Han Yu's "Za shuo" 雜說 (Miscellaneous Discourses): A Three-Tier System of Government

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This article highlights the significance of the "Za shuo" 雜說 (Miscellaneous discourses) series for the study of Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) political ideology, which proposes a three-tier system of governance that is made up of the emperor, the feudal lords, and the bureaucrats. The emperor is the pinnacle of the system; he collaborates with his ministers to devise state policies in the inner palace. The feudal lords protect the emperor in the regional areas. The bureaucrats form the machinery of the government and implement its policies. Challenging current scholarship, which treats each of Han Yu's essays independently, the article proposes a new interpretation of them as a whole. It argues that the three essays "Long shuo" 龍說 (Discourse on the dragon), "Yi shuo" 醫說 (Discourse on physicians), and "Ma shuo" 馬說 (Discourse on horses) form an organic unit that provides internally consistent counsel to the ruler for his governance, and that a fourth essay, "Ti Cui Shanjun zhuan" 題崔山君傳 (Foreword to the biography of Cui Shanjun), is likely an interpolation. Through unearthing the true meaning of this series, the article also narrows down its time of composition, which has traditionally been left unspecified. This article also reveals Han Yu's attitude toward the revived concern over the enfeoffment of princes in medieval China and toward his political ideology, which is not purely Confucian. The article thus is a contribution to the study of both political history and literary creation in the mid-Tang era.

INTRODUCTION

Han Yu's 韓愈 (768–824) "Za shuo" 雜說 (Miscellaneous discourses) is a series of essays that have been traditionally treated as independent creations. Two of them, "Long shuo" 龍說 (Discourse on the dragon) and "Ma shuo" 馬說 (Discourse on horses) are popular anthology pieces.[1] This article provides new findings on multiple aspects of the series, including the number of essays included, their respective themes and relations, and date of composition. It also throws new light on Han Yu's political thought.

In most editions of Han Yu's works, the "Za shuo" series consists of four essays, simply titled as first, second, third, and fourth.[2] The first, second, and fourth essays are also often referred to as "Long shuo," "Yi shuo" 醫說 (Discourse on physicians), and "Ma shuo." Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) remarked that the third essay has an alternative title, "Ti Cui Shanjun

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1. Both essays are included in the influential anthology *Guwen guanzhi* 古文觀止, a Qing dynasty compilation for prose learners; see *Guwen guanzhi*, comp. Wu Chucai 吳楚材 (fl. 1694) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), 7.26a–27a. They were also selected for Ye Baifeng's 葉百豐 collection of traditional commentaries on Han Yu's works, *Han Changli wen huiping* 韓昌黎文彙評 (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1990), 22–27.

2. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 韓昌黎文集校注, ed. Ma Qichang 馬其昶 (1855–1930) and Ma Maoyuan 馬茂元 (1918–1989) (1986; rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 1.32–36.

zhuan" 題崔山君傳 (Foreword to the biography of Cui Shanjun), and that in some editions it is not included in the series.[3] This study argues that "Yi shuo" was written to support the guiding principles of the enfeoffment system, and that "Long shuo," "Yi shuo," and "Ma shuo" form one organic whole. It also presents an in-depth study of "Yi shuo," modifies the current understanding of "Long shuo" and "Ma shuo," and proposes that Han Yu advocated a three-tier system of government, made up of the emperor, the feudal lords, and the bureaucrats. The emperor is the apogee; he collaborates with his ministers to devise state policies in the inner palace. The feudal lords protect the emperor in the regional areas. The bureaucrats form the engine of the government: they implement policies. This study further narrows down the year of the series's composition to the period between 794 and 807.[4]

This article begins by examining the themes of the essays and their relation to one another. Most of this investigation will be devoted to analyzing "Yi shuo" because it has not been studied before. I then discuss "Ti Cui Shanjun zhuan," which is out of place in the series, and suggest a new range of years for the composition of the series.

"LONG SHUO": THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

The first essay, "Long shuo," sets the central theme: worthy ministers magnify the splendor of the ruler and validate his position. Previous scholarship has focused on what the dragon and the clouds in the text stand for, observing the interdependence between them.[5] While most would agree that the dragon stands for the ruler and the clouds for his ministers, nothing much has been said about the essay's key message, that the ruler's identity also depends on his ministers, and that the reference to *The Book of Changes* (*Zhou yi* 周易) is crucial in determining the leading role of this text.[6] The image of the dragon as an awe-inspiring rather than a moralizing power has also been overlooked.

"Long shuo" reads:

3. *Changli xiansheng ji kaoyi* 昌黎先生集考異 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 4.4b.

4. Chen Keming 陳克明 did not specify the date of the series, nor did Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 (1913–2001) and Chang Sichun 常思春; see Chen Keming, *Han Yu nianpu ji shiwen xinian* 韓愈年譜及詩文繫年 (Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 1999), 152; *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu* 韓愈全集校注, ed. Qu Shouyuan and Chang Sichun (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 1996), 2707–16.

5. Madeline K. Spring has discussed the three major interpretations. The first is the traditional interpretation that reads the clouds as a metaphor for worthy subjects; Han Yu is implicitly stating that without loyal subjects such as himself, the power and potential effectiveness of the ruler is severely diminished. The second is Tong Dide's 童第德 (1893–1969) proposal to read the text as a discussion between two friends, based on the assumption that without mutual respect and support no true friendship can exist. Spring argues that this reading is not applicable in light of the other essays and in view of the strong persuasive intent characteristic of ancient-prose imaginative discourse. The third interpretation, which she considers more insightful, is Qian Jibo's 錢基博 (1887–1957) suggestion that the dragon represents Han Yu himself. In this reading, Han is the one who stands out from others due to his distinctive characteristics, and the clouds are metaphors for the proper time and circumstances necessary for him to gain appropriate recognition. Spring observes that this interpretation returns to the concept that the dragon is a rare creature that only emerges once in a long while, and, since its appearance is so unfamiliar, it is seldom recognized. She cites other essays that are thematically similar in their use of dragons or other fabulous creatures, such as Han Yu's "Huo lin jie" 獲麟解 (Resolving [the question of] catching a unicorn) and Liu Zongyuan's 柳宗元 (773–819) "Zhe long shuo" 謫龍說 (Discourse on a banished dragon) and "Long ma tu zan" 龍馬圖贊 (Encomium on a drawing of a dragon-horse); Spring, "A Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen': The Rhetoric of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan" (PhD diss., Univ. of Washington, 1983), 140–49.

6. The most detailed traditional commentary is Xie Fangde's 謝枋得 (1226–1289) line-by-line interpretation, but Xie does not explain the significance of the quote from *The Book of Changes* nor the leading role of this essay in the series; see *Wenzhang guifan pinglin zhushi* 文章軌範評林註釋, comm. and sel. Xie Fangde, comm. Zou Shouyi 鄒守益 (1491–1562), Li Tingji 李廷機 (d. 1616), coll. Itō Randen 伊東藍田 (1734–1809) (Kagoshima: Kagoshima-ken kanpon 鹿児島県刊本, 1872), *juan* 5, n.p.

