manner that displayed membership within elite levels of government. As we will see, this interplay between displays of deference and claims of status became central to the aesthetics of the admonitions.

up duties to attend you and offer inadequate service.” The irony is that the prince has already escaped the chariot, so the elaborate politesse, complete with a “dare to notify” statement, that Han Jue shows to his vanished royal prisoner is all for naught. See *Zuozhuan* Lord Cheng 2.3; Yang 1981, 2.794; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 2.719.

- 23 After Lord Hui of Qi 齊惠公 died and his favorite Cui Zhu 崔杼 was expelled from Qi, the *Zuozhuan* states that when a high official left a realm, the ruler of that realm would send a supposedly standard statement to fellow lords (*zhu hou*): 某氏之守臣某，失守宗廟，敢告。“The so-and-so keeper and subject of the so-and-so lineage lost his stewardship of the Ancestral Temple. We dare to notify you” (*Zuozhuan* Lord Xuan 10.2; Yang 1981, 2.706–707; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 1.631).
- 24 “Dare to notify” thus contrasted with “dare to state this” (*gan yan zhi* 敢言之), a common Han phrase used by subordinate officials submitting statements to officials of higher status or the imperial throne. Excavated administrative documents furthermore show that orders to lower-ranked officials typically used a simple “notify” (*gao* 告) or “inform” (*wei* 謂) (see Su Weiguo 2005; Zhou Shuijie 2014). In 7 BCE, after Aidi 哀帝 (r. 7–1 BCE) acceded to the throne, Wang Jia 王嘉 (d. 2 BCE) submitted a memorial calling for a move away from the tumultuous court politics of the previous emperor, Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE). The memorial praised the careful and measured practices of Xuandi 宣帝 (r. 74–48 BCE). According to Wang, during Xuandi’s reign the Secretariat (Shangshu 尚書) rarely redirected down petitions (*zhang* 章) for criminal investigations, since they were so disruptive. Moreover, when such petitions were sent down, they included the phrase “dare to notify you of this matter” (*gan gao zhi* 敢告之), a surprisingly polite formulation to use for a case against an accused criminal. According to the commentator Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645 CE), such language helped prevent counter-accusations and mutual slandering. See *Hanshu* 86.3491.

Yang Xiong's Admonitions: Officials and Rulers in an Ideal Government

Evidence for Yang Xiong's admonitions in Han sources is extremely limited. His autobiography in the *Hanshu* quotes some of his writings, but does not mention admonitions. They surface only in the autobiography's appraisal, written by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE), who identified the texts inspiring each of Yang's compositions, including his masterworks *Taixuan jing* 太玄經 (*Classic of Supreme Mystery*) and *Fayan* 法言 (*Exemplary Figures*). As Ban Gu put it: "Judging that among admonitions none were finer than the 'Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts,' [Yang] composed the admonitions of the Region[al Commissioners] (箴莫善於虞箴，作州箴).²⁵ Neither the autobiography nor the appraisal mention office admonitions, though most later sources insist that Yang did indeed compose them. We do not know precisely when Yang wrote his poems, though surely it was after arriving at the imperial court around 13 BCE.²⁶ Since the Regional Commissioner admonitions totaled twelve, and a few of his office admonitions adopted hoary office titles (e.g. "Master of Works" [*si kong* 司空]) from classical texts such as the *Zhouli* 周禮 (*Rites of Zhou*), some have argued that Yang composed his admonitions to celebrate the rise of Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE), or at least express support for Wang Mang's classicizing reforms.²⁷ This argument is not entirely convincing, however, and possibly rooted in a bias against Yang dating back to Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), who condemned Yang for supporting the "usurper" Wang Mang. It is just as likely, if not more likely that Yang Xiong wrote the admonitions both as responses to some reforms already completed as early as the reign of Chengdi 成帝 (r. 33–7 BCE) and as prescriptions for further reform and reorganization of Han offices. Such an effort would be entirely in keeping with trends during late Western Han, which saw a growing "love for antiquity" (*hao gu* 好古) trend that transformed the literary and political landscape of the imperial court.²⁸

Certainly such an aim can be detected in the Regional Commissioner admonitions, which betray concerns rather far removed from the actual duties of the commissioners. As is well-known, even in late Western Han the "regions" or "provinces" (*zhou* 州) were

25 *Hanshu* 87b.3583. For the question of whether Yang read "Overseer of Hunts" in the *Zuo-zhuan* or as a separately circulating work, see n.18 above.

26 For a summary of Yang's life, see Nylan 2013, xiii–xviii.

27 See, e.g., Wang Qing 2000, 68. Wang Mang famously adopted office titles from the *Zhouli* and reduced the number of provincial circuits or "regions" (*zhou* 州) from thirteen to twelve (*Hanshu* 99a.4077), the same number of regional commissioner admonitions written by Yang Xiong.

28 Ultimately, this trend culminated in Wang Mang's attempts to recreate purportedly ancient government offices and ritual practices, though earlier reform efforts in the final decades of Western Han had sought similar goals. See, e.g., Tian 2015. For details on *hao gu* in late Western Han, and the critical role of Yang Xiong, see Nylan 2011, 99–129.

already a long-extant scheme of territorial division, one that first emerged during the Warring States period and received administrative expression in Qin 秦 (221–207 BCE) and Western Han. The most important and famous step in the evolution of the provinces came in 106 BCE, when Wudi established “circuits” (*bu* 部), some of them called by their old pre-imperial province names, that were administered by “inspectors” (*cishi* 刺史).²⁹ In 8 BCE, Chengdi re-named the inspectors “regional commissioners” (*zhoumu* 州牧).³⁰ As Rafe de Crespigny has emphasized, the initial charge of the inspectors was rather narrow, being largely limited to monitoring the activities of commandery governors and kingdom administrators.³¹ Yang Xiong’s admonitions, however, reflected a much broader understanding of the regional commissioners and their role, not least because the verses combined descriptions of the regions from the “Yu gong” 禹貢 (Tribute of Yu) chapter of the *Shangshu* 尚書 (*Documents*) with stories of major political events and ruling lineages that occurred over the centuries within provincial borders. The following admonition of Yanzhou 兗州, a region situated along the Yellow River plain that contained the historic heartland of the Shang 商 ruling house, provides an example:

兗州箴	Admonition of Yanzhou ³²
悠悠濟河，	Vast and long are the Ji and Yellow rivers,
兗州之寓。	They are the borders of Yanzhou.

29 *Hanshu* 6.197. Even during the Qin the “provinces” (*zhou*) might have served as a kind of inspectorate unit (see, e.g., *Hanshu* 19a.741). Scholars tend to disagree on whether off-hand mention of “provinces” in the *Hanshu* can be taken as reflecting the administrative reality of Qin and early Western Han, or if they are retrospective characterizations based on the Eastern Han system. For an overview of modern treatments, one that argues forcefully for the former position, see Xin Deyong 2009, 98, 177–178, and *passim*.

30 *Hanshu* 12.329.

31 de Crespigny 2007.

32 Stanza divisions in this translation and translations below reflect attempts to create rhyme groupings, based on the last character in each line, following tables in Luo Changpei and Zhou Zumou 1958. The rhyming pattern in this poem, like most Han verse, is irregular. The first two stanzas feature a continuous AAAA pattern, belonging to either the *yu* 魚 rhyme group or a related “combined rhyme” (*he yun* 合韻) group, broken by the word *tong* 通 (**lōŋ*) in the first line of the second stanza. The next three stanzas have an ABCB pattern. The four single-couplet stanzas in the second half of the poem move to a DD EE FF GG pattern, while the final closing stanza uses an AAAA pattern following the same *yu* group from the first stanza. This pattern seems to parallel shifts in narrative: the opening description in the first two stanzas describes the background to the establishment of the Shang; the next three stanzas describe its worsening difficulties; the staccato pattern of the two-line stanzas provides a didactic climax; and the final stanza closes the poem. Of course, rhyme analysis for Han verse is only provisional at best, and doubtless other patterns exist outside of the end rhymes.

