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On the Ranking of Meritorious Vassals under the Early Former  
Han Dynasty: Ancestral Temples and Changes in the Privileges of  
Adjunct Marquises Appointed by the Founder

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It has been frequently pointed out that vassals who had rendered distinguished service in the founding of the Former Han 漢 dynasty were given privileged positions and took control of its political nerve centre during the first half of its existence. However, there has been little research on just what kind of privileges were obtained and how they were enjoyed. This article examines the historical significance of ranking meritorious vassals by the Dynasty Founder (Liu Bang 劉邦), and in doing so, reexamine historical developments during the period from the perspective of institutional history. The findings may be summarized as follows.

(1) Those vassals who served in Liu Bang's army and were enfeoffed as adjunct marquises (*liehou* 列侯) had by the second year of the rule of empress dowager Lü 呂 all been given a rank commensurate with their achievements.

(2) On the occasion of the annual offering of wine in the eighth month, subsequent emperors reconfirmed the documents recording the ranking of meritorious vassals kept in the founder's mausoleum, and also whenever any of the adjunct marquises enfeoffed by Liu Bang were divested of their lands, they always sought to reinstate them out of memory for Liu Bang and empress dowager Lü.

(3) It was during the first year of the reign of Emperor Jing 景 that the mausoleum of Gucheng 顧成 came to be honored on a par with that of the founder, and all adjunct marquises were obligated to attend all services performed there. Consequently, it became possible for the emperor to manipulate the

titular rank of "adjunct marquis" based on whether or not vassals were "respectful and punctilious" towards the ancestral temples, regardless of whether or not they had been meritorious vassals of the founder.

(4) This change of attitude towards the meritorious vassals of the founder meant that during the reigns of Emperors Jing and Wu 武, the special privileges held by them were negated in favor of a system that required all adjunct marquises to loyally serve the reigning emperor.

*Xingtai*: Regional Offices of the Ministry of State Under the  
Western Wei Dynasty

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Under the Northern Wei 魏 Dynasty, *xingtai* 行台, which were regional branch offices of Ministry of State (Shangshu Sheng 尚書省), became wide-ranging and powerful administrative agencies and continued to play an important role in regional governance under the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi 齊 Dynasties. However, since the institution has been thought to have fallen into decline under the Western Wei Dynasty, it ceased to be the subject of interest to historians of ancient China.

During that time, *xingtai* assumed a variety of forms. One was the conventional agency located in the provinces, another the *da xingtai* of Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 located in the central of government. Furthermore, regional *xingtai* were subdivided into (1) those located in already pacified areas, (2) those in war zones, and (3) those which local power-holders were permitted to establish. Type (1) were established in areas under the rule of the Western Wei and are seen on the front line facing the Eastern Wei. Many of them were established and then abolished during a short period during the first half of the Dynasty's existence. Type (2) were established throughout the Dynasty's history in conjunction with military campaigns against neighboring powers or during the pacification of internal rebellions. That is to say, when military action was being taken in areas where Dynasty rule had not yet been established. All of them were abolished as soon as military action came to an end. Type (3) were assigned to powerful clans and other local power-