> The dragon breathes out, and its breath turns into clouds. The clouds indeed cannot be more numinous than the dragon; but the dragon rides on this breath, travels far and wide in mysterious space, approaches the sun and the moon, crouches in their light and glow, induces thunder and lightning, makes its [own] transformations divine, spreads rain on the land, and drenches mountains and valleys: how numinous and marvelous are the clouds!
>
> The clouds are what the dragon can make numinous; the numen of this dragon, however, is not something the clouds can make numinous; but [if] the dragon does not have the clouds, it has nothing to rely upon to divinize its numen. Losing what it relies upon—isn't this indeed unfeasible?
>
> How unusual! What it relies upon is what it creates. *The Book of Changes* says, "The clouds follow the dragon." As it is called "dragon," the clouds should follow.[7]
>
> 龍噓氣成雲，雲固弗靈於龍也；然龍乘是氣，茫洋窮乎玄間，薄日月，伏光景，感震電，神變化，水下土，汩陵谷；雲亦靈怪矣哉！雲，龍之所能使為靈也，若龍之靈，則非雲之所能使為靈也；然龍弗得雲，無以神其靈矣；失其所憑依，信不可歟？異哉！其所憑依，乃其所自為也。《易》曰：「雲從龍。」既曰龍，雲從之矣。[8]

This essay explores the relationship between the dragon and the clouds it creates. The dragon is clearly a metaphor for the sage ruler;[9] the clouds, in the traditional understanding of the essay, are metaphors for wise ministers.[10] The monarch gives worthy men honorable positions as chief ministers; in return, he receives their support to rule the state. When they work seamlessly together, like the dragon accompanied by the clouds, this will create a time of great peace, signified by a wise and vigorous ruler.

The source of Han's quotation "the clouds follow the dragon" is the commentary on the words of the text for the fifth *yang* line (九五) of the *Qian* 乾 (pure *yang*) hexagram in *The Book of Changes*. It reads:

> Things with the same tonality resonate together; things with the same material force seek out one another. Water flows to where it is wet; fire goes toward where it is dry. Clouds follow the dragon; wind follows the tiger. The sage bestirs himself, and all creatures look to him. What is rooted in Heaven draws close to what is above; what is rooted in Earth draws close to what is below. Thus, each thing follows its own kind.
>
> 同聲相應，同氣相求。水流濕，火就燥，雲從龍，風從虎。聖人作而萬物覩，本乎天者親上，本乎地者親下，則各從其類也。[11]

The line statement reads: "When a flying dragon is in the sky, it is fitting to see the great man" 飛龍在天，利見大人. According to Wang Bi's 王弼 (226–249) commentary, the path of the great man prevails when the dragon exercises its virtue in Heaven, that is, when the ruler acts virtuously.[12] Hellmut Wilhelm has pointed out that the flying dragon refers to the ruler, who can benefit by seeking advice from the great man.[13]

7. The translations of Han Yu's essays are mine, but I have taken note of Spring's translation in "Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen'," 133–34, and of her revised translation in Spring, *Animal Allegories in T'ang China* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1993), 143.

8. Text and punctuation are based on *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.32–33.

9. In Chinese culture the dragon can represent *yin* and *yang*, water and sky, sage and emperor; Spring, *Animal Allegories in T'ang China*, 142.

10. See, e.g., *Wenzhang guifan pinglin zhushi*, *juan* 5; *Guwen guanzhi*, 7.26b.

11. As translated by Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A New Translation of the I Ching as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994), 137. *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正義, 1.15a, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏, vol. 1, coll. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 1980), 15.

12. As translated by Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 137. *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 1.1a; 1.6a.

13. Hellmut Wilhelm and Richard Wilhelm, *Understanding the I Ching: The Wilhelm Lectures on the Book of Changes* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), 74.

The reference to the *Qian* hexagram, the first hexagram in *The Book of Changes*, is highly symbolic. The judgment for *qian* says that it consists of "fundamentality, prevalence, fitness, and constancy" 元亨利貞; the commentary on the judgment notes that myriad things are provided their beginnings by it, and, as such, it controls Heaven. It allows clouds to scud and rain to fall and things in all their different categories to flow into forms.[14] *Qian* is, as Hellmut Wilhelm stated, "the unlimited embodiment of the strong, light, active, creative power, whose symbol is Heaven. In relation to the human world, it stands for a creative personality in a leading position, the holy ruler."[15] Unmistakably, "Long shuo" points to the leading role of the ruler and his reliance on ministers personally appointed by him to create a time of great peace, which is in accordance with mainstream political thought during the mid-Tang. As Anthony DeBlasi has noted, the moral qualities of the ruler and ministers reinforce each other, determining the state of society.[16]

The image of the dragon inducing thunder and lightning, and drenching mountains and valleys, shows that this dragon can engender awe and respect. This awe and respect are not the result of mere moral power. In this sense, Han is advocating a vigorous emperor, as Charles Hartman suggested, when he proposed that Han Yu favored a "bipartite system of power," consisting of rule by a rigorous monarchy and administration by a career bureaucracy.[17] This emphasis on the emperor's strength is probably a response to the political situation of the mid-Tang, when the central government was losing control over its provinces after the An Lushan Rebellion (755–763). While the emphasis on the role of great ministers in governance can be associated with Confucian ideas, the celebration of a vigorous emperor who induces awe is associated with the Legalists.

"YI SHUO": FEUDAL LORDS AS BUTTRESSES AND BULWARKS

The second essay, "Yi shuo," has not yet received much scholarly attention.[18] I propose that it was written to support the enfeoffment system. Fully fledged by the Western Zhou period, the enfeoffment system was designed to prolong the imperial lineage and believed to be capable of extending the rule. My interpretation overturns the assumption that Han Yu did not write on that topic, again drawing attention to Han's reference to *The Book of Changes*.[19] The essay reads:

> Those skilled in medicine do not look at whether someone is stout or gaunt; they only examine the pulse to see if it is failing or not. Those skilled in planning for the empire do not look at whether the empire is safe or in peril; they only examine the "strands and ropes" to see if they are

14. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 129.

15. Wilhelm and Wilhelm, *Understanding the I Ching*, 65.

16. DeBlasi proposed that it was the major concern of Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818) and other scholar-officials that worthy ministers were not allowed to fulfill their crucial role: providing the ruler with the information he needed to govern benevolently; DeBlasi, *Reform in the Balance: The Defense of Literary Culture in Mid-Tang China* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 2002), 66–78.

17. Hartman also argues that Han Yu opposed contemporary elements or groupings—the hereditary aristocracy, the eunuchs, the Buddhist and Taoist ecclesiastical establishment, and the independent military—that took their power from either emperor or officials. Hartman remarks that the First Emperor of Qin (259–210 BCE) had created an earlier prototype of this binary system of government, and that Han's respect for this monarch and his interest in certain Legalist thinkers testify to this influence on his political thinking; Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1986), 11.

18. Xie Fangde, who explained the metaphorical meaning of each line in "Long shuo" and "Ma shuo," did not comment on "Yi shuo" and "Ti Cui Shanjun zhuan."

19. Qian Bocheng 錢伯城 proposed that Han Yu did not write on the topic because he rejected the enfeoffment system for its obvious defects; Qian Bocheng, "Du 'Fengjian lun'" 讀封建論, *Du shu* 1997.5: 43–46.

in order or disarray. The empire is [like] a person; its safety or peril is [like] being stout or gaunt; "the strands and ropes" are [like] the pulse. One whose pulse is not failing, although gaunt, is not in danger; one whose pulse is failing, although stout, will die. One who is well versed in this doctrine—surely he is aware of what to rely upon to rule the empire!

As for the decline of the Xia, Yin, and Zhou dynasties, feudal lords rose and wars and expeditions happened daily; the reason that [the throne] was passed down through dozens of kings and the empire did not topple was that the "strands and ropes" were preserved. As for the unification of the empire by the Qin emperor, he did not disseminate his power through feudal lords and had [their] weapons gathered and melted. The reason that [his throne] was passed down for [only] two generations and the empire toppled was that the "strands and ropes" were no longer preserved. For this reason, even if there is nothing wrong with the four limbs, this is not sufficient [for the physician] to be reassured: it is only the pulse [that matters]; even if there are no incidents within the four seas, this is not sufficient [for the ruler] to be proud: it is only the "strands and ropes" [that matter].