九河既導， When the Nine Rivers were channeled,³³
 雷夏攸處。 Where the Leixia marsh was situated,
 草繇木條， Grasses were luxuriant and trees tall,
 漆絲締紵。 With tribute of lacquer, silk, fine cloth, and *zhu* hemp.³⁴

濟漯既通， After the Ji and the Ta were connected,³⁵
 降丘宅土。 People descended the hills and inhabited the land.³⁶
 成湯五徙， King Tang moved five times,
 卒都于亳。 Finally establishing his capital at Bo.³⁷
 盤庚北度， Pan Geng to the north forded the river,
 牧野是宅。 And MuYe was where he lived.³⁸

丁感雉雉， Wu Ding was moved by the crowing pheasant,
 祖己伊忠。 And Zuji was loyal.³⁹
 爰正厥事， Wu Ding properly aligned his actions,
 遂緒高宗。 And so established the high lineage temple.⁴⁰

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- 33 The “Nine Rivers” refers to the lower reaches of the Yellow River. According to the final section of the “Yu gong,” Yu divided this portion of the Yellow River into nine separate channels, which then emptied into the ocean. See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 2.553–554.
- 34 This list only partially conforms with the products associated with Yanzhou in the “Yu gong,” which identifies “fine cloth” (*chi* 絺) and “*zhu* hemp” (*zhu* 紵) in Yuzhou 豫州. According to Lu Ji 陸機 (3rd century CE), *zhu* hemp was not planted annually and yielded three crops per year (Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 2.678–679).
- 35 The “Yu gong” has no such passage, but rather states that the “the rivers Yong and Ju joined together” (滌沮會同). Mention of the Ji and Ta comes after the description of Yanzhou, when Yu floats down the Ji and Luo rivers to the Yellow River (Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 2.570–573).
- 36 This line quotes verbatim from the “Yu gong” entry on Yanzhou.
- 37 Though Yan Kejun’s text has *hao* 毫, it is surely *bo* 亳, the Shang capital. In the “Yin ben ji” 殷本紀 (Basic Annals of the Yin [Shang]) the *Shiji* concludes a list of the early Shang lineage heads by stating that, “from the time of [lineage founder] Qi to Cheng Tang [the Yin] had moved eight times. Tang first settled at Bo, following a settlement established by previous rulers, and made an announcement to Di” (*Shiji* 3.93).
- 38 The couplet seems to contradict the *Shiji* “Yin ben ji,” which describes Pan Geng fording south, not north, and establishing his capital in Bo, Tang’s old city. See *Shiji* 3.102.
- 39 According to the “Yin ben ji,” Wu Ding became terrified after a pheasant landed on a bronze tripod and crowed. In response, Zuji successfully convinced Wu Ding to redouble his efforts toward moral governance, resulting in prosperity for his subjects (*Shiji* 9.103).
- 40 After the death of Wu Ding, the “Yin ben ji” describes Zuji 立其廟為高宗 “establishing his temple to be that of the high lineage founder” (*Shiji* 9.104). The line “properly aligned his actions” is also found in the “Gao zong rong ri” 高宗彤日 chapter of the *Shangshu*.

厥後陵遲，
 顛覆湯緒。
 西伯戡黎，
 祖伊奔走，
 致天威命，
 不恐不震。
 婦言是用，
 牝雞司晨，
 三仁既知，
 武果戎殷。
 牧野之禽，
 豈復能耽！
 甲子之朝，
 豈復能笑！
 有國雖久，
 必畏天咎；
 有民雖長，
 必懼人殃。

After this the household declined,
 Toppling and overturning Tang's lineage.
 When King Wen of Zhou suppressed the Li,
 The Shang minister Zuyi fled.⁴¹
 When Heaven threatened its mandate,
 The Shang felt no fear or shock.
 Words of women were used,
 The hens ruled the roost.⁴²
 When the three worthy men of Shang understood,⁴³
 King Wu thereupon attacked Yin.
 The Shang king was captured at Muye,
 How could he continue to indulge?⁴⁴
 At dawn on the day Jiazi,⁴⁵
 How could he continue to laugh?
 Even if a ruler has long had the realm,
 He must fear Heaven's blame.
 Even if he has long ruled the people,
 He must fear human disaster.

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- 41 The phrase “Xi bo kan li” 西伯戡黎 (The Western Earl suppressed the Li) is also the title of a *Shangshu* chapter, probably of Eastern Zhou date, that describes an incident in the rise of the “Western Earl,” posthumously known as King Wen of Zhou. The *Shiji* relates a similar story, in which Zuyi rushed to warn Zhou 紂, the last Shang king, of the danger posed by King Wen, who was gaining support from vassal lords made restive by Shang's harsh rule (*Shiji* 3.107–108).
- 42 The couplet refers to lines from the “Mu shi” 牧誓 chapter of the *Shangshu*: 王曰：「古人有言曰：『牝雞無晨；牝雞之晨，惟家之索。』今商王受惟婦言是用。“The king said: ‘The people of yore would say: “The hen does not see the dawn. If there is a hen at dawn, this is the family's end.’ Now the Shang king Zhou only follows the opinions of women.” See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 3.1098–1100.
- 43 *Analects* 18/1. The “three worthy men” (*san ren*) refers to the three Shang advisors who were unable to convince Zhou, the last Shang king, to change his destructive behavior. See also *Shiji* 3.108.
- 44 While the *Shiji* states that King Zhou 紂 of Shang burned himself alive after defeat at Muye was certain (*Shiji* 3.108; 4.124), pre-Han and Han texts describe other fates for the vanquished king. See, e.g. the “Quan mou” 權謀 chapter of the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (*Shuoyuan jiao zheng*, 239), which states that King Wu took Zhou prisoner.
- 45 Jiazi was the day on which King Wu defeated the Shang. *Shiji* 3.108.

箕子獻歎，	Jizi let out a sob,
厥居為墟。	Their palaces were lain waste. ⁴⁶
牧臣司兗，	Your commissioner is in charge of Yanzhou,
敢告執書。	And dares to notify the one holding the documents. ⁴⁷

The first stanza is almost entirely comprised of paraphrases from the “Yu gong” description of Yanzhou, though it offers slightly different details: instead of descending from the hills after the introduction of sericulture (as in the “Yu gong”), the “Admonition of Yanzhou” describes settlement occurring after the connection of two rivers mentioned only at the end of the “Yu gong” entry. Moreover, two of the tribute items given in the admonition are found in the “Yu gong” under Yuzhou 豫州, not Yanzhou.⁴⁸

Such borrowings from other “Yu gong” sections, perhaps dictated by the prosodic requirements of the poem,⁴⁹ remind us that the admonitions were not “accurate” descriptions of regions, but conventionalized morality tales designed to demonstrate the dangers of inept governance. In the “Admonition of Yanzhou,” Yanzhou provides a setting for the downfall of the Shang ruling house, drawing upon stories found in the *Shiji* and chapters of the *Shangshu*. In the final couplet, then, the Regional Commissioner “dares to notify” not about Yanzhou per se, but about the dramatic moral and political collapse that unfolded within its borders. The “Admonition of Yanzhou” thus shifts the rhetorical pattern of the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts.” Recall that the *Zuozhuan* verse invoked the overseer’s jurisdiction over the hunting “plains” (*yuan* 原) as a basis for criticizing excessive hunts. “Overseer of Hunts” does suggest change over time, since Hou Yi transgressed the boundaries between plains and capital established by Yu in hoary antiquity, but this historical narrative is thin at best. By contrast, “Admonition of Yanzhou” traces a clear “rise and fall” tale: the Shang founder established the capital, and Wu Ding corrected his ways when the pheasant crowed on the tripod, but later rulers faltered and did not heed the warnings of virtuous ministers. The “Admonition of Yanzhou” thus roots its critique not so much in duties over the region as in stories and narratives associat-

46 According to the *Shiji* chapter “Hereditary House of Master Wei of Song” (Song Weizi shi jia 宋微子世家), after King Wu of Zhou ennobled Jizi in Chaoxian 朝鮮, the former Shang official traveled back to make a court visit to Zhou. En route, he passed by the “ruins of Yin” (*Yin xu* 殷墟) and wanted to cry, composing a verse that made former Shang subjects weep (*Shiji* 38.1621).

47 Text follows *Quan Shanggu Sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* 全上古三代秦漢三國六朝文 [hereafter, *QSSQHSLW*], vol. 1, *juan* 54.1.

48 See n.34 above.

49 For instance, *zhu* 紓, even though not mentioned as a tribute item of Yanzhou in the “Yu gong,” falls within the rhyme group *yu* 魚 (*ɲa) used in the first stanza.

ed with the land. The poem fuses together administrative duty with knowledge of regional history, claiming both to be the responsibility of the Regional Commissioner and the basis for moral remonstrance. It goes without saying, of course, that such an understanding of the Commissioner was rather far removed from the formal administrative duties of the office.⁵⁰

This capacity of the admonitions to articulate the proper parameters of offices becomes even more obvious in Yang's office admonitions, as in the following example:

司空箴	Admonition of the Master of Works
普彼坤靈，	Spreading was Kun's numen, ⁵¹
侔天作則。	It accorded with Heaven and gave rise to principles.
分制五服，	Dividing and establishing five zones, ⁵²
畫為萬國。	Demarcated into myriad realms.
乃立地官，	Only then were set up the offices of the Earth,
空惟是職。	And the Master of Works took them as his charge. ⁵³
茫茫九州，	Vast and far-reaching were the Nine Provinces,
都鄙盈區。	Capital residences filled up districts. ⁵⁴

50 See n.31 above. Note that office reforms of 8 BCE had raised the salary rank of Wudi's "inspectors" to 2,000 bushels (*shi* 石), putting them on par with ministerial-level officials. In this sense, then, Yang Xiong's admonitions perhaps reflected an expanded and more powerful role for the Regional Commissioners that, even before Wang Mang came to power, was already receiving some support in actual administrative practice. On the 8 BCE reforms, see Habberstad 2017, 119–138.

