THE BOOK OF LORD SHANG

Apologetics of State Power in Early China

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1.4: Du Zhi said:
   "I, your minister, have heard: 'If benefit does not increase hundredfold, one should not modify the law; if achievements do not increase tenfold, one should not alter [ritual vessels]. I, your minister, [have also] heard: 'One who imitates antiquity does not err; one who conforms to rituals has no deviations.' Please, my lord, consider this!"

Gongsun Yang said:
   "Former generations did not adopt the same teaching: So which antiquity should one imitate? Thearchs and Monarchs did not repeat one another: So which rituals should one conform to? Fuxi and Shennong taught but did not punish; the Yellow Thearch, Yao, and Shun punished but did not implicate [the criminals'] families, and Kings Wen and Wu both established laws appropriate to the times and regulated rituals according to their undertakings. Rituals and laws are fixed according to the times; regulations and orders are all expedient; weapons, armor, utensils, and equipment, all are used according to their utility. Hence, I say: there is no single way to order the generation; to benefit the state, one need not imitate antiquity. My lord, do not hesitate!"

2

ORDERS TO CULTIVATE WASTELANDS (糸令)

The second chapter of the Book of Lord Shang is sometimes viewed as related to the government ordinances that Lord Xiao of Qin allegedly issued to encourage cultivation of wastelands (Barbieri-Low and Yates 2015, 72). In my eyes, this interpretation is inaccurate. What we have in the chapter are not legal texts but rather twenty short recommendations about how to push the population toward farming. Each briefly introduces the desired policies, summarizes their social effects, and concludes with the uniform desideratum “then wastelands will surely be cultivated” (則草必變矣). It is arguably the dullest and least-sophisticated chapter in the entire book. It is also probably among the earliest.

There is no visible logic in the internal organization of the twenty items, and their reasoning about the effects of the proposed actions is at times difficult to follow. Some of the policies are aimed at improving the lot of the peasants: for example, preventing exploitation by “wicked officials” (2.1, 2.16) or “fix[ing] taxes according to estimates of grain yield” (2.2), which indeed became the norm in the state of Qin (Korolkov 2010, 142-169). Yet the authors’ primary emphasis is on directing the people to agricultural work by reducing the attractiveness of alternative occupations. Three groups figure prominently in the text as targets for discrimination. The first are members of the high elite, nobles and officials, whose lavish lifestyle (2.4, 2.6, 2.7) and social advancement due to “broad learning” (2.14) spoil the people's
more and distract them from agriculture. Moreover, members of the
elite protect their dependents, who thereby escape agricultural labor.
These dependents—composed of a variety of members of the lower
elite and subelite—are the second group targeted by Shang Yang. The
text repeatedly attacks "drifting people," those who "rely on their
mouths to eat," "those who are treacherous, impetuous, fond of pri-
ivate connections, and have no faith in agriculture," "those who hate
agriculture, who are indolent, and who have insatiable desires," "nar-
row-minded and short-tempered people," "ruthless people," "lazy and
indolent people," "wasteful people," and the like (2.4, 2.7, 2.8, 2.11, 2.13,
2.16, 2.20). By restricting their ability to enjoy elite patronage for their
living, the state will direct these people toward agricultural produc-
tion. The third group against whom the offensive should be launched
are merchants. They should be squeezed of their profits, humiliated,
and discriminated against so as to make their occupation singularly
unattractive (2.5, 2.6, 2.10, 2.15, 2.17, 2.19).

The early date of chapter 2 was discussed in chapter 2, part 1, and so
is not addressed here anew. Yet it is important to note that aside from
many indicators that connect this chapter with the pre-reform situa-
tion in the state of Qin, there are also meaningful silences that likewise
suggest an early date of composition. In particular, one is perplexed
by the authors' silence with regard to any positive measures to encourage
peasants to invest in opening up new fields. The chapter does not men-
tion such incentives as distributing tools or draft animals to the farm-
ners willing to develop wastelands or granting them temporary relief
from taxes or conscription, nor does it address hydraulic works or any
other proactive measures by the state authorities aimed at supporting
land reclamation. In distinction from later chapters (such as 6 and 19),
chapter 2 never raises the possibility of attracting immigrants. This
contrasts markedly with Qin's actual economic policies (for which see,
e.g., Pines with others 2014, 19–24) and suggests that the chapter was
composed before Qin's agromanaged economy matured. The authors'
inability to devise positive means of encouraging intensive agricul-
tural work turns the chapter's recurrent mantra "then wastelands will
surely be cultivated" into a somewhat simplistic and unconvincing
recommendation. Nonetheless, the chapter is a valuable glimpse into
the mindset of Shang Yang and like-minded reform statesmen at the
outset of reforms. It is also a precious testimony to the socioeconomic
conditions in the state of Qin at the time. For instance, the authors'
fear that "learning" will distract farmers from tilling (2.4) indicates
that it was possible back then for a "knowledgeable peasant" (2.14) to
change his social status due to superior education and suggests a rela-
tively early arrival of the age of social mobility in the state of Qin.