Being concerned about what one can be reassured by, and being anxious about what one can be proud of: those who are skilled in medicine and those who are skilled in planning refer to these as the Heaven upholding them.[20] The *Changes* says, "One should look where he has trodden and examine the omens involved."[21] Those who are skilled in medicine and skilled in planning will do this.[22]

善醫者，不視人之瘠肥，察其脈之病否而已矣；善計天下者，不視天下之安危，察其紀綱之理亂而已矣。天下者，人也；安危者，肥瘠也；紀綱者，脈也。脈不病，雖瘠，不害；脈病而肥者，死矣。通於此說者，其知所以為天下乎！夏、殷、周之衰也，諸侯作而戰伐日行矣；傳數十王而天下不傾者，紀綱存焉耳。秦之王天下也，無分勢於諸侯，聚兵而焚之；傳二世而天下傾者，紀綱亡焉耳。是故四支雖無故，不足恃也，脈而已矣；四海雖無事，不足矜也，紀綱而已矣。憂其所可恃，懼其所可矜，善醫善計者，謂之天扶與之。《易》曰：「視履考祥。」善醫善計者為之。[23]

The metaphors are clearly indicated: a competent doctor is a wise ruler; the human body is the state. Human life span depends on the pulse, just as dynastic duration depends on the "strands and ropes." The "strands and ropes" (*jigang* 紀綱) are components of a net. They are both types of threads and have the extended meanings of regulations, as suggested by putting the "strands and ropes" in order. Translations of the phrase *jigang* include "regulations and mainstays,"[24] "strands and mainstays," with the extended meanings of "network, nexus, organization,"[25] and "institutions; rules and regulations; law; moral standard."[26] Although the text of "Yi shuo" does not define "strands and ropes" explicitly, the discourse contrasting the relative length of the enduring Three Dynasties (trad. ca. 2070–256 BCE) with the extremely short-lived Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) reveals that they refer to the enfeoffment system. Liu Guoying 劉國盈 defines "strands and ropes" as the status of the Son of Heaven, which is representative of the hierarchical social order composed of the ruler and his subjects, the father and his children.[27] This hierarchical social order is greatly emphasized

20. Ma Qichang has pointed out that the meaning of 謂之天扶與之 is obscure. There are versions that do not include the word *tian* 天 or have *chi* 持 for *fu* 扶; *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.34.

21. As translated by Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 203.

22. Spring translates *fei* 肥 as "obese/obesity," but since *fei* is a metaphor for the safety of the state, it is positive in this context, closer to "stout." Spring, "Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen'," 134–35.

23. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.33–34.

24. Spring, "Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen'," 134–35.

25. Paul W. Kroll, *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 189.

26. John DeFrancis, ed., *ABC Chinese–English Comprehensive Dictionary* (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 447.

27. Liu proposes that military governors disrupted this order with military force while Buddhism and Taoism disrupted it with their ideas; Liu Guoying, *Han Yu congkao* 韓愈叢考 (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1999), 99.

in the enfeoffment system, in which "the ruler was the guiding principle for his officials, the father for his children, and the husband for his wife" 君為臣綱，父為子綱，夫為妻綱. The relation of these guiding principles to the Zhou dynasty is pointed out in Ma Rong's 馬融 (79–166) commentary of the *Analects*, that the "rites" in the line "Zhou follows the rites of Yin" 周因於殷禮 refer to the "three mainstays and five constants" 三綱五常.[28] These rites were the foundation of the enfeoffment system that made it possible for the Son of Heaven to give feudal lords military, political, and economic autonomy without worrying that they would rebel.

When Liu Zongyuan and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) discussed the administrative system, they used the word *zhi* 制 (system),[29] which also makes for a better match with *mai* 脈 (pulse), as both are one-syllable words and thus easier to incorporate in parallel phrases. Despite the standard use of *zhi* and the literary effect it can create, Han Yu used the term *jigang* instead, probably because he wanted to emphasize that the crucial spirit of the enfeoffment system does not rely solely on regulations but on rites as well. So long as the rites remained, the Son of Heaven would still be revered and could keep his position. It is for this reason that enfeoffment was often perceived as a demonstration of benevolence, because it implies trust and faith of the emperor in his imperial clan.

The pulse of a person, *mai* 脈, refers to the imperial bloodline in the context of Chinese dynastic duration, often used with *guo* 國 (state) in the combination of *guomai* 國脈 (bloodline of the state).[30] When the *Baihu tongyi* 白虎通義 (Comprehensive discussions in the White Tiger Hall) explains the system of concubines (*yingqie zhi* 媵妾制) of the Zhou dynasty, it uses *xuemai* 血脈 to refer to the bloodline, commenting that the feudal lord took concubines from three different states to diversify the bloodline to guarantee the delivery of offspring.[31] The system of concubines was associated with the enfeoffment system.[32]

To highlight the connection between "strands and ropes" and the enfeoffment system, Han Yu compares the Xia (trad. 2070–1600 BCE), Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE), and Zhou (1046–256 BCE) dynasties, collectively known as the Three Dynasties, with the Qin. He points out that during the Three Dynasties, although the power of the Son of Heaven declined with feudal lords fighting for hegemony, the imperial bloodline remained unbroken and the throne was passed down through dozens of rulers. This is like a person whose pulse is steady even though his limbs are weak. The Qin centralized its power by implementing a system of

28. Cheng Shude 程樹德, *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, 4 vols. (1990; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 4.128.

29. Liu Zongyuan, "Fengjian lun" 封建論 (Disquisition on enfeoffment), in *Liu Zongyuan ji* 柳宗元集 (1979; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 69–77; Bai Juyi, "Yi fengjian lun junxian" 議封建論郡縣 (Assessing enfeoffment, and debating on commanderies and counties), in *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 白居易集箋校, annot. Zhu Jincheng 朱金城 (1988; rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 64.3519–21.

30. See, e.g., the chapter "Si xian" 思賢 (Longing for the virtuous) in Wang Fu's 王符 (ca. 85–162) *Qianfu lun* 潛夫論, which poses, "Therefore, scholars who nurture their life take [herbal] medicine before they become sick; rulers who nurture their states appoint virtuous men before there is chaos. That is why they are always at ease, and the bloodline of the state is long-lasting" 是故養壽之士，先病服藥；養世之君，先亂任賢。是以身常安而國永永也. The two *yong* 永 (long-lasting) are considered a textual error, and Cheng Rong's 程榮 Ming edition, which Wang Jipei's 汪繼培 edition is based on, instead has *guomai yong* 國脈永 (the bloodline of the state is long-lasting); *Qianfu lun*, comm. Wang Jipei 汪繼培 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 2.88–90.

31. *Baihutong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, comp. Chen Li 陳立 (1809–1869), punc. and coll. Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 10.470.

32. The Gongyang commentary to the *Chunqiu* explains, "when a feudal lord takes a wife from a state, then two other states send concubines to accompany the bride, and her nephew and sister follow" 諸侯娶一國，則二國往媵之，以姪娣從; *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳註疏, comp. Gongyang Shou 公羊壽 (fl. 156 BCE), comm. He Xiu 何休 (129–182), sub-comm. Xu Yan 徐彥, ed. Pu Weizhong 浦衛忠 and Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000), 8.184.

commanderies and counties. It controlled its region, but the imperial house lasted for only two generations. This is like a person who appears sturdy but whose pulse is weak; thus, death is imminent.