51 *Kun* (Field) is Hexagram 2 from the *Changes* (*Yijing* 易經), associated with the earth. The phrase also appears in Ban Gu's "Western Capital Rhapsody" (*Xi du fu* 西都賦). See Knechtges 1982, 116 n.142.

52 In the "Gao yao mo" chapter of the *Shangshu*, the legendary Yu states that he will "assist in completing the five zones" (弼成五服), with a similar phrase appearing in the *Shiji* chapter "Xia ben ji" 夏本紀 (*Shiji* 2.80). The final section of the "Yu gong" describes the earth divided into five nested zones (*dian fu* 甸服) of civilization, each populated by groups owing graded tax and tribute obligations to the ruler at the center. See Gu Jiegang and Liu Liu Qiyu 2005, 1.472–473 n.11.

53 Eastern Han classicists puzzled over the fact that though the Sikong was in charge of the earth, his official title included the graph *kong* 空, not *tu* 土 ("earth" or "soil") (See Satō 2002, 14 n.4). The "Yao dian" chapter of the *Shangshu* describes Shun appointing Yu as Sikong on the recommendation of the Siyue 四嶽. See also *Shiji* 2.50.

54 The "Tian guan" 天官 section of the *Zhouli* includes a description of the administration of the *du bi* 都鄙. In his commentary to the passage, Zheng Xuan wrote: 都之所居曰鄙。"Bi refers to a residence in the capital." See *SSJZS-BDB*, 4-1.28.

綱以群牧，	Leading lines set with many shepherds, ⁵⁵
綴以方侯。	Stitched together with regional lords. ⁵⁶
烈烈雋乂，	Magnificent were the talented and worthy men,
翼翼王臣。	Protective and supportive were the royal vassals.
臣當其官，	The ministers matched their offices,
官當其人。	And offices matched their incumbents.
九十之政，	There were allowances for the ninety-year olds, ⁵⁷
七賦以均。	And the seven levies were evenly distributed. ⁵⁸
昔在季葉，	When the age went into decline,
班祿遺賢。	Rank and salary neglected worthy men,
掎克充朝，	And the corrupt filled the court, ⁵⁹
而象恭滔天。	Outwardly respectful, they offended Heaven. ⁶⁰

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- 55 The “shepherds” (*mu* 牧) were officers from the central government responsible for the surveillance of delineated geographic areas. The phrase *qun mu* appears in the “Shun dian” chapter of the *Shangshu* (*SSJZS-BDB*, 2.55).
- 56 The term *fang hou* (“regional lords”) is unattested in early texts, but probably refers to local nobles who ruled over different realms. The “Kang wang zhi gao” 康王之告 chapter of the *Shangshu* describes “various lords” (*zhu hou* 諸侯) coming from the “Western regions” (*xi fang* 西方) and Eastern regions” (*dong fang* 東方). See *SSJZS-BDB*, 2.516.
- 57 The “Wang zhi” and “Nei ze” chapters of the *Liji* 禮記 describe privileges granted to elderly people of specified ages, with ninety-year olds receiving the most generous benefits. However, three different versions of this admonition, transmitted in the collectanea *Guwen yuan*, *Chuxue ji*, and *Yiwen leiju*, render this line as “the governance of the one-ninth” (*jiu yi zhi zheng* 九一之政), with most commentators understanding it as a reference to a “one-ninth tax” mentioned in *Mengzi* 3A: 請野九一而助, “I suggest that in the country the tax should be one in nine, using the *zhu* tax.” See Lau 1970, 99.
- 58 The “seven levies” (*qi fu* 七賦) appears in Yang Xiong’s *Fayan*. Commentators such as Li Gui 李軌 (fl. 335 CE) have glossed it as the five grains along with silk and hemp. See Nylan 2013, 59.
- 59 This and the previous line recall *Mengzi* 6B, in which *Mengzi* describes a bad realm, and the conditions that, in an ideal world, would prompt punishment of that realm’s ruler: 入其疆，土地荒蕪，遺老失賢，掎克在位，則有讓, “When [the ruler] enters the domain of a lord, if he finds the land is neglected, the old are forgotten and the good and wise overlooked, and grasping men (*po ke*) are in positions of power, then there is reprimand” (Lau 1970, 176). For *po ke*, see also “Dang” (*Shijing*, #255) (Waley and Allen 1996, 261, translated as “slaughterers”).
- 60 The phrase directly quotes the *Shangshu* chapter “Yao dian” 堯典: 帝曰: 「吁! 靜言庸違，象恭滔天」 “The Lord Yao said: “Huh! He speaks well, if glibly, but then acts evilly. Though outwardly respectful, he offends Heaven.” (*SSJZS-BDB*, 2.40).

匪人斯力，	The wrong people asserted power,
匪政斯敕。	And the wrong policies were ordered.
流貨市寵，	Flows of money purchased favor,
而芑苴是鬻。	Reed-wrapped gifts sealed the sales. ⁶¹
王路斯荒，	The royal route thus lain waste,
孰不傾覆？	How could it not topple over?
空臣司土，	The Master of Works is in charge of the land.
敢告在側。	And dares to report to those attending at the side. ⁶²

To be sure, the “Admonition of the Master of Works” generally follows the pattern of the *Zuozhuan* “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts.” They even share comparable language: e.g., “vast and far-reaching were Yu’s tracks” (“Overseer”) becomes “vast and far-reaching were the Nine Provinces” (“Master of Works”). Closer examination of these two lines, however, reveals differences. The shift from Yu to the Nine Provinces, from the actions of an individual sage to a fixed territorial scheme or even cosmic order, is emblematic of a larger pattern in the admonitions of the offices. Instead of describing the work of particular figures, Yang Xiong’s admonitions adopt a higher level of abstraction, describing historically constant categories of offices with histories that reach back to high antiquity.⁶³ These histories typically follow the “rise and fall” narrative seen in the admonitions of the regions, with each office experiencing a decline from an idyllic period in high antiquity, when duties were clearly defined and executed, to a more recent age when corruption and incompetence had destroyed the office’s integrity.

The “Admonition of the Master of Works” described an office using a title (*si kong*) found in classical texts. Most of Yang Xiong’s admonitions, however, did not, but instead referred to Han offices. Nonetheless, he still connected the duties of contemporary Han offices to the actions of the ancient sages, as in the following admonition describing the Superintendent of Trials (Ting wei 廷尉), the highest legal official and judge in the Han bureaucracy:

61 The term *baoku* 芑苴 appears in several pre-imperial and early imperial texts, with some commentators understanding it as a reed wrapping that covered fish or meat. The term means a gift or bribe in other texts, including the “Da lue” 大略 chapter of the *Xunzi* 荀子 (Hutton 2014, 305).

62 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 1, 54.4.

63 This pattern is similar to rhetoric seen in the *Hanshu* chapters “Yi wen zhi” 藝文志 (Treatise on Arts and Letters) and “Bai guan gong qing biao” 百官公卿表 (Table of the Many Offices and Ministerial Posts).