2.1: In governing do not procrastinate: then wicked officials will not
be able to profit privately from the people, the hundred officials will not
delay each other in performing their tasks, and peasants will have extra
time. If wicked officials do not profit privately from the people, then
the peasants will not be impoverished. If the peasants are not impov-
erished and have extra time, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.


2.2: Fix taxes according to estimates of grain yield; then taxation
will be uniform, and the people below will be equalized. If taxation is
uniform, it will be trusted; if it is trusted, officials will not dare behave
wickedly. If the people are equalized, they will be cautious; if they are
cautious, they will dislike change. If taxation is uniform, officials dare
not behave wickedly, and the people are cautious and dislike change,
then above they will not reject their superiors, while in the middle they
will not be embittered toward officials. If above they do not reject their
superiors, while in the middle they are not embittered toward officials,
then able-bodied people will be strenuous in agriculture and will not
change [their ways], while minors will tirelessly study [their example].
If minors tirelessly study [the example of adults], then wastelands will
surely be cultivated.


2.3: Do not fix ranks, responsibilities, or offices according to foreign
powers, then the people will not esteem learning and will also not
despise agriculture. If the people do not esteem learning, they will be
 ignorant; if they are ignorant, they will have no external ties; if they have no external ties, the state will be at peace and will not be endangered. If the people do not despise agriculture, they will exert themselves in agriculture and not be careless. If the state is at peace and is not endangered, while [the people] exert themselves in agriculture and are not careless, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.4: If emoluments are bountiful and taxes abundant, then too many people rely on their mouths to eat, and agriculture is devastated. So impose [on rich households] levies according to the number of mouths in their households and double their conscript obligations. Then deviant, floating, and idle people will have nothing to rely upon for sustenance; if they have nothing to rely upon for sustenance, they will have to be engaged in agriculture, and should they be engaged in agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.5: Allow neither merchants to buy grain nor peasants to sell grain. If peasants cannot sell grain, then indolent peasants will strenuously exert themselves. If the merchants cannot buy grain, then in the years of abundant harvests they will not be overjoyed; if in the years of abundant harvests they will not be overjoyed, then in the years of famine they will not make copious profit. If there is no copious profit, the merchants become fearful; when fearful, they will want to become peasants. If indolent peasants strenuously exert themselves, and merchants want to become peasants, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.6: If the sounds of music and [fine] clothes do not pervade the hundred counties, then the people will neither look at [fine clothes] while at work nor listen to [the sounds of music] while at rest. If while at rest they do not listen to [the sounds of music], their mood will not become licentious; if while at work they do not look [at fine clothes], their minds will surely be one. If their minds are one and their mood is not licentious, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.7: Do not allow the use of hired labor; then the heads of the noble lineages will not be able to engage in construction and renovation, favored sons will not eat indolently, indolent people will not be lazy, and hirings will have no means of sustenance. Then they will have to become peasants. If heads of the noble lineages are not able to engage in construction and renovation, there will be no damage to agricultural activities. If favored sons and indolent people are not lazy, then old fields will not become wasteland, if there is no damage to agricultural activities and peasants are even more engaged in agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.8: Abolish hostels for travelers; then those who are treacherous, impetuous, fond of private connections, and have no faith in agriculture will have nowhere to go. When the people who stay at the hostels for travelers have no means of sustenance, they will surely turn to agriculture; if they turn to agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.9: Unify [control over] mountains and marshes; then those who hate agriculture, who are indolent, and who have insatiable desires will have no means of sustenance. If they have no means of sustenance, they will surely turn to agriculture; if they turn to agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.
2.10: Raise the prices of wine and meat by placing heavy levies on them, increasing them ten times the original cost.¹⁴ Then merchants and peddlers will be few, peasants will not be able to get excessively drunk, and the great ministers will not overeat in a wasteful manner. If merchants and peddlers are few, superiors will not waste grain; if the people are not able to get excessively drunk, the peasants will not be idle; if the great ministers are not wasteful, there will be no delay in the state's affairs and the sovereign will not err in his undertakings. If superiors do not waste grain and the people are not idle at agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.11: Double the punishments and bind the criminals through [the system of] mutual responsibility; then narrow-minded and short-tempered people will not fight, ruthless people will not contend, lazy and indolent people will not drift, wasteful people will not appear, and evil people will not cheat.