This comparison of dynastic length, especially that of the Zhou dynasty and the Qin dynasty, was a common measure among those who supported the enfeoffment system. The most significant example is the conversation in 628 between Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649) and Xiao Yu 蕭瑀 (574–647), junior preceptor of the heir apparent (太子少師), in which Taizong inquired of the method for eternal rule.[33] In response Xiao attributed the length of the previous dynasties to the level of enfeoffment, with the extreme example of the Qin dynasty, which perished in two generations due to the complete termination of enfeoffment.[34] The *Zizhi tongjian* summarizes his remarks saying, "the Three Dynasties enfeoffed and lasted long, the Qin stood on its own and perished quickly" 三代封建而久長，秦孤立而速亡.[35] "Standing on its own" points to the fact that there were no feudal lords to support the Qin. Xiao Yu referred to the feudal lords as "bedrocks" (*panshi* 磐石), and "bulwarks and screens" (*fan ping* 藩屏), believing in their role in safeguarding the Son of Heaven.[36] Han focuses in his essay on "strands and ropes," highlighting that it was the ritual proprieties that governed the feudal lords; even though they fought each other, they did not overturn the Son of Heaven. Xiao Yu's response that "the Qin appointed civil governors; it lasted for only two generations" 秦置守令，二世而絕 holds the system of commanderies and counties responsible, for it deprived royal descendants of any opportunity to protect the imperial house.[37] Han Yu highlights this key feature: the First Emperor of Qin (r. 221–210 BCE) destroyed all the weapons of the feudal lords, allowing no regional power to exist. His refusal to enfeoff imperial agnates exposes his suspicions toward even his own clan. This centralization of power is often seen as a sign that the emperor was unable to rule with benevolence.

The similarity in discourse suggests that "Yi shuo" was written to support the enfeoffment system. Although hereditary lands were also bestowed on meritorious subjects and the descendants of former dynasties, the major grants were given to imperial agnates. Empowering them was also empowering the imperial bloodline. This is Taizong's concern, as it is Han Yu's, who used "pulse" as a metaphor for "strands and ropes" to stress that enfeoffment is beneficial to securing hereditary rule.[38] "Four limbs," the metaphor for the regional areas, is also a common metaphor for "brothers." It matches with the context of enfeoffing imperial agnates to guard areas outside the capital. Since the Three Dynasties were celebrated for

33. "Xiao Yu zhuan" 蕭瑀傳 (Biography of Xiao Yu), in *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (1975; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 63.2398–400. Jack Chen comments that the conversation took place during a banquet on January 15, 628 (the sixteenth day of the twelfth lunar month, in the second year of the Zhenguan reign); Chen, *The Poetics of Sovereignty: On Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Asia Center, 2010), 59–60. This date is based on *Tang huiyao* 唐會要, comp. Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 46.824–28. Sima Guang's 司馬光 (1019–1086) *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive mirror to aid in government) says that this conversation took place in 627; *Zizhi tongjian*, annot. Hu Sanxing 胡三省 (1230–1302) (1956; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 192.6037.

34. *Jiu Tang shu* 63.2401.

35. *Zizhi tongjian* 192.6037.

36. *Jiu Tang shu* 63.2401; "Xiao Yu zhuan," in *Xin Tang shu* (1975; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003), 101.3950–51.

37. *Xin Tang shu*, 101.3950–51.

38. David L. McMullen argues that Taizong saw hereditary enfeoffment of princes as a practical means to control, protect, and perpetuate his own imperial line to balance the administrative power of the civil bureaucracy; McMullen, "Big Cats Will Play: Tang Taizong and His Advisors," *Journal of Chinese Studies* 57 (2013): 315–18.

their sage rulers, the revival of the system was perceived as a prudent move to imitate those wise kings.[39]

An examination of the political and literary history further confirms this new reading. Because the Tang house had practiced honorary enfeoffment, with only material provisions but not land, there had been some debate on the possible return of the ancient system.[40] The open debate began in 637, when Taizong planned to confer hereditary prefectures on twenty-one princes and fourteen meritorious officials.[41] The issue resurfaced in Xuanzong's 玄宗 (r. 712–756) reign when the An Lushan Rebellion broke out. The rebellion was attributed to Xuanzong's appointment of An Lushan 安祿山 (d. 757), a military governor of nomadic origin, as head of all three northeastern garrisons. The emperor then had to reconsider his imperial household policy for securing the state, which led to the issuance of the Pu'an 普安 decree in 756 that appointed the heir and certain princes to various strategic regions to fight the rebels.[42] Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762), however, reverted to the suppression of princes, likely because of Prince Lin of Yong's 永王璘 (d. 757) rebellion.[43]

It was during Xianzong's 憲宗 (r. 805–820) reign that discussion concerning the enfeoffment of princes resurfaced. In 806, when Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831) was the left remonstrator, he composed "Xian shi biao" 獻事表 (Memorial on contemporary affairs) to recommend appointing princes to hereditary posts to stabilize the empire.[44] In 809, he made the same appeal in his New Music Bureau poem "Shangyang baifa ren" 上陽白髮人 (White-haired

39. For analysis of Taizong's intention of modeling the Zhou by reviving the enfeoffment system, see Chen, *Poetics of Sovereignty*, 59–63.

40. For a comprehensive study of the nature of enfeoffment during the Han and Tang dynasties, see Yang Guanghui 楊光輝, *Han Tang fengjue zhidu* 漢唐封爵制度 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2002).

41. Officials such as Ma Zhou 馬周 (601–648), Yu Zhining 于志寧 (588–665), Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659), Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643), and Li Baiyao 李百藥 (565–648) all presented views against the enfeoffment system. Taizong is said to have dropped his proposal after reading Li Baiyao's "Fengjian lun" 封建論 (Disquisition on enfeoffment); *Zizhi tongjian* 195.6130. See also "Ling zongshi xunxian zuo zhenfanmu zhao" 令宗室勳賢作鎮藩牧詔 (Edict commanding imperial agnates and meritorious officials to be hereditary prefects), in Zhou Shaoliang 周紹良, ed., *Quan Tang wen xinbian* 全唐文新編 (Chengdu: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 2000), 1: 5.51. According to McMullen, Taizong initiated another court discussion of the enfeoffment system in 628, and in edicts issued in 631 and 637 he raised the matter twice more. A long discussion, with contributions by leading court scholars, was recorded over the following decade; David L. McMullen, "The Emperor, the Princes, and the Prefectures: A Political Analysis of the Pu'an Decree of 756 and the *Fengjian* Issue," *Tang Studies* 32 (2014): 81.

42. For a comprehensive analysis, see McMullen, "Emperor, the Princes, and the Prefectures," 47–97. On the Pu'an decree (titled "Ming san wang zhi" 命三王制 [Imperial announcement conferring titles on three princes]), see *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集, comp. Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019–1079) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 36.154–55. In slightly different wording, the edict can also be found in *Wenyuan yinghua* 文苑英華 (Finest blossoms in the garden of literature), under a different title, "Xuanzong xing Pu'an jun zhi" 玄宗幸普安郡制 (Imperial announcement on Xuanzong favoring Pu'an commandery), written by Jia Zhi 賈至 (718–772); *Wenyuan yinghua* (1966; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 462.3a–5a, 6: 2351–52. For the policies of the post-rebellion emperors Suzong, Daizong, and Dezong toward the imperial clan, see David L. McMullen, "Put Not Your Trust in Princes: A Political Analysis of the Imperial Clan from 755 to 805," *Tang Studies* 36 (2018): 1–56.

43. Xuanzong had appointed various princes to various strategic points, while Suzong himself was posted in Shuofang, on the border, far away from the central plain. "Fang Guan zhuan" 房琯傳 (Biography of Fang Guan), in *Jiu Tang shu* 111.3322. The prince refused to acknowledge Suzong's status, attempting to occupy the lower Yangtze while the court was combating the rebels, which perhaps explains Suzong's later sensitivity to palace intrigues. "Shiyizong zhuzi" 十一宗諸子 (The various princes of the eleven forebears), in *Xin Tang shu* 82.3611; "Xuanzong zhuzi" 玄宗諸子 (The various princes of Xuanzong), in *Jiu Tang shu* 107.3264–66.