廷尉箴	Admonition of the Superintendent of Trials
天降五刑，	Heaven sent down the five punishments, ⁶⁴
維夏之績。	Forming the merits of Xia.
亂茲平民，	Even if chaos came to the common people,
不回不僻。	There was no wavering, no avoiding,
昔在蚩尤，	In the past Chiyou
爰作淫刑。	Created excessive punishments.
延于苗民，	These spread among the people of the Miao,
夏氏不寧。	And the Xia clan was not at peace. ⁶⁵
穆王耄荒，	When King Mu became older and decrepit,
甫侯伊謨。	Lord Fu then began to plan. ⁶⁶
五刑訓天，	The five punishments accorded with Heaven,
周以阜基。	And Zhou thereby built up its foundation.
厥後陵遲，	Later Zhou began to deteriorate,
上帝不孤。	But the High Lord did not abandon it, ⁶⁷

- 64 Several chapters of the *Shangshu* (*Documents*) refer to the “five punishments” (*wu xing*), including the following line from the “Gao yao mo” chapter: 天討有罪，五刑五用哉。 “Heaven punished those who had committed a crime, so the five punishments had their five applications.” See Gu and Liu, vol. 1, 424–425. The “Xing fa zhi” (Treatise on the Norms for Mutilating Punishments) of the *Hanshu* adopts the definition of the “five punishments” found in the “Qiu guan” 秋官 chapter of the *Zhouli*: tattooing, cutting off the nose, castration, amputation of the feet, and execution. See *Hanshu* 23.1091; Hulsewé 1955, 330.
- 65 The two couplets starting with the line referring to Chiyou directly refer to the “Lü xing” 呂刑 (Punishments of Lü) chapter of the *Shangshu*.
- 66 The couplet paraphrases the opening line of the “Lü xing.” Some early texts refer to Lü as Fu 甫.
- 67 Commentators offer different interpretations of this line. Zhang Qiao (cited in Satō 2003, 25 n.5) followed the *Guwen yuan* version, which gives *bu gu* 不觚, thus invoking *Analects* 6/25: 觚不觚，觚哉。 “A square vase that is not square – square indeed!” (translation follows Leys and Nylan 2014, 17. Zhang continued: 叔世任情，漫焉無法，猶觚之不觚。 “The final age of a dynasty indulges with abandon, reckless and unchecked, so it is like a square vessel that is not square.” Satō drew upon a gloss in the *Shiming* 釋名 (comp. ca. 200 CE) to read *gu* as *gu* 顧 (to look behind, to regard), noting similarities with a line in the *Shijing* poem “Yun Han” 雲漢 (#258) that reads 上帝不臨。 “The High Lord does not come near.” The interpretations of both Zhang and Satō thus have the High Lord abandoning the Zhou or not treating the Zhou as a legitimate ruling house. My reading associates the line with *Analects* 4/25, a passage regularly cited in Han texts: 子曰：德不孤，必鄰。 “The Master said: Virtue is not solitary; it always has a neighbor” (Leys and Nylan 2014, 12). This interpretation creates a narrative of more gradual decline: Zhou deteriorated, but it was the Qin who really escalated a system of punitive justice.

周輕其制， 秦繁其辜。	For Zhou just lightened its control, While Qin multiplied the guilty.
五刑紛紛， 靡遏靡止。 寇賊滿山， 刑者半市。	The five punishments proliferated, None checked or stopped. Bandits and criminals filled the mountains, And the punished filled half the marketplace.
昔在唐虞象刑， 天民是全。 紂作炮烙， 墜人於淵。	In the past Yao and Shun used identifying punishments, And Heaven's people were made whole. ⁶⁸ King Zhou of Shang devised burning and roasting, And threw people into an abyss. ⁶⁹
故有國者， 無云何謂， 是則是剝。 無云何害， 是剝是割。	Therefore rulers of realms, Without giving any reason, Would amputate and cut off noses. Without explaining the offense, Would skin and cut.
惟虐惟殺， 人其莫泰。 殷以刑顛， 秦以酷敗。	With only abuse and killing, Among the people there was no peace. The Shang collapsed due to punishments, And Qin failed due to cruelty.
獄臣司理， 敢告執謁。	Your legal servant is in charge of the law, And dares to report to the one in charge of visits. ⁷⁰

The rise and fall narrative here departs from the clear arc of “Master of Works,” since it tacks back and forth between the proper penal system of high antiquity and the debased punitive practices of both the distant past (the late Shang) and more recent periods (the

68 The “identifying punishments” (changes in clothing, tattoos, and so forth) appear in the *Shangshu* “Yao dian” chapter, according to some interpretations (thank you to Kai Vogelsang for the suggested translation). See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 2.163–167. They regularly appear in other early texts. In the “Xian zhi” 先知 chapter of *Fayan*, for instance, Yang Xiong praised this form of punishment, in contrast to actual mutilating punishments that proliferated after the age of Yao and Shun. See Nylan 2013, 143.

69 The “Yi bing” 議兵 chapter of the *Xunzi*, along with several Western Han texts, mentions Zhou’s “burning and roasting” punishment, which according to early sources entailed making prisoners walk on a bronze pillar set atop burning coals. See Hutton 2014, 158 n.55. The *Chuci* poem “Zhao hun” 招魂 describes wolves stationed at gates into heaven that, 懸人以娛，投之深淵些 “Hang out men for sport, / then cast them into the abyss” (Hawkes 1985, 224).

70 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 1, 54.6.

Qin). Nonetheless, by tracing different examples over time, “Superintendent of Trials” still depicts an office with a deep past. Of course, there was no office called “Superintendent of Trials” in high antiquity, but by focusing on the five punishment and their proper (and improper) application, the admonition traces a history of that office and shows how the proper execution of its responsibilities promoted stability over the ages.

The final lines of “Master of Works” and “Superintendent of Trials” closely adhere to the pattern of “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts.” Indeed, all of Yang’s admonitions close with a “dare to notify” statement and a reference to an attending or assisting official of some kind.⁷¹ The persistence of this pattern suggests that the remonstrative object of the poem is still, ultimately, the emperor or ruler, as it so clearly is in “Overseer of Hunts.” However, the admonitory message has changed substantially. Rather than criticizing specific behaviors of the ruler, the poetic voice behind each admonition is warning against neglect of the office’s responsibilities, with the danger of such neglect amply demonstrated by the historical examples given in the poem. The ruler has thus faded into the background, but by no means disappeared. Regular references to the *Shangshu* are relevant here, with Yang constantly invoking the work of the legendary rulers Yao and Shun, who appointed various sage officials to execute different matters of government. Rather than the ruler’s actions, then, the admonitions call attention to whether or not the ruler has ensured, as stated in “Master of Works,” that “the ministers matched their offices / and offices matched their incumbents” (臣當其官，官當其人).⁷² At the same time, by articulating the origins, duties, and historical trajectory of an individual office, the poetic voice behind the admonitions posits the integrity of the offices in question and displays a thorough understanding of its boundaries, standards, and normative modes of behavior.

71 While “Overseer of Hunts” ends with a “dare to notify” statement directed to a “groom” (pu fu), most (though not all) of Yang Xiong’s admonitions are directed to an official described as “the one in charge of” (zhi 執) a specified activity or duty. I am unsure of the significance of this change, though Yang is perhaps drawing on language from ritual texts, including the Zhouli and Liji, which regularly describe the actions of officials “in charge of” (zhi) different matters. Whether or not these references in ritual texts should be understood as office titles, or less formalized descriptions of what a given official is supposed to do in a specific situation, is a matter of interpretation. Among Han office titles, to my knowledge only Superintendent of the Capital (Zhi jin wu 執金吾) contains the word zhi. Moreover, as with the reference to “groom” in “Overseer of Hunts,” it is often not clear if the final official in Yang Xiong’s admonitions is a subordinate of the office described in the poem or of the ruler.

72 “Master of Works” is not the only of Yang’s admonitions to include such language. For instance, “Admonition of the Grand Herald” (Da Honglu zhen 大鴻臚箴) reads: 署非其人，人失其材，職反其官。“Bureaus did not have the right incumbents / incumbents did not have the appropriate talents / and duties contrasted with their offices.” See *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 1, 54.4.

Yang's admonitions thus address rulers and officials as a doubled object of remonstrance, providing a guideline for proper oversight by the former and a template for proper action by the latter. As we will see, however, those who followed Yang Xiong wrote admonitions that altered this balance, giving substantially more attention to officials over the ruler.

Admonitions After Yang Xiong: From Celebrating Officialdom to Ventriloquizing the Emperor

As noted above in the introduction, the Eastern Han writers Cui Yin, Cui Yuan, Liu Tao-tu, and Hu Guang all continued writing admonitions in the style of Yang Xiong, with Hu Guang eventually compiling a now lost text entitled *Bai guan zhen*.⁷³ Precious little information exists to explain why these men were inspired to write admonitions, though an admiration for Yang Xiong's erudition was no doubt one impetus.⁷⁴ However, two fragments in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (984 CE), the first attributed to Cui Yuan and the second to Hu Guang, provide different perspectives on the origins and function of the admonitions. According to Cui Yuan, we read, Yang Xiong came across the "Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts" while reading a "tradition of the *Chunqiu*" (春秋之傳) and then composed twenty-five admonitions in total, "articulating that which was appropriate for the ruler's virtuous power, and thus embodying the basis of the realm" (言君德之所宜，斯乃體國之宗也).⁷⁵ While Cui notes that Yang read "Overseer of Hunts" in the *Zuozhuan*,⁷⁶ his explanation does not fit easily with the description in that text. Recall that the *Zuozhuan* preceded "Overseer of Hunts" with a description of Xin Jia ordering his officials, "according to the duties of their offices, to remonstrate on the king's faults" (官箴王闕). The fragment from Cui Yuan, however, makes no mention of "the king's faults," stating rather that Yang's admonitions were concerned with what was "appropriate" (*yi* 宜) to the ruler. The statement is elliptical and hard to interpret. However, the fragment seems to

73 The account of Hu Guang's life and career in the *Hou Hanshu* provides the most complete description of Hu's work in compiling this text. See *Hou Hanshu* 80.1511.

