

# HAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE

*By T'ung-tsu Ch'ü*

EDITED BY JACK L. DULL

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS  
SEATTLE AND LONDON

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## FOREWORD

THE translation of the texts presented here and their initial analyses by Professor Ch'ü T'ung-tsu were made under my direction for the Chinese History Project of the University of Washington. Hence I welcome this opportunity to say a few words about the Project and the scholar who greatly advanced our work on the Ch'in and Han dynasties.

It was hoped that *The History of Chinese Society: Liao*, which appeared in 1949, would serve as a model for subsequent volumes. For various reasons this plan had to be abandoned. But while our Ch'in-Han material is being presented in a series of monographs, many features of the early volume have been retained.

Before Professor Ch'ü joined the Chinese History Project in 1945, Mr. Wang Yü-ch'üan had selected, translated, and annotated basic texts pertaining to major aspects of Ch'in and Han society. Not long after the end of the war he left the Project. Mrs. Lea Kisselgoff, who had studied under Professors Paul Pelliot and Marcel Granet in Paris, joined our staff in the early forties. She dealt painstakingly and competently with the many problems of meaning, interpretation, and bibliography presented by our primary and related sources. Mrs. Ruth S. Ricard saw the manuscript through its early phases. She combined an exceptional secretarial skill with great ingenuity in overcoming the endless technical difficulties involved in this task.

Professor Ch'ü, whose training and capacity eminently fitted him to become the Project's major Han specialist, added very substantially to the number of translated texts and annotation of the original Sections VII (Social Stratification, Kinship System, Customs and Traditions), VIII (Powerful Families), and IX (Temples and Monasteries). These three sections have been rearranged. Under Professor Ch'ü's hand, material was compiled that will make Section IX a highly illuminating monograph on Ch'in and Han religion, and the data on customs and

traditions will become an equally illuminating monograph on Ch'in and Han folklore. I trust that both these studies will soon find their way into print. The greater part of the data of Section VII and virtually the whole of Section VIII have been brought together in the present volume, for which Professor Ch'ü has written the analytic introduction.

All these studies were well advanced when Professor Ch'ü resigned from the Project to work at a special assignment at Harvard University, and later to teach at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. Fortunately, he could still work on the Ch'in-Han material at the Far Eastern and Russian Institute of the University of Washington, to which the "dynastic" material of the Project had been transferred in the late fifties. Under Professor Hellmut Wilhelm's guidance and with Professor Jack L. Dull's editorship, Professor Ch'ü completed his task before joining (in 1965) his wife and children, who had returned earlier to the Chinese mainland.

*Habent sua fata* . . . This is not the place to tell the story of the Chinese History Project, on which the World War and the developments in China left their mark. Nor is this the place for a detailed discussion of Professor Ch'ü's methodological framework and conclusions. When he joined our staff, he viewed the history of Chinese society essentially as Max Weber did. And though I differed with him concerning Weber's idea of China's bureaucracy as an estate (*Stand*), I respected his freedom to develop his argument as befitted a free scholar in a free world.

For the record, I should like to restate a point on which Professor Ch'ü and I were at one: that the core of the social power structure in imperial China was a ruling bureaucracy. This stratum interlocked with and was supplemented by what we originally designated as "powerful families." Since then, the "notables" (or "gentry") in bureaucratic societies have been examined further. But the Ch'in-Han material on "powerful families" assembled in the present volume is among the richest of its kind. While here and elsewhere different interpretations can be expected, all serious students will agree that Professor Ch'ü's contribution has raised the investigation of Chinese society and history to a new level of factual inquiry and coordination.