44. *Yuan Zhen ji* 元稹集, ed. Ji Qin 冀勤 (1982; rpt. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 1:32.373. For the memorial's year of composition, see Yang Jun 楊軍, *Yuan Zhen ji biannian jianzhu: Sanwen juan* 元稹集編年箋注：散文卷 (Xi'an: San-Qin chubanshe, 2008), 129–34.

women of Shangyang Palace).[45] In 806, Bai Juyi also composed "Yi fengjian lun junxian," one of the policy essays that he wrote in preparation for the imperial examination with his friend Yuan Zhen. Bai claimed that the key to successful rule was not which system to use but the virtue of the emperor.[46] Liu Zongyuan's argumentative essay "Fengjian lun," believed to have been written sometime between 804 and 814, when Liu was serving in Yongzhou 永州 (in modern Hunan), criticized enfeoffment and supported the system of commanderies and counties.[47] Yuan's and Bai's concern with the topic, especially in 806 when they were both preparing for the imperial examination, as well as Liu's detailed arguments, suggest that the comparison of the two administrative systems was once again a major issue in the mid-Tang. The issue had gone beyond palace debate and made its way into different genres of writing.

Because Bai Juyi's strategic essay was written to prepare for the imperial examination, with the emperor as the examiner, it is a perfect means to observe the concerns of the royal house during the mid-Tang. The essay begins with two points. The first states the consequences of the two systems: "The system of Zhou had five ranks [of nobility];[48] its drawback was the decline of the royal house. The Qin abolished fiefs; its defeat was the dismantling of the empire" 周制五等，其弊也王室衰微。秦廢列國，其敗也天下崩壞. These respective consequences are also stressed in Han Yu's essay. The second point reveals the emperor's highest priority: "Now I wish to make a billion people my children and all within the four seas my family, establish a legacy that cannot be surpassed, and pass down beneficence without end" 今欲子兆人，家四海，建不拔之業，垂無疆之休. The goal is to establish a long-lasting patriarchal state. Han Yu also emphasizes the preservation of the imperial line.

In response to the two issues raised, Bai Juyi proposes that the success of the system chosen, whichever that may be, depended on the emperor. He urges Xianzong to concern himself with how to govern by virtue rather than what system to use. More specifically, he suggests, "to make a priority of befriending and harmonizing kin, without considering it urgent to enfeoff princes; to have in mind rewarding hard work and encouraging leisure, without contemplating the establishment of feudal lords; to cherish revering the wise and favoring the virtuous, without paying attention to the establishment of [feudal] states; to treat as an [urgent] issue pacifying and consoling the myriad people, without considering the abolishment of commanderies" 以敦睦親族為先，不以封王為急；以優勸勞逸為念，不以建侯為思；以尊賢寵德為心，不以開國為意；以安撫黎元為事，不以廢郡為謀.[49] Bai Juyi believed that it was the emperor's attitude and policies, not the particular system, that played the determining role in dynastic duration. Bai and Han thus both agreed that the virtue of the emperor is decisive. However, Han also supports enfeoffment, unlike Bai who does not consider a change of the current system necessary.

Han's preference for the system of enfeoffment over commanderies and counties can also be seen in his other works. In his essay "Shou jie" 守戒 (Be on guard and stay alert),

45. Mei Ah Tan, "New Music Bureau Poetry as Memorial: The True Significance of Yuan Zhen's 'Shangyang baifa ren'," *Tang Studies* 35 (2017): 87–108.

46. "Celin xu" 策林序 (Preface to the policy papers) and "Yi fengjian lun junxian," in *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 62.3436–37; 64.3519–21.

47. Shi Ziyu 施子愉 proposes 814, during which year Liu immersed himself in the ancient classics and expressed his personal views in argumentative essays. Shi Ziyu, *Liu Zongyuan nianpu* 柳宗元年譜 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1958), 77–78.

48. Feudal lords were classified into five ranks based on the size of their states: *gong* 公 (dukes), *hou* 侯 (marquises), *bo* 伯 (earls), *zi* 子 (viscounts), and *nan* 男 (barons). According to Li Feng, the five titles had different origins, and the systematized ranks are only found in Eastern Zhou texts; Li Feng, "'Feudalism' and Western Zhou China: A Criticism," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 63 (2003): 134–35.

49. *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 64.3520.

he quotes the *Songs* and the *Documents* to glorify the imperial agnates in protecting the state, noting that feudal states are buttresses and bulwarks to the royal house.[50] In the end, he emphasizes that the most crucial is to have the right person for defending the state. In "Quzhou Xu Yanwang miao bei" 衢州徐偃王廟碑 (Stele for the Quzhou temple of King Yan of Xu), Han attributes the fall of Qin to its abolition of enfeoffment. This stele was originally inscribed to commend King Yan of Xu (fl. 10th century BCE), whose descendants asked Han to write an inscription that commemorates the renovation of the sacrificial temple. Han begins by tracing the Xu to the ancient Ying 嬴, the clan of the Qin emperors. Drawing attention to their kinship, he starts comparing the ruling principles of King Yan and the Qin emperors. Condemning the Qin emperors for ruling by force and for seeking profit, Han proposes that they only managed to take over the central plain because there was no virtuous Son of Heaven at the time to bring out the benefits of the enfeoffment system, and that the fall of the dynasty was inevitable when the First Emperor of Qin abolished the feudal system and made everyone his bureaucrats—this was the reason for the annihilation of his bloodline. King Yan, on the other hand, embraced the idea of benevolence and thus still received temple offerings long after he had lost his land. His benevolence was manifest in his willing sacrifice of the land to avoid military confrontation with his contemporary King Mu of Zhou 周穆王, who had sent an expedition against him when he realized that Xu had the support of thirty-six feudal states.[51] Xu decided to leave, and he was followed by many of his subjects.[52] The stele inscription should have had nothing to do with Qin and its administrative system, but Han Yu was so opposed to the Qin practice that he raised the question anyway by tracing the origin of the two Ying clans and by contrasting the results of their practice respectively.

The reference to *The Book of Changes* at the end of "Yi shuo" further indicates Han's writing intent. The quotation comes from the line statement associated with the top *yang* line (上九) of hexagram 10, *Lü* 履 (treading), which reads, "One should look where he has trodden and examine the omens involved. Here the cycle starts back, so it means fundamental good fortune" 視履考祥，其旋元吉.[53] That is, the ruler should examine his own behavior to receive good fortune. The judgment for the hexagram is: "Even if one treads on the tiger's tail here, as it will not bite, so he will prevail" 履虎尾，不咥人，亨.[54] This is a metaphor; it works for the "Yi shuo" comment on the risk of being unable to control the entire central plain, but the outcome will be positive as long as the emperor is cautious. This caution is defined in the commentary on the judgment of the hexagram:

> Treading is a matter of the soft treading on the hard. It is because *dui* responds to *qian* with cheerfulness that "even if one treads on the tiger's tail, as it will not bite, so he will prevail." [If one is] strong, adheres to the Mean, and is upright, [he may] tread in the place of a supreme sovereign and yet do so without anxiety, for this is the measure of his brilliance.
> 履，柔履剛也。兌而應乎乾，是以「履虎尾，不咥人，亨」。剛中正，履帝位而不疚，光明也。[55]

50. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.51–52.