74 Cui Yin, the earliest of the Eastern Han admonitions writers, seems to have been particularly obsessed with Yang Xiong. He reportedly wrote his essay "Da zhi" 達旨 (Expressing My Purpose) in imitation of Yang's "Jie chao" 解嘲 (Justification Against Ridicule). According to the *Hou Hanshu* account of his life, Cui composed the essay in response to ridicule that he did not hold an official post and was "supremely dark and somber" (*tai xuan jing* 太玄靜), an obvious pun on the title of Yang Xiong's *Tai xuan jing* 太玄經 (Classic of Supreme Mystery) (*Hou Hanshu* 52.1709).

75 *Taiping yulan*, 588.7a.

76 Unless, of course, Cui Yin is referring not to the *Zuozhuan* but to a different "tradition of the Chunqiu." Neither of the other two extant *Zuozhuan* commentaries mention Xin Jia.

suggest that rather than critique, the admonitions were to provide an overall model for the ruler's emulation that reflected the "basis" or "foundation" (*zong* 宗) of the entire empire.

By contrast, the fragment attributed to Hu Guang seems to emphasize critique as the central purpose of the admonitions:

箴諫之興，所由尚矣。聖君求之於下，忠臣納之於上，故虞書曰：「予違汝弼，汝無面從，退有後言。」墨子著書，稱夏箴之辭。

The rise of the admonitions is something that came about in ancient times. Sagely rulers searched for them below, and loyal ministers submitted them above. Therefore, the writings of Xia state: "When We commit an error, you correct it. Do not present a façade of following along, only to retire and make contradictory statements."⁷⁷ When Mozi composed his writings, he praised the language of the admonitions of the Xia.⁷⁸

This account places admonitions within what David Schaberg has called an "architecture of communication" that facilitated regular and legitimate criticism of the ruler by his officials.⁷⁹ As a result, Hu seems to accept the *Zuozhuan* story that admonitions were meant to criticize the mistakes of the king. Moreover, for Hu the admonitions were not a poetic form of relatively recent creation but rather a type of ancient bureaucratic practice.⁸⁰ In describing a generalized responsibility to remonstrate the ruler, however, the fragment does not pay much attention to one of the central features of the *Zuozhuan* story: that criticisms within the admonitions were tightly connected to the specific duties of the officials who wrote them. It was the Overseer of Hunts, *not* Xin Jia, after all, who wrote the "Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts."

The fragments attributed to Cui Yuan and Hu Guang thus framed the purpose of the admonitions somewhat differently: while the former held that they should reflect the ruler's power and "embody" the entire realm, the latter held that they were designed to critique the ruler. Neither fragment, however, gives much emphasis to the formal responsibilities and divisions between offices that emerged in Yang's admonitions, which as we saw above ascribed ancient histories to Han bureaucratic posts and their duties. The difference

77 The quote comes from the "Gao yao mo" chapter of the *Shangshu*. I follow the understanding of this passage reflected in the *Shiji*. See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 1.453.

78 *Taiping yulan*, 588.7a. The received text of the *Mozi* does not contain any reference to "admonitions of Xia," and in the entire text the word *zhen* 箴 appears only once.

79 See Schaberg 1997, 143. Schaberg refers to a *Zuozhuan* speech from Shi Kuang 師曠, the music master of Jin 晉, that describes modes of remonstrance. See *Zuozhuan*, Lord Xiang, 14.6; Yang Bojun 1981, 3.107; Durrant, et. al. 2016, 3.1025.

80 This claim that the duties of offices inspired literary categories and forms is hardly unique to Hu Guang. Indeed, it forms one of the central conceits of the *Hanshu* "Yi wen zhi," which explains the origin of some bibliographic categories by reference to the duties of officials in high antiquity. See Lewis 1999, 325–332.

is subtle, and space limitations prevent a full discussion, but an examination of one of the extant Eastern Han admonitions reflects this relative lack of concern with the boundaries between offices and their official responsibilities. The following “Admonition of the Superintendent of Trials” (*Dali zhen* 大理箴), by Cui Yin, even though it discusses the same post, departs rather significantly from Yang Xiong’s “Superintendent of Trials” (translated above). Unlike Yang’s poem, Cui Yin’s admonition focuses less on the five punishments and their execution and more on the actions of exemplary officials, including some who never occupied the post of “Superintendent of Trials” (whether termed Tingwei or Dali):⁸¹

大理箴	Admonition of the Superintendent of Trials
邈矣皋陶，	Profound was Gao Yao!
翊唐作士。	He assisted Yao’s dynasty and served as the justice official. ⁸²
設為犴狴，	He set up prisons,
九州允理。	So the nine provinces were verily in order.
如石之平，	Balanced as weights, ⁸³
如淵之清。	Pure as a deep pool. ⁸⁴
三槐九棘，	Before the three pagoda trees and nine jujube trees, ⁸⁵
以賢以德。	There were worthies, there were the virtuous.
罪人斯殛，	Criminals were thus executed,
凶族斯進。	Murderous clans brought forward.

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- 81 Though the term *Dali* is not found in the *Shangshu*, some pre-Qin and Han sources claim that Gao Yao 皋陶, the legendary legal official from high antiquity, was appointed Dali by Shun 舜 (See, e.g., *Shiji* 1.43). Jingdi 景帝 changed the title Tingwei to Dali in 143 BCE, but Wudi 武帝 changed it back in 138 BCE; Aidi 哀帝 again called it Dali in 2 BCE, but Wang Mang 王莽 renamed the office Zuoshi 作士. See *Hanshu* 19a.730.
- 82 The “Shun dian” 舜典 chapter of the *Shangshu* states: 皋陶，蠻夷猾夏，寇賊姦宄。汝作士，五刑有服。“Lord [Shun] said: ‘Gao Yao! The Man and the Yi cause trouble for the Xia by robbing, killing, raping, and doing evil acts. You shall serve as the justice official. Use the punishments to make them submit.’” Some citations of this line in early commentaries to Han texts use the term *shishi* 士師 (military generals), an office title also found in the *Zhouli*. As Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu pointed out (Gu and Liu 2005, 1.239–243), and as this line itself seems to suggest, not until late in the Zhanguo period did a clearer distinction emerge between military and legal officials.
- 83 Cf. *Xunzi* “Jun dao” 君道 chapter: 衡石稱縣者，所以為平。“Setting up scales and measuring out weights are a means to establish what is balanced.” See Hutton 2014, 118.
- 84 Cf. *Zhuangzi* “Tian di” 天地 chapter: 夫道，淵乎其居也，濇乎其清也。“As for the Dao, deep is its abode; transparent is its purity.” See *Zhuangzi ji jie*, 416.
- 85 In the “Qiu guan” 秋官 chapter of the *Zhouli*, the three pagoda and nine jujube trees mark the court audience positions, respectively, of the Executive Council (*san gong* 三公) and the ministers and nobles (*qing dafu* 卿大夫).

熙又帝載，
 旁施作明。⁸⁶
 昔在仲尼，
 哀矜聖人。⁸⁷
 子罕禮刑，
 衛人釋艱。⁸⁸
 釋之其忠，
 勛亮孝文。⁸⁹
 于公哀寡，
 定國廣門。⁹⁰
 寘哉邈矣，
 舊訓不遵。
 主慢臣驕，
 虐用其民。

- 86 Cf. the “Yi ji” 益稷 chapter of the pseudo-Kong *Shangshu* (*Documents*), describing the legendary legal official Gao Yao: 皋陶方施厥敎，方施象刑，惟明。“Throughout, Gao Yao venerated the order [of Yao] and implemented the identifying punishments so that they were clear.”
- 87 The “Xing lun” 刑論 (On Mutilating Punishments) chapter of the *Kong cong zi* 孔叢子 describes Kongzi praising “sympathy and compassion” in legal judgments.
- 88 Probably a reference to Zigao 子臬, whose story is recounted, with differing details, in the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 and *Shuoyuan*. Zigao (called 子羔 in *Shuoyuan*) was a disciple of Kongzi who served as an official in Wei. During a period of unrest at the Wei court, Zigao was saved by a convicted criminal, even though it was Zigao who had amputated the man’s foot after his conviction. When Zigao asked the amputee why he had saved his punisher, he explained he wanted to help, since Zigao was entirely lawful, had given him every benefit of the doubt during criminal proceedings, and showed obvious grief when his foot was cut off. See the *Han Feizi*, “Wai chu shuo zuo xia” 外儲說左下 chapter (*Han Feizi ji shi*, 2.677); and *Shuoyuan*, “Zhi gong” 至公 chapter (*Shuoyuan jiao zheng*, 362263).
- 89 Zhang Shizhi 張釋之 was appointed Superintendent of Trials during the reign of the Western Han emperor Wendi (r. 180–157 BCE), probably in the year 160 or 158 (Loewe 2000, 690). The *Hanshu* praises Zhang Shizhi’s dispassionate execution of criminal cases (*Hanshu* 50.2310–2311). Zhang also purportedly advised Wendi to adopt a more modest plan for his mausoleum, for which the emperor, and Zhang as well, earned high praise in a memorial Liu Xiang submitted to the throne during the reign of Chengdi (*Hanshu* 36.1950–1957).
- 90 Lord Yu, a justice official in Donghai, unsuccessfully pleaded before the governor to spare the life of a filial widow wrongly accused of killing her beloved aunt. His son, Yu Dingguo 于定國, was appointed Superintendent of Trials in 69 BCE, and became famous for carefully and compassionately executing the law (*Hanshu* 71.3041–3043).