¹⁵ If these five types of people do not exist within the borders, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.12: Do not allow the people to shift locations on their own initiative;¹⁶ then ignorant people¹⁷ and those who disrupt agriculture¹⁸ will have nothing to rely upon for sustenance and will have to engage in agriculture. If the minds of ignorant and impetuous people are one, the peasants will surely be tranquil. If the peasants are tranquil and ignorant, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.13: Issue a comprehensive order to conscript minor sons,¹⁹ employ each according to his task,²⁰ and enhance the conditions for their exemption.²¹ Let them obtain their provisions from the officials in charge of food rations, who would regulate [the amount provided].²² If minor sons are unable to avoid corvée service or to attain high official positions, they will not drift into the service of other people.²³ Then they will have to engage in agriculture. If they engage in agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.14: Great ministers and nobles of the state's capital²⁴ should not be allowed to engage in affairs of broad erudition, sophisticated argumentation, or drifting and settling.²⁵ Do not allow them to drift and settle among the hundred counties, so that peasants will neither hear about extraordinary things nor observe different methods.²⁶ If peasants neither hear about extraordinary things nor observe different methods, then knowledgeable peasants will have no way to depart from their original occupation, and ignorant peasants will not become knowledgeable or fond of learning. If ignorant peasants do not become knowledgeable or fond of learning, they will strenuously devote themselves to agriculture. If knowledgeable peasants have no way to depart from their original occupation, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.15: Issue orders to bar females from the army's markets.²⁷ Order the merchants (in these markets) to prepare armor and weapons for themselves; let them watch when the army rises. Also, order that no one transfer grain privately to the army's markets. Then evil strategems will have no place from which to arise, those who illicitedly transport grain will not hoard it privately,²⁸ and lazy and indolent people will not drift to the army's markets. There will be no place to sell stolen grain, and the suppliers of grain will have no private [benefits]. If lazy and indolent people do not drift to the army's markets, then the peasants will not be licentious, and the state's grain will not be wasted;²⁹ then wastelands will surely be cultivated.
2.16: Let the hundred counties be governed by the same pattern; then those who follow deviant [officials] will not be able to alter regulations, and those who commit transgressions and are dismissed will not be able to cover up for those who had promoted them. If transgressions and promotions are not covered up, there will be no wicked men among the officials. If the deviant [official] does not embelish [his deeds] and a replacement does not alter [regulations], then official entourages will be small, and the people will not be exhausted. If there are no wicked men among the officials, the people will not drift; if the people do not drift, their occupations will not be undermined. If official entourages are small, levies will not become troublesome. If the people are not exhausted, peasants will have more time. If peasants have more time, levies are not troublesome, and occupations are not undermined, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.17: Make tolls at the passes and the markets heavy; then peasants will hate the merchants, and the merchants in their hearts will cast doubt upon [their own] indolence. If peasants hate the merchants, and the merchants doubt [their own] indolence, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.18: Enscript the merchants according to the number of members of their households. Order servants, grooms, runners, and pages all to be named [for corvée service]; then peasants will be at ease, whereas the merchants will be overworked. If the peasants are at ease, good fields will not become wastelands; if merchants are overworked, then the rites of sending gifts back and forth will not spread over the hundred counties. Then the peasants will not starve, and one's conduct will be without embellishments. If the peasants do not starve and one's conduct is without embellishments, the people will be strenuous in public works and will not neglect their private affairs. Then the peasants' undertakings will surely be successful. If the peasants' undertakings are surely successful, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.19: Do not allow those who transport grain to rent carts or rent out their carts on return. The weight loaded on carts and oxen should be registered. Then transport back and forth will be swift, and occupation [in transportation] will not undermine agriculture. If this occupation does not undermine agriculture, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.

2.20: Do not let [convicted] criminals request food from clerks; this way villainous people will remain without a master. If the villainous people are without a master, then villainy will not be encouraged; if villainy is not encouraged, then villainous people will have no one to depend on. If villainous people have no one to depend on, peasant [work] will not be undermined; when peasant [work] is not undermined, then wastelands will surely be cultivated.
AGRICULTURE AND WARFARE (農戰)

Chapter 3 is the longest in the Book of Lord Shang, as is appropriate to one titled “Agriculture and Warfare.” Indeed, the central message of the entire book points to agriculture as the singularly appropriate way of enriching the state and warfare as the only effective way of overpowering rivals and attaining security and peace. The chapter repeatedly reiterates this message (3.1, 3.6, 3.7). Moreover, it emphasizes how closely these two pursuits are linked; this linkage is reflected in their designation as “the One” (yì 壹). Agriculture provides material resources that enable the state to wage war; war expands the territory under state control and allows further agricultural enrichment. The chapter promises that the ruler who is able to unify the population in pursuing the One will become the True Monarch—that is, the unifier of All-under-Heaven (3.4, 3.7).