51. Li Tu 李塗 (fl. 1131–1162) pointed out that most of Han's essays contribute to the promotion of moral education and the Confucian way, but "Quzhou Xu Yanwang miao bei" is an exception. King Mu of Zhou was the Son of Heaven, yet King Yan dared to hold audiences and receive gifts from other feudal lords. This was a transgression against ritual, yet Han Yu still lauded him for his benevolence. *Wenzhang jingyi* 文章精義, annot. Wang Liqi 王利器 (1912–1998), preceded by the publication of Chen Kui 陳騤 (1128–1203), *Wen ze* 文則 (1960; Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1998), 64.

52. "Quzhou Xu Yanwang miao bei," in *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 6.410.

53. As translated by Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 203–4; *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.20a.

54. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 200; *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.18a.

55. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 200; *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.18a.

Adhering to the Mean and behaving in the correct manner, the emperor will be fortunate even in the face of danger. In "Yi shuo," this great fortune is the continuance of the imperial bloodline (via the metaphor of the "pulse"), and the danger is that of the empire collapsing (via the metaphor of "the body"). The commentary on the abstract meanings or "images" (*xiang* 象) of the hexagram elaborates further on the manner in which the Mean and correct behavior can be achieved. "Above is heaven, and below is lake: [this constitutes the image of] *Lü*. [In the same way,] the noble man makes distinction between the high and the low and so defines how the common folk shall set their goal" 上天下澤，履；君子以辨上下，安民志.[56] The emphasis on the individual roles that each has to fulfill in society is a key concept in rites, the means for governance. The enacting of the rites is essential to maintaining the enfeoffment system. The quotation suggests that the emperor should consider implementing a proper system and act appropriately to avoid calamity. In "Quzhou Xu Yanwang miao bei," Han declares that the enfeoffment system failed only because the Son of Heaven was not virtuous. In order for the emperor to bring out the best effects of the system, so as to maintain his "pulse," or lineage, he must act with virtue.

The line statement for the top *yang* line forms a striking contrast to that of the third *yin* line (六三), the only broken line in the hexagram, which reads, "The one-eyed may [still] see, and the lame may [still] tread, but when [he] treads on the tiger's tail, [it] will bite him, [and he] shall have misfortune. [It refers to] a warrior trying to pass off as a great sovereign" 眇能視，跛能履，履虎尾，咥人，凶。武人為于大君.[57] This warrior Han Yu had in mind was probably the First Emperor of Qin, who tried to control his people by sheer military force, in complete contrast to the former kings, especially those of the Western Zhou, who implemented the enfeoffment system based on filial piety and ritual proprieties, the two most fundamental elements of Confucianism. In sum, Han Yu was advocating the system because it was based on the rites of the Western Zhou, and he believed that the success of that system lay in virtue and, more specifically, in benevolence. This idea that virtue is key chimes with that of Bai Juyi.

"MA SHUO": THE LARGE ADMINISTRATIVE BASE

The third essay, "Ma shuo," completes the series. It states that talented men are plentiful, and that they must await recognition by higher authorities, especially by the ruler and his ministers, to be recruited.[58] These men would become the effective executors of state policies, just like thousand-*li* (league) horses that could quickly carry people to their destinations. "Ma shuo" begins:

> Only when Bo Le was alive, were there horses that could gallop a thousand *li*. There have always been horses that can gallop a thousand *li*; but there has not always been a Bo Le. Therefore, even though there have always been fine horses, they have been abused at the hands of servants and died in stables side by side, not recognized for their ability to gallop a thousand *li*.
>
> Among those horses that could gallop a thousand *li*, some consumed [as much as] one bushel in one feeding. Those who fed the horses did so without knowing that they could gallop a thousand *li*. If these horses, though they have the ability to gallop a thousand *li*, have not eaten their fill, their strength is not sufficient and their talent and beauty cannot be revealed. It will be

56. Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 200; *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.18b.

57. Translation slightly revised from Lynn, *Classic of Changes*, 202; *Zhouyi zhengyi*, 2.19a.

58. Previous scholarship has focused on the idea of recognition alone; see, e.g., Zhang Qinghua 張清華, *Han xue yanjiu* 韓學研究, 2 vols. (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 1: 381.

difficult for them to compete even with ordinary horses. How can one expect them to gallop a thousand *li*?

Whipping them and not using the proper methods; feeding them and not realizing their abilities; making them neigh and not understanding what they mean—[the grooms] hold their whips and look down at them, exclaiming, "There are no [more fine] horses in the world!" Alas! Is it true that there are no [more fine] horses? They truly do not understand horses![59]

世有伯樂，然後有千里馬；千里馬常有，而伯樂不常有；故雖有名馬，祇辱於奴隸人之手，駢死於槽櫪之間，不以千里稱也。馬之千里者，一食或盡粟一石。食馬者，不知其能千里而食也；是馬也，雖有千里之能，食不飽，力不足，才美不外見，且欲與常馬等，不可得，安求其能千里也？策之不以其道，食之不能盡其材，鳴之而不能通其意，執策而臨之，曰：「天下無馬。」嗚呼！其真無馬邪？其真不知馬也！[60]

The theme is recognition. "Ma shuo" alludes to the availability of talented people and the pressing need to have wise officials recognize their ability and recruit them. Bo Le, the connoisseur of horses, is an established metaphor for high officials such as chief ministers, just as the swift horses are metaphors for talented people.[61] The horses without a Bo Le are metaphors for talented men left unrecognized, unable to reach their full potential. Food is a metaphor for honorable treatment, including, as Xie Fangde notes, the treatment of outstanding figures with ritual propriety, giving them high status and wealth so that their talents may be displayed and put into action.[62] "A thousand *li*" is a metaphor for adhering to moral principles and righteousness even at the cost of death. Only a virtuous ruler can inspire others to gallop a thousand *li*.[63]

The relation between Bo Le and the horses is similar to that of the dragon and the clouds. Both metaphors address the relationship between the ruler and his subjects. This final essay completes Han Yu's argument that the emperor, in order to perfect the administrative body, must be open to the recruitment of men who have great potential. As Sun Changwu 孫昌武 has proposed, the employment of worthy men regardless of their social status is an idea that is more closely associated with Mohism than Confucianism, which focuses more on hereditary succession.[64]

THE INTERPOLATION OF "TI CUI SHANJUN ZHUAN"

As we have seen above, "Long shuo," "Yi shuo," and "Ma shuo" are all metaphorical, unlike the essay that appears as "Za shuo the third," alternately titled "Ti Cui Shanjun

59. Spring translates the last part as, "When he is whipped, it is not according to his Dao, when he is fed, he is unable to use his talent completely, but yet when he cries out, he cannot get his meaning across"; Spring, "Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen'," 137. In the revised version, she translates it as, "They are whipped inappropriately and fed in such a way that they cannot fulfill their innate talent. Yet when they cry out, they cannot be understood"; Spring, *Animal Allegories in T'ang China*, 108. The Chinese does not specify the subject who performs this series of actions, but the verbs used suggest that the subject is actually the grooms. Both *si* 食 (to let [them] eat) and *ming* 鳴 (to make [them] cry) are causative verbs, with the pronoun *zhi* 之 serving as object, referring to the horses.

60. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.35–36.

61. Bo Le, original name Sun Yang 孫陽, was an expert in assessing horses during the time of Duke Mu of Qin 秦穆公 (659–621 BCE); see, e.g., *Liezi jishi* 列子集釋, comm. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 8.255–58 ("Shuo fu" 說符). In his comment on the *Zhuangzi* chapter "Ma ti" 馬蹄, Lu Deming 陸德明 (ca. 550–630) quotes *Shi shi xing jing* 石氏星經 (Classic of constellations by the Shi) saying that Bo Le is the name of a constellation in charge of heavenly horses and that Sun Yang, since he was so good with horses, was named after the constellation; *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 27.3a.