賞以崇欲， Rewards thereby exalted desires,
 刑以肆忿。 And punishments thereby spread anger.
 紂作炮烙， King Zhou of Shang devised burning and roasting,
 周人滅殷。 And the people of Zhou vanquished his realm.

夏用淫刑， The Xia employed excessive punishments,
 湯誓其軍。 So Tang pledged an oath to his army.⁹¹
 衛鞅酷烈， Shang Yang's cruelty blazed,
 卒殞於秦。 In the end he perished in Qin.

不疑知害， Juan Buyi understood dangers,
 禍不及身。 So a calamity never reached his person.⁹²
 嗟茲大理， Ah! This Superintendent of Trials,
 慎於爾官。 Takes care with his office.

賞不可不思， With rewards, he must be thoughtful.
 斷不可不度。 With decisions, he must be reverent.
 或有忠而害， Some were loyal but then harmed,
 或有孝而見殘。 Some were filial but then injured.

吳沈伍胥， The King of Wu threw Wu Zixu into the water,
 殷剖比干。 The King of Shang dismembered Bi Gan.
 莫遂爾情， Nobody followed the facts of the situation,
 是截是刑。 But just sliced and mutilated.

無遂爾志， Nobody followed the truth of the matter,⁹³
 以速以亟。 But moved swiftly and executed.
 天鑒在顏， Heaven mirrors our expressions,
 無細不錄。 With no details left unrecorded.

福善禍惡， Good fortune is excellent and disaster ugly,
 其效甚速。 Their results come swiftly.
 理臣司律， The Superintendent of Trials is in charge of the statutes,
 敢告執獄。 He dares to report to the one in charge of cases.⁹⁴

91 The “Tang shi” 湯誓 chapter of the *Shangshu* describes King Tang of Shang promising his soldiers great rewards if they assisted him in defeating the Xia. See Gu Jiegang and Liu Qiyu 2005, 2.878–887.

92 Juan Buyi (d. ca. 81 BCE) attained some fame, first as Inspector (*cishi*) of Qingzhou during the reign of Zhaodi and then as Governor of the Capital (*Jingzhaoyin*). Buyi reportedly refused to relinquish his sword before an audience with an imperial envoy, citing a gentleman's need for protection (*Hanshu* 41.3035).

93 The translation of *zhi* 志 follows Olberding 2012, 33–38.

The verses begin with clear references to Gao Yao, the legendary legal official, with additional references to Confucius and Zihan. Note that, like Yang Xiong's "Admonition of the Superintendent of Trials," Cui Yin's admonition also tacks back and forth between ancient and contemporary practice. Notably, however, he does so in order to *praise* a few figures from much more recent history, including the Western Han men Zhang Shizhi and Yu Dingguo, both of whom served as Superintendent of Trials. In addition, his reference to Juan Buyi shows that Cui did not limit himself to officials who held the post: Juan served as Governor of the Capital (Jingzhaoyin 京兆尹) but never as Superintendent of Trials. On the one hand, this characteristic of the poem reflects the fact that many officials in the capital had legal duties. It also, however, reflects a clear emphasis on the broader importance of loyal and upright officials: in this vein, note the references to Wu Zixu and Bi Gan, pre-imperial figures who both became famous during the Han as virtuous men wronged by cruel and unjust rulers. Cui Yin thus celebrates less the historical integrity of the office than the exemplary nature of proper service and loyal remonstrance, even in the face of danger. The end result is a valorization of excellent officials, whether or not their actions specifically related to the office of Superintendent of Trials.

A starker example of an admonition that pays less attention to the particular duties of an office comes in the Western Jin figure Fu Xian's "Admonition of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor." As noted above, Fu Xian's admonition has typically been understood as a transformative turning point for the genre. In fact, his contribution is one of degree, rather than kind, since the admonition continues trends already evident in the Eastern Han admonitions. One difference, however, is that Fu Xian seems to have written his admonition for specific political purposes. While in most cases admonition authors did not hold the offices described in their verses, Fu Xian's admonition was directly related to his official career, for he did serve as Assistant to the Imperial Counselor. The appointment, in 289, represented Fu Xian's return to the higher echelons of Luoyang 洛陽 officialdom, after a demotion five years prior.⁹⁵ Moreover, it came just before the death of Wudi 武帝 (r. 266–290), who was perhaps concerned about the capacity of his hapless son, Huidi 惠帝 (r. 290–301), to maintain control over the throne. By 289, Fu Xian "had a reputation for fearlessly admonishing and even impeaching officials,"⁹⁶ and indeed Huidi's regent, Yang Jun, had earlier tried to have Fu Xian removed from court. The

94 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 2, 44.9.

95 In 284, Fu Xian had called for the removal of Xiahou Jun 夏侯駿 from the position of Senior Rectifier (Da zhongzheng 大中正) of Yuzhou 豫州. Xiaohou Jun was related by marriage to Wei Shu 魏舒, the Minister of Education (Situ 司徒), and Wei Shu immediately had Fu Xian demoted as a result of his petition. See *Jinshu* 47.1324.

96 Knechtges and Chang vol. 1, 250.

somewhat brazen and forthright Fu Xian thus might have written the poem to assert himself and his authority in the new post.

The poem's preface begins by invoking the by then long-standing notion that, "the admonitions of the many offices were meant to admonish the king's faults" (百官之箴，以箴王闕).⁹⁷ In the immediately following lines, however, Fu Xian set aside questions of critique to focus on himself. According to the preface, Fu feared that he would commit errors in office, so he composed the admonition "in order to spur myself to action" (以自勸勵). As he concluded:

不云自箴，而云御史中丞箴者，凡為御史中丞，欲通以箴之也。

The reason I did not call it a "self-admonition" but the "Admonition of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor" is because there is a general way to serve as Assistant to the Imperial Counselor, and desiring to penetrate it deeply I made an admonition about it.⁹⁸

Note that Fu Xian quite explicitly states that his purpose is to critique himself by reference to the patterns and duties adhering to the office of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor. The explanation thus contradicts his opening cant about admonishing the king. At the same time, Fu Xian's entire stated justification for the poem was perhaps designed to give him some level of plausible deniability, since a close reading of his verses suggests a much broader focus that was hardly limited to the duties of the Assistant:

煌煌天文，	Sparkling and dazzling are the patterns of heaven,
眾星是環。	The many stars revolve around it. ⁹⁹
爰立執法，	I take my place and grasp the models,
其暉有煥。	In all their shining brilliance.
執憲之綱，	Upholding the order of the law, ¹⁰⁰
秉國之憲。	And grasping the law of the realm. ¹⁰¹
鷹揚虎視，	Eagle-like I soar, tiger-like I glare, ¹⁰²
肅清違慢。	Solemnly washing clean all transgressions.

97 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 4, 52.11.

98 *Ibid.*

99 Cf. *Analects* 2/1.

100 The term *zhi xian* appears to come from Wei Meng's "Feng jian shi" 諷諫詩 (Poem in Admonishment): 明明群司，執憲靡顧。"Illustrious, the gathered ministers / They uphold the laws without special favor." See also Raft 2007, 401 n.66. Fu Xian was not the first to use this term in relation to the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor (*Yushi zhongcheng*). The late Western Han advisor Gu Yong 谷永 praised an Assistant to the Imperial Counselor for upholding the law (*zhi xian*). See *Hanshu* 83.3391.