KARL A. WITTFOGEL  
 Director  
 Chinese History Project

New York  
 March 1967

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

THIS volume, the first of a series of monographs dealing with various aspects of the history of the Ch'in-Han period, was originally conceived as one chapter in a much more modest undertaking: a one-volume history of the Ch'in-Han dynasties, which was to be a companion volume to the work on the Liao dynasty by Karl August Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng. Under Professor Wittfogel's earlier plan there was to be one volume for each of the major dynasties. When, in 1939, Wang Yü-ch'üan joined Professor Wittfogel on the Han Project, roughly the same categories were established as those used in the Liao volume, and Wang began translating and annotating texts for each of the sixteen sections into which the finished work was to be divided. Later, Ch'ü T'ung-tsu joined the Project, and although he continued some of the work begun by Wang, he concerned himself largely with the topic of social structure.

Over the years a greater appreciation of the wealth of materials available led to recasting the form that the finished work should take. It was decided that, instead of a section, a volume or monograph was justified for each major subdivision. This volume is the first product of that revised approach to the materials.

This volume and many, though not all, of the others in this series are organized much like the Liao volume: there is an interpretive intro-

duction followed by documents translated from the Han histories, with annotations drawn from other contemporary, primary, and modern sources. The "introduction" is intended to stand as a monograph by itself and requires no further comment. The documents are grouped in three categories: (I) Kinship and Marriage, (II) Social Classes, and (III) Powerful Families. The documents are numbered consecutively within each category; thus a reference to I, 56, means document 56 in the first category. The translations adhere closely to the original text and are provided with extensive notes to clarify doubtful passages or to elaborate upon points raised in the passage. Chinese titles have been translated; the Chinese titles have been given on the first occurrence, and thereafter only the English translation is used. Generally, we have followed the translations of titles adopted by Homer H. Dubs, but have added many new ones.

Although Wang Yü-ch'üan translated some of the documents in this work while it was in its earlier stages, he is in no way responsible for the final product; that responsibility rests with Professor Ch'ü, who not only translated and annotated most of the documents in the first instance but also went over all the passages already translated. Since Professor Ch'ü returned to his homeland before the final copy was prepared, and since, at his request, we have ceased corresponding, I have been forced to make occasional stylistic changes that he has not seen. These changes are very minor and in no case has the meaning of the translation been altered.

The first half of this work, the "introduction," is entirely the work of Professor Ch'ü. Changes in this portion of the text, both stylistic and substantive, were made only with the full approval of Professor Ch'ü, and the basic argumentation is wholly his.

The author's views on Chinese society are well known from his earlier publications, and those views are reflected in this major contribution to our understanding of the Ch'in-Han period. Although I, as editor of this volume, did not feel that I could impose my own interpretations on the author, I personally feel that alternative interpretations of some of these materials on the Han are not only possible but also, in some cases, desirable. Furthermore, I would venture to suggest that there will be further discussions on the nature of Han society—discussions that will be engendered by the appearance of this work. In this way I hope that the volume will ultimately lead to a greater appreciation of the changing nature of early Chinese society and also to the asking (and answering) of larger questions concerning the "Confucianization" of Chinese soci-

ety. The book provides us with an impressive amount of materials for understanding the nature of Han society; it also raises questions about Chinese society in the Han and particularly the post-Han periods. This characteristic of providing solutions to problems while simultaneously leading the reader on to new issues is precisely what we expect from a good book.

The creation and publication of this work were possible only because of the cooperation of many people and institutions; they all deserve a public expression of appreciation. First among them stands Professor Karl August Wittfogel, who conceived the work in the first place and who saw it through its earlier stages. After George E. Taylor, Director of the Far Eastern and Russian Institute, arranged to have the project transferred to the University of Washington, Professor Hellmut Wilhelm became its general director; he has given unselfishly of his time and effort in pushing this work to completion. On several occasions, I have sought advice from Professor Hsiao Kung-ch'üan and from Mr. Tu Ching-i,—advice for which I am very thankful. At various times during the preparation of this volume, research funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation; without their generous assistance the work would have been impossible. Finally, publication has been made possible by a grant from the administration of the University of Washington. A special word of appreciation goes to Miss Arlene Cavanaugh for her careful typing of the manuscript.

JACK L. DULL, *Editor*  
April 1967



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