62. Xie Fangde, *Wenzhang guifan pinglin zhushi*, *juan* 5.

63. "Zhi shi pian" 知士篇 (Appreciating scholars), in *Lü shi chunqiu zhushu* 呂氏春秋注疏, comm. Wang Liqi (Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 2002), 9.899–900.

64. Sun Changwu, *Han Yu sanwen yishu lun* 韓愈散文藝術論 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1986), 28.

zhuan," and inserted between "Yi shuo" and "Ma shuo" in editions such as Qu Shouyuan and Chang Sichun's *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu* and Ma Qichang and Ma Maoyuan's *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu*. "Ti Cui Shanjun zhuan" reads:

> When Scholar Tan composed "The Biography of Cui Shanjun," he referred to cranes that spoke—isn't that peculiar?[65] Yet when I observe men, those who can fulfill their [human] nature and not resemble birds, beasts, and monstrous creatures are few. Is it only achieved by those who are indignant with the world, averse to evil, and would rather leave [the mundane world] without return?
>
> As for sages of the past, there was one whose head resembled that of an ox, one whose body resembled that of a snake, one whose mouth resembled that of a bird, and one whose appearance resembled a fluffy, hideous mask. They all had appearances similar [to other creatures], but their minds were different. Can we call them non-human? There are those who are extremely handsome, with proud bosom, delicate skin, and faces smooth with cinnabar-red. If their appearances are human but their minds are those of birds and beasts, how can we call them human? This being so, rather than observing appearances [to determine if people] are [human] or not, it would be better to discuss their minds and actions to see if they can act without committing errors. Matters concerning strange phenomena and spirits are what the disciples of Confucius did not speak of. I write about it because of his [i.e., Cui Shanjun's] indignation with the world and aversion to evil, and therefore composed a foreword.[66]
>
> 談生之為《崔山君傳》，稱鶴言者，豈不怪哉！然吾觀於人，其能盡其性而不類於禽獸異物者希矣。將憤世嫉邪，長往而不來者之所為乎？昔之聖者，其首有若牛者，其形有若蛇者，其喙有若鳥者，其貌有若蒙倛者：彼皆貌似而心不同焉，可謂之非人邪？即有平脅曼膚，顏如渥丹，美而很者，貌則人，其心則禽獸，又惡可謂之人邪？然則觀貌之是非，不若論其心與其行事之可否為不失也。怪神之事，孔子之徒不言。余將特取其憤世嫉邪而作之，故題之云爾。[67]

This essay points out that one's mind and actions determine one's nature, and that appearances can be deceptive. The style does not fit into the genre of miscellaneous discourse. The "Lun shuo" 論說 (Disquisition and discourse) chapter of the *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 (The literary mind and the carving of dragons) comments that *shuo* (discourse) is used for persuasion to create pleasure in the listener while addressing contemporary issues.[68] Nan Zhezhen 南哲鎮 points out that the term *shuo* originates from the "persuasions" of strategists speaking to feudal lords. The genre was not further developed until the mid-Tang, when the use of metaphors and prose narration to comment on social and political issues became significant. Nan observes that this type of "discourse" is often referred to as "Za shuo."[69] Since the three essays in Han Yu's "Za shuo" series are all metaphorical essays that address governance, "Ti Cui Shanjun zhuan" does not match the other three essays in theme or in style. Han concludes the essay by saying that it is a foreword for Scholar Tan's "Cui Shanjun zhuan" 崔山君傳 (Biography of Cui Shanjun). Although Huang Zhen 黃震 (1213–1280)

65. This alludes to a passage in the *Yiyuan* 異苑 (Collection of unusual [stories]) that expresses the idea that cranes are long-lived and knowledgeable about the past: "In the winter of the second year of Taikang during the Jin dynasty, it was severely cold. People of Nanzhou saw two cranes talking under the bridge, saying, 'This year is so cold; no less so than the year when Yao passed.' Upon this they flew away." 晉太康二年冬大寒，南洲人見二白鶴語於橋下，曰：「今茲寒不減堯崩年也。」於是飛去. *Yiyuan*, comp. Liu Jingshu 劉敬叔 (fl. 417), coll. and punc. Fan Ning 范寧 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 3.14.

66. See also Spring, "Stylistic Study of Tang 'Guwen'," 135–36.

67. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 1.34.

68. *Wenxin diaolong jiaozheng*, comp. Liu Xie 劉勰 (ca. 466–538), coll. and comm. Wang Liqi (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 4.126–33.

69. Nan Zhezhen, "Tang dai zashuo yanjiu" 唐代雜說研究, *Guji yanjiu* 2004.1: 196–200.

refers to the text as "He yu" 鶴喻 (Crane metaphor),[70] it is incorrect to do so, since the crane is not used as a metaphor, while all the creatures in the other essays are. There is also no central or extended metaphor in the essay, as there is in the others; only individual similes. Zhu Xi's remark that the essay is not included in the series in some of the editions viewed by him provides a hint that the essay does not belong.

THE DATE OF COMPOSITION

The central theme of Han's "Za shuo" is the three-tier system of government, with the emperor taking the leading role in seeking out valuable officials, both from within his own royal clan and from the literati. The respective themes, especially that of "Yi shuo," help narrow down the possibilities for the year of its composition.

There are currently two major opinions on dating. One is based on the compilation style of Han's works. Qu Shouyuan quotes from Fang Songqing 方崧卿 (1135–1194), noting that the series must have been written before Han Yu reached forty (i.e., before 808), because it was put in *juan* 11, where all the works were composed before 808.[71] This argument is quite convincing. The other opinion is based on Han's biography. Sun Changwu proposes that "Ma shuo" was written during Han Yu's early career, sometime between 768 and 803 (before he was thirty-five), when he was desperately in need of patrons.[72] While this is possible, there is also a chance that Han was writing for others who had similar experiences to his own. Han wrote many letters on behalf of those he considered worthy.[73] One of these letters, "Wei ren qiu jian shu" 為人求薦書 (To seek recommendation for someone), whose year of composition is unknown, also uses the metaphor of Bo Le and the thousand-*li* horses.

The similarities of ideas and discourse between this series and Han Yu's other works composed between 794 and 802 may serve as a reference for the date of composition. Early in his career, Han was seeking his Bo Le. In 794, he composed "Yu Fengxiang Xing Shangshu shu" 與鳳翔邢尚書書 (Letter to Minister Xing of Fengxiang).[74] In the letter, Han identifies himself as a plain-garbed gentleman awaiting recognition, while higher authorities rely on the acclaim of plain-garbed gentlemen to spread their fame. The letter takes the same form of argument as "Long shuo" and "Ma shuo": the higher authority and their officials are interdependent, just as the ruler is not sagacious without wise ministers, and Bo Le loses its identity without recognizing thousand-*li* horses. In 802, Han composed "Yu Yu Xiangyang shu" 與于襄陽書 (Letter to Yu of Xiangyang), in which he reiterated the interdependence

70. Huang Zhen refers to the four essays as "Long yu" 龍喻 (Dragon metaphor), "Yi yu" 醫喻 (Physician metaphor), "He yu," and "Ma yu" 馬喻 (Horse metaphor), proposing that the first essay argues that a ruler cannot do without his subjects; the second that order does not guarantee long-term rule; the third that men cannot be judged by their appearance; and the fourth that there are virtuous men who are beyond the commonplace. Huang Zhen, *Huang shi ri chao* 黃氏日抄, *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 edn., 59.13b.

71. *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu*, 2710. The same information can be seen in Fang Chenggui 方成珪, *Changli xiansheng shiwen nianpu* 昌黎先生詩文年譜 (1926), 24b–25a, in Beijing tushuguan comp., *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan* 北京圖書館藏珍本年譜叢刊, 11:364–65.