101 Cf. "Jie nan shan" 節南山 (*Shijing*, #191), stanza three (Waley and Allen 1996, 165).

102 In a letter to his friend Wu Zhi 吳質, for example, Cao Zhi 曹志 (192–232) described Wu at

蹇蹇匪躬，	Stalwart and loyal, without blame,
是曰王臣。	For this I am called a king's minister. ¹⁰³
既直其道，	Being fully aligned with this way,
奚顧其身。	What use concern about my own person?
身之不顧，	With my person of no concern,
孰其弗震？	Who could not be in awe?
邦國若否，	If in the realm anything was darkened,
山甫是明；	Shanfu shed light upon it. ¹⁰⁴
焉用彼相，	How can we employ a minister,
莫扶其傾？	Who does not support the ruler when he totters? ¹⁰⁵
淮南構逆，	When the King of Huainan planned rebellion,
實憚汲生。	Indeed did he fear Master Ji. ¹⁰⁶
赫赫有國，	The realm being majestic,
可無忠貞，	How could it not have loyal and steadfast men?
憂責有在，	Even when worries and troubles are present,
繩亦必直。	The plumb line, for its part, must be straight.
良農耘穢，	A good farmer pulls up the weeds,
勿使能植。	Preventing them from flourishing.
無禮是逐，	When banishing those without ritual decorum,
安惜翼翼？	How could I worry about hurting their wings? ¹⁰⁷

a banquet: 鷹揚其體，鳳歎虎視。“You soared like a hawk, sighed like a phoenix, and glared like a tiger.” Ying Qu 應璩 (190–252), meanwhile, used the phrase to describe the career success of Wang Su 王肅 (195–256) and He Zeng 何曾 (199–278). For a summary of these two letters, see Knechtges 2015, 206 and 209. The term possibly traces back to the *Shijing* poem “Da ming” 大明 (#236), which describes Shang Fu “soaring like an eagle” as he assisted King Wu 武王 in his battle against the Shang at Muye 牧野.

103 A paraphrase of the second line statement of Hexagram #39 *Jian* 蹇 (Adversity): 王臣蹇蹇，匪躬之故。“This minister of the king suffers adversity upon adversity, but it is not on his own account.” See Lynn 1994, 376.

104 Cf. “Zheng min” 蒸民 (*Shijing*, #260), fourth stanza. See Waley and Allen 2016, 276.

105 Cf. *Analects* 16.1.

106 A reference to Ji An, an official and advisor during the reign of Wudi who developed a reputation as a fearless critic of his court rivals and even the emperor. When Liu An, the king of Huainan, launched his rebellion, he expressed fear of Ji's forthright remonstrations (*zhi jian* 直諫). See *Shiji* 120.3109.

107 A reference to a story in *Zuo zhuan* (Lord Wen 18.7), in which the Lu minister Ji Wenzhi states that it would be unwise to harbor a noble son from another realm who had fled to Lu after committing patricide. Fu Xian appears to be following a version of this story included in a statement from the *Hanshu* account of the late Western Han minister Zhai Fangjin 翟方進

嗟爾庶寮，	Ah! The many officials,
各敬乃職！	When each are reverent only then do they fulfill duties.
無為罰先，	Do not make punishment primary,
無怙厥力！	Do not rely upon strength.
怨及朋友，	When rancor reaches friends,
無慚於色。	Let no agony disturb one's countenance.
得罪天子，	When you incur blame from the Son of Heaven,
內省有惡。	Inwardly examine and be humbled. ¹⁰⁸
是用作箴，	For this purpose I composed an admonition,
惟以自敕。	In order to give a decree to myself. ¹⁰⁹

Compared to the Han admonitions analyzed above, Fu Xian's poem is relatively unconcerned with invoking historical examples of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor or even with describing a narrative of historical decline in the office. It is true that the censorial duties invoked in the opening stanza were central to the work of the Assistant, and indeed Fu Xian was not the first to describe an Assistant to the Imperial Counselor "upholding the laws" (*zhi xian* 執憲).¹¹⁰ Nonetheless, most of the poem's references are not limited to the specific position of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor. The one historical example mentioned, the mid-Western Han official Ji An 汲黯, is telling, Ji never served under the Imperial Counselor; indeed, he became famous for criticizing the two important Imperial Counselors of his day: Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 (ca. 200–121 BCE) and Zhang Tang 張湯 (d. ca. 114 BCE). Rather than tracing the professional and historical contours of an office, then, Fu Xian focused on articulating his own dedication to an ideal theoretically applicable to any office: forthright remonstrance that ignored private political alliances or concerns about offending others. Rather than a good Assistant to the Imperial Counselor, Fu Xian was claiming he would be a good, upstanding, and above all critical official.

It is perhaps in this light that we should read the final couplet, which dispenses with the "dare to notify" (*qan gao*) statement so characteristic of the Han admonitions. Rather, Fu Xian writes that he will "give a decree to myself" (*zi chi* 自敕), thus linking the poem back to the preface. Recall that Fu hoped his admonition would "spur himself to action"

(d. 7 BCE). The account includes an altered version of the *Zuozhuan* quote by Ji Wenzhi followed by the statement: 翅翼雖傷，不避也。"Even if wings [i.e. the wings of the small birds] are hurt, I do not hesitate." See *Hanshu* 84.3420.

108 "Rancor touches friends" and "incur blame from the Son of Heaven" are both from "Yu wu zheng" 雨無正 (#194), in the same stanza. See Waley and Allen 1996, 174.

109 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 4, 52.11–12.

110 See n.100 above.

and suggested that he could have called the poem a “self-admonition.” Though Fu Xian was not discussing his inner emotional world, by failing to use the “dare to notify” phrase, neither did he directly address the poem to other officials or the emperor. Rather, in pointing to his own person with the verb *chi* (“decree” or “command”), a weighty word commonly used for instructions or admonishments from the emperor or high officials to subordinates, Fu Xian implies that bureaucratic operational procedures no longer formed an effective or reliable system for serving the emperor and realizing an ideal of effective bureaucratic service. In the face of a politically treacherous world at the imperial court, perhaps the only effective framework for official action was not adherence to administrative protocol but rather the development of a set of internalized standards maintained in the face of a system whose procedures had become hopelessly corrupted.

Perhaps inevitably, objections emerged regarding the contradiction between, on the one hand, the genre’s demand to critique the faults of a ruler and, on the other, a drifting focus away from critique or even the discussion of specific features of an office seen in the Han admonitions. Such objections came in the “Admonition of the Emperor” by the accomplished Western Jin writer Pan Ni (ca. 250–311), who knew and exchanged poems with Fu Xian.¹¹¹ In a long preface to his poem, Pan complained that an obsession with offices had distracted admonition authors from the genre’s admonitory aim. Opening with a citation of the *Changes* (*Yi* 易), Pan claimed that the ruler-minister relationship mirrored the link between Heaven and Earth. In an extended excursus, Pan describes the Heaven-like immovability of the perfect ruler who, having been installed by Heaven, remains supremely impartial. As he put it: “How could [Heaven] possibly have done this solely in order to favor one single person and exhaust his immeasurable desires?” (豈以寵一人之身，極無量之欲，如斯而已哉), since “all under heaven was not for a single person, but for all under heaven” (天下非一人之天下，乃天下之天下).¹¹² The preface then emphasizes that rulers alone could hardly be expected to regulate their desires such that they “delighted in hearing of their missteps” (好聞其過). As a result, ancient sage rulers established bureaucratic practices to ensure regular criticism of the ruler: “[They utilized] “the wooden placard for criticisms, a drum for those who dared to offer remonstrance, inscriptions on basins and maces, and scribes who hid nothing” (必有誹謗之木，敢諫之鼓，盤杵之銘，無諱之史). The statement is an obvious reference to the “architecture of communication” between rulers and their remonstrating ministers, an idea extending back to pre-imperial times.¹¹³

111 Knechtges and Chang 2010, vol. 1, 694.

112 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 5, 95.3.

113 See n.79 above.

Despite this long-standing function of remonstrance, Pan Ni goes on to suggest that the tradition had become too focused on offices. Such a focus was perhaps justified, not least because remonstrators had no choice but to rely on careful circumlocution to convey criticisms. Pan implies, however, that it had caused the verses to stray from their original purpose:

自虞人箴以至於百官，非唯規其所司，誠欲人主斟酌其得失焉。春秋傳曰命百官箴王闕，則亦天子之事也。

From the “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts” all the way to the *Admonitions of the Many Offices* (*Bai guan zhen*), the aim was not only to outline that which the officials administered; they truly wanted the ruler to take stock of his successes and failures. If in the tradition of the *Chunqiu* it said, “He ordered the many officials to admonish the king on his faults,” then the admonitions are also a matter for the Son of Heaven.¹¹⁴

Pan Ni admittedly places all of the admonitions, from “Overseer of Hunts” to the Han admonitions, in a continuous tradition. His characterization, however, implies changes and gaps in that tradition, for as we saw above “Overseer of Hunts” was meant to critique the ruler’s faults, but only later in the Han period did the admonitions tradition begin to “outline” (*gui* 規) the parameters and official duties of the different offices. Far from tracing a simple narrative of continuity, then, Pan Ni is issuing a reminder, perhaps in response to Fu Xian’s inwardly-directed poem, that the admonitions had strayed from their original purpose of criticizing the ruler.

