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The Relationship Between Imperial Rule and Imperial  
Secretariat System in the First Half of the Later Han

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From the mid Former Han, by means of the Imperial Secretariat (*shang-shu-t'ai* 尚書台) employed as the "imperial mouthpiece" (*pi-hsia hou she* 陛下喉舌), emperors exercised systematic control over the bureaucratic structure. Thus the Imperial Secretariat system, possessing the function of managing the operation of state administration gradually developed. With the usurpation of government power by Wang Mang 王莽, this function of the Imperial Secretariat was however, stripped away and the operation of state administration rapidly deteriorated, leading before long to the collapse of government power.

With the restoration of the Han dynasty by Kuang-wu-ti 光武帝 and his successor Ming-ti 明帝, the Imperial Secretariat was again employed as the "imperial mouthpiece" and in the matter of exercising systematic control over the bureaucratic structure in order to vigorously demonstrate the function of managing state administration, through the Imperial Secretariat system, structured imperial control was greatly enhanced. On the other hand, however, in contrast to Kuang-wu-ti and Ming-ti, who vigorously demonstrated the imperial power to "scrutinize Imperial Secretariat business" (*hsing shang shu shih* 省尚書事), Chang-ti 章帝

set up the post of Overseer of the Imperial Secretariat (lu shang-shu shih 錄尚書事), structurally augmenting the diminution of his own power to "scrutinize Imperial Secretariat business".

From the reign of Ho-ti 和帝 onwards, a succession of empress dowagers maintained the court with young-emperors on the throne. As the scale of emperors' power to "scrutinize Imperial Secretariat business" diminished, a form of imperial rule in which the empress-dowager, with the support of her own (=imperial consort) clan "counselling from within the inner apartments" (*nei-fu* 內輔) can be perceived. The foundation of this system being established, against the background of empress-dowager holding the court, by the imperial consort families of purification in the form of "inner" existence, their resulting identification with the individual existence of the emperor had a definite influence on the operation of state administration through the Imperial Secretariat system, bringing to light the imperial consort regime as a major feature of Later Han history.

The peak of the imperial consort regimes was reached with that of the Liangs 梁氏 of the latter half of the Later Han dynasty, which gave rise to a political situation further complicated by the eunuchs. Just prior to that, however, in the reign of Shun-ti 順帝, with the suspension of empress-dowager court domination, the reappearance of the bureaucratic organisation, with regard to demonstration of function and operation of state administration by the Imperial Secretariat as the "imperial mouthpiece" shows the tentative establishment of structured imperial control. That is to say, the Imperial Secretariat system.

Tianjin under the Boxers' Control and the Myth of  
Local Militia in 1900

by Seiichirō YOSHIZAWA

Many scholars have been interested in the origin of the Boxer