72. Sun Changwu, *Han Yu shiwen xuanping* 韓愈詩文選評 (2002; rpt. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2003), 66.

73. Han had many followers, partly because of his willingness to recommend others. The most famous among them are Li Ao, Li Han 李漢 (fl. 825–835), Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (ca. 777–ca. 830/835), Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751–814), and Zhang Ji 張籍 (ca. 767–ca. 830). They were known historically as "protégés of Han Yu" 韓門弟子. For a study of its connotations, from Han's support of like-minded literati on taking the imperial examinations to the meaning that focuses on the inheritance of Han's orthodoxies of Confucian thoughts and literary creation, see Qian Deyun 錢得運, "'Han men dizi' kaolun" 韓門弟子考論, *Journal of Chinese Studies* 59 (2014): 165–79.

74. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 3.201–2; for the year of composition, see *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu*, 1191.

between seniors and juniors in establishing their fame and careers respectively.[75] In 794, Han composed "Ying kemu shi yu ren shu" 應科目時與人書 (Letter seeking recommendation when sitting for examination), in which he compares himself to a peculiar watery creature: "As long as there is water, it can transform into wind and rain, roaming up and down under Heaven without difficulty" 其得水，變化風雨上下于天不難也.[76] This image recalls the spirit of the clouds that could realize the magnificent power of the dragon, as noted in "Long shuo." In 795, Han composed three letters to the ministers within forty-eight days, in which he emphasized that it was the responsibility of the ministers to ensure that every talented man be appointed.[77] Hartman notes that Han wrote to the chief ministers after failing the *Boxue hongci* 博學宏詞 (Vast erudition and grand composition) examination for the third time. In his indignation, he implies that the ministers who failed to nurture talent in public service did not, according to the Confucian concept of the "rectification of names," qualify to serve as ministers.[78] Han's situation recalls the idea expressed in "Ma shuo" that it is Bo Le that is scarce, not thousand-*li* horses.

Because the three essays "Long shuo," "Yi shuo," and "Ma shuo" read as a whole, they were probably written at the same time. As "Yi shuo" addresses the debate on enfeoffment, it is highly probable that it was written when that was again a central concern. Liu Zongyuan's argumentative essay "Fengjian lun" was composed sometime between 804 and 814; Bai Juyi's "Yi fengjian lun junxian" and Yuan Zhen's "Xian shi biao" were composed in 806; Yuan Zhen's "Shangyang baifa ren" was composed in 809. Han Yu was Liu Zongyuan's colleague when they both served as supervising censors in 803. It is possible that they discussed the issue before they composed their respective works on the administrative system. The emperor in 803 was still Dezong 德宗 (742–805, r. 780–805), in whose reign the greatest number of chief ministers were executed or sent into exile, including the two financial experts Liu Yan 劉晏 (715–780) and Yang Yan 楊炎 (727–821), as well as the virtuous minister Lu Zhi 陸贄 (754–805).[79] The metaphorical emphasis on the seamless collaboration between the emperor and his ministers could be a reflection on the political situation at the time.

Earlier in this article, evidence has been given—including intratextual, intertextual, historical, and literary—to prove that "Yi shuo" was written to comment on the enfeoffment system. The debate on it in the mid-Tang is only one of the many details that support this reading. The argument that "Yi shuo" is an essay related to enfeoffment because there was debate on it at the time, and that the year of composition can be deduced because the debate was under way, may seem somewhat circular, but the fact that there is plenty of other evidence to support the reading of enfeoffment makes it possible to use that debate to narrow down the possibilities for the year of its composition. To consolidate the results from all the means of dating, including the compilation style, which indicates a time of composition before 808: Han's life experience, which suggests the period of 768–803; similar images and ideas used in the period between 794 and 802; the revival of the debate on the administration system between 804 and 809; and Han's interaction with Liu Zongyuan in 803, the composition most probably falls between 794 and 807.

75. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 3.184–85; see *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu*, 1522.

76. *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 3.205; see *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu*, 1188.

77. For the year of composition, see *Han Yu quanji jiaozhu*, 1238–57.

78. Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity*, 30–32.

79. For a discussion of Dezong's attitude toward chief ministers, see Mei Ah Tan, "Beyond the Horizon of an Avian Fable: 'Large-Beaked Crows' as an Allegory of Wang Shuwen's Political Reforms," *Journal of Chinese Studies* 51 (2010): 235–37.

CONCLUSION

The "Za shuo" series proposes a three-tier government, and it clearly expresses Han's political ideology, taking Confucianism as its principle and incorporating the benefits of Legalism and Mohism. Han emphasizes the interdependence of the ruler and his ministers, quoting the *Book of Changes* to suggest the opening of a great era. His support for enfeoffment relies heavily on the Confucian ideas of rites, filial piety, and extended compassion. Confucians believed that the Son of Heaven should rule by virtue so that his subjects would model themselves after him, while cultivating loyalty in themselves and in the commoners. He praised the Zhou house for employing music and rites to stabilize society. As Han considered himself a disciple of Confucius and Mencius in the orthodox line, he too followed their doctrines,[80] and attributed the failure of the enfeoffment system to the ruler's incapability to practice benevolence rather than to the system itself. This is demonstrated by his deliberate use of *jigang* rather than *zhi* in the "Yi shuo," and by the stele for King Yan, in which he extols the king's benevolent rule and criticizes the Qin for its administration solely by force. At the same time, Han also advocates Legalist ideas on the importance of a vigorous emperor, reflected by his eulogy of the dragon's ability to incite awe and respect. The emphasis on the recruitment of worthy men, regardless of their social status and background, is an application of Mohist ideas.[81] The three-tier system that Han proposes concerns the preservation of the imperial lineage and the recruitment of virtuous and talented officials to support the government. These are the two steps also mentioned in the "Shize xun" 時則訓 (Seasonal rules) in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子: "To enfeoff lords and to appoint wise ministers" 封建侯，立賢輔.[82] Together with the emperor, they would herald a new era of great peace.

This research has produced multifaceted findings. It reveals that Han Yu's series of "Miscellaneous Discourses" includes only three essays that form an organic whole, all focused on the theme of governance. Together they present an idealized three-tier system of power composed of ruler, feudal lords, and worthy officials, based on the key concepts of Confucianism—benevolence and ritual propriety—while also benefiting from the ideas of Legalism and Mohism. The study uncovers that "Yi shuo" can be read as showing Han Yu's true attitude toward the enfeoffment system. It also revises the current understanding of "Long shuo" and "Ma shuo," and draws attention to the significance of the references to *The Book of Changes* in both. Finally, it narrows down the composition of the series to the period between 794 and 807. From a wider viewpoint, this research presents another angle to observe Han's innovation of the "Miscellaneous Discourses" and the political and intellectual development of the mid-Tang.

80. For a study of how Han Yu's literary theory and practice grew from his fundamental Confucian concern with political and social questions, see chapter 4, "The Unity of Style," in Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity*, 211–75.

81. Although Han considered himself a Confucian, that did not deter him from acknowledging the power of the ruler celebrated by Legalists, nor the appointment of worthy men regardless of their social status, as urged by Mohists. In "Jinshi cewen" 進士策問, he acknowledged the contributions of two Legalists, Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 BCE) and Shang Yang 商鞅 (? 390–338 BCE), who strengthened the Qi and the Qin states respectively. In "Yuan dao" 原道, he incorporated Mozi's idea of "universal love"; *Han Changli wenji jiaozhu* 2.104.

82. *Huainan Honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, comp. Liu Wendian 劉文典 (1889–1958), coll. Feng Yi 馮逸 and Qiao Hua 喬華 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 5.185.