Somewhat ironically, however, Pan Ni then dispensed with the notion of careful critique of the ruler on the basis of official duties. Toward the end, the preface notes that “those who serve as true kings” (為王者), being responsible for “commanding the myriad affairs and fostering the land within the four seas” (總萬機而撫四海), enjoyed a peerless status. Therefore, “how indeed could a successful remonstrator only criticize a ruler?” (諫之順者，曷為獨闕之哉). Admonitions in general, and Pan Ni’s admonition in particular, required a recognition and celebration of the ruler’s special status. Pan Ni even used this reasoning to explain his use of the word *chengyu* 乘輿 (“emperor”) in the title of the admonition: the circumlocution was driven by the fact that he “did not dare denigrate a title of such supreme reverence” (不敢斥至尊之號).¹¹⁵

The preface thus claims that the admonition aimed to both criticize *and* celebrate rulers. In so doing, Pan Ni wittingly or not continues to write in the same vein as his Han predecessors, since their office admonitions were as much celebrations of the successful

114 *QSSQHSLW*, vol. 5, 95.3.

115 Pan Ni here seems to borrow from Du Yu’s explanation of the meaning of *gan gao* in the *Zuozhuan* “Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts.” See above n.20.

execution of bureaucratic responsibilities across different offices as they were criticisms of both officials and rulers who neglected those responsibilities. Moreover, the fact that his admonition completely set aside any notion of critique of the ruler rooted in official job responsibilities belies Pan Ni's stated desire to reorient the admonitions toward its "original" purpose. Indeed, in moving the object of remonstrance to a higher level of abstraction (i.e. all "rulers" throughout time), Pan Ni merely applied to the ruler the same logic of historical integrity and continuity in government offices seen in Yang Xiong's admonitions and the other Han office admonitions.

The final line of "Admonition of the Emperor," perhaps even more than the earlier admonitions, fully mines the rhetorical opportunities afforded by this feature of the poems. There, Pan Ni remarkably concludes with the line: "The august one is in charge of the realm, and dares to notify the one who receives the statements" (有皇司國，敢告納言). As noted above, in Han bureaucratic communications, "dare to notify" was a polite phrase typically used in communications between officials of equal status. Here, then, Pan Ni simultaneously adopts the voice of the emperor while implying that the emperor's subordinate (the *na yan* 納言) was the ruler's peer. Whether by ventriloquizing the emperor or by having the emperor speak to his subordinates as if they were his peers, Pan Ni thus effectively uses the poem to voice a status approximating that of a ruler. As we saw in the Han verses and Fu Xian's poems, the line separating admonition from the celebration of personal erudition and the advancement of status claims was never clear. Pan Ni, however, blurred the lines between the two more than ever before.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis, only an initial attempt to chart a neglected and complicated literary genre, suggests that the *Bai guan zhen* admonitions, as well as their post-Han successors, were not part of a static poetic tradition that merely copied the aesthetics of their *Zuozhuan* model. True, most extant assessments of the genre emphasized that the *Zuozhuan* "Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts" and later poems in the *Bai guan zhen* style were all written to "admonish the king for his faults," and that they were part of the "architecture of communication" characteristic of the early bureaucracy that allowed officials to critique the ruler. As this essay has endeavored to demonstrate, however, in reality the purposes of the poems were always more complicated. Indeed, from the very beginning of the reinvention of the admonitions during the late Western Han and early Eastern Han, the poems began to move away from a focus on the ruler to discuss officials. As noted above, the critic Qian Zhongshu linked this change to a decline in the status of rulers. Notwithstanding the overly late post-Han period to which Qian dated this decline, his interpretation is understandable and not entirely without merit, for indeed emperors did witness an erosion of power over the course of the early imperial period, while at the same time officials began to navigate ever larger and more complicated institutions of admin-

istration. The growing concern traced in the admonitions with offices and office holders, then, makes sense given this changing institutional context.

Close analysis of the admonitions, however, affords a more nuanced narrative than Qian's story, for Yang Xiong's treatment of offices appears far removed from what we see in Fu Xian's "Admonition of the Assistant to the Imperial Counselor." On this point, it is worth emphasizing that Yang Xiong did not only write "office admonitions," but also composed admonitions of the "Regional Commissioners" (*zhou mu*). His admonitions thus collectively outlined the empire's different regions and highest administrative offices. The end result is a comprehensive vision of how the empire should best be divided up and governed. Central to this vision was a rhetorical weaving together of regions and offices into long historical narratives, with Yang almost invariably placing the origin of both in the halcyon days of high antiquity, before going on to describe their decline in more recent ages. The poems thus served as a clarion call for office-holders and emperors alike to reestablish a government rooted in long-standing official posts that had timeless duties, clearly defined boundaries, and consistent and shared administrative procedures and norms of communication that linked them all together. Compared to the *Zuo zhuan* "Admonition of the Overseer of Hunts," these patterns in Yang Xiong's verses took the admonitions far from their putative purpose of "admonishing the king for his faults." At the same time, the ruler has not entirely disappeared from view: the constant references to the *Shangshu* and its descriptions of the legendary rulers Yao and Shun are paired with a continued use of the closing "dare to notify" statement, which in "Overseer of Hunts" directed the critique toward the ruler. In Yang's poems, however, the ruler is urged not to curb specific behaviors, but to appoint "ministers who matched their offices" and preside over the government.

Already by the time of the Eastern Han admonitions, however, this reformist impulse of the admonitions, and the balance Yang's verses struck between offices and the ruler, was beginning to change. As we saw in Cui Yin's "Admonition of the Superintendent of Justice," many of the conventions established by Yang Xiong remained. At the same time, Cui Yin named more specific exemplary office-holders, some of them rather recent and a few of them men who never even held an official post related to legal administration. The historical integrity of the office and its duties, then, was beginning to receive less attention than men Cui Yin deemed worthy of emulation, regardless of their specific careers or official responsibilities. Fu Xian's admonition went even further in this direction, since it seems almost entirely unconcerned with whether or not a given figure served as Assistant to the Imperial Counselor. Most tellingly, he entirely eliminated the "dare to notify" statement at the end of the poem, closing instead with "give a decree to myself" (*zi chi*). Fu Xian thus turned away not only from a focus on the ruler, but from any concern with the particular duties of the office he held, not to mention any confidence in a model of government in which bureaucratic offices followed clearly defined boundaries and

administrative protocol. Pan Ni's "Admonition of the Emperor" attempted to draw the admonitions back toward their supposedly ancient purpose of criticizing the ruler. In so doing, however, he ventriloquized the emperor, just as his Han predecessors had adopted the voice of administrative offices, arguably claiming the status of a ruler in the process. In the end, then, Fu Xian and Pan Ni managed to advance claims of rhetorical erudition, high status, and moral authority, but by drawing on and emphasizing different aspects of the admonitions tradition they inherited from the Han: a focus on exemplary service in office (Fu Xian) and a recognition of the ruler's position as overseer at the apex of government (Pan Ni).

It would be too simplistic, then, to claim that rulers completely disappeared as an important figure in the admonitions tradition. They remained present, but not merely as a subject of critique. The verses discussed above suggest that authors of admonitions were ineluctably drawn toward the genre's capacity not just to criticize the ruler, but rather to weave together a complex series of voices and audiences that invoked duties, standards, and bureaucratic processes characteristic of court offices and government service. Perhaps it is this interaction between poetic voice and administrative procedure that has prompted some scholars to describe the genre as "political" or even "public."¹¹⁶ Even if we accept such a characterization, however, the political claims that could be advanced by the admonitions changed substantially over the course of the Han and post-Han period. While everybody busily claimed that the admonitions were always designed to critique the faults of rulers, the verses they actually wrote established and explored a much more varied rhetorical world.

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116 These comments are inspired by Raft 2007, 305 and *passim*, though I would caution against Raft's statement that in medieval *shi* poetry, "pure admonishment belongs to a genre like the admonitions." As the examples given here hopefully demonstrate, it is unclear what a "pure" admonishment even means. If it is understood only as a criticism of the ruler, then the Han and post-Han admonitions would hardly appear to qualify.

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