Its title notwithstanding, chapter 3 does not address practical issues concerning agricultural and military activities. Rather, its focus is on how to make tilling and fighting singularly attractive from a social point of view. The solution is simple: ranks and offices should be allocated exclusively to diligent tillers and valiant soldiers (3.2), whereas those involved in intellectual pursuits, commerce, and artisanship should be prevented from advancing up the social ladder. This recommendation encapsulates the new social system based on the ranks of merit that became the hallmark of Shang Yang’s reforms (see chapters 1 and 3 in part 1).

Among the three groups of unproductive populations who should be prevented from attaining office and rank, intellectuals figure most prominently. Those who study the Canon of Poems and Documents, those who advance through glib talk and argumentativeness, peripatetic men-of-service who enjoy the patronage of “external powers” (i.e., foreign states), and those who sell and buy promotions: all arouse the author’s (or authors’) ire. Intellectual pursuits—in particular engagement in the Poems and Documents and in moralizing discourse—are the true malady of the state: their success distracts the people from till ing and fighting (3.5). The intellectuals are “caterpillars” (3.6) who corrupt the officials’ conduct above and the people’s mores below; they weaken the state economically, militarily, administratively, and ultimately politically by encouraging dissent from below (3.10). They are the greatest threat to the state’s power.

The authors’ repeated appeals to the ruler to get rid of “traveling persuaders” (i.e., scholars who move from one court to another in search of better employment) and those engaged in learning indicate that by the time of the chapter’s composition (presumably at a relatively early stage of Shang Yang’s reforms), the power of the educated elite at the court of Qin was still considerable. The chapter serves as a testimony to the uphill battle faced by Shang Yang and his associates in their struggle to reshape Qin society and create a new sociopolitical system.

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3.1: The means whereby the sovereign encourages the people are offices and ranks; the means by which the state prospers are agriculture and warfare. Today the people seek offices and ranks, yet they are attainable not through agriculture and warfare but through crafty words and empty ways: this is called “to exhaust the people.” He who exhausts his people, his state will surely lack strength; he who lacks strength, his state will surely be dismembered.
3.2: He who excels at ruling the state teaches the people to engage exclusively in the One (i.e., agriculture and warfare) in order to attain offices and ranks. Hence, if those who are not engaged in the One will have neither offices nor ranks. When the state eliminates superfluous talk, the people will be simple; if they are simple, they will not be licentious. If the people see that the benefits above come from a single opening, they will engage in the One. If they engage in the One, the people will not recklessly demand riches. If the people do not make reckless demands, they will have abundant force; when force is abundant, the state will be powerful. Yet nowadays all the people within the borders say: “One can escape from agriculture and war and still get offices and ranks.” Therefore, the powerful and eminent are able to change their occupation; they diligently study Poems and Documents and then follow foreign powers. At best, they attain renown, and at the least they are able to seek after offices and emoluments. As for the petty and insignificant, they become merchants and peddlers, engage in skillful arts, and all escape agriculture and warfare. In such a situation, the state is endangered. If the people consider this a proper teaching, the state will be dismembered.

3.3: He who excels at ruling the state does not neglect agriculture, even if his granaries are full; he does not indulge in talk, even if the state is large and the population is plentiful; then the people will be simple and united. If the people are simple and united, then offices and ranks cannot be obtained through glibness; if they cannot be obtained through glibness, then treachery will not arise; if treachery does not arise, then the sovereign is not deluded. Yet nowadays the people within the borders and those who hold offices and ranks see that in the court one can obtain offices and ranks through glib talk and argumentativeness; hence, one cannot implement constant norms for offices and ranks. Therefore, when entering the court, they prevaricate in front of the sovereign, while when retreating they think of their private interests. As they think how to fulfill their private interests, they sell power to the underlings. Lying to the sovereign and thinking of private interests are not beneficial to the state, but they do so because of ranks and emoluments. Selling power to the underlings is inappropriate for a loyal minister, but they do so to seek wealth.

Therefore, lower officials who hope to be promoted all say: “If I have enough wealth, then I can make the superior official do what I want.” They say: “If I seek promotion without using wealth, it is like using a cat as bait for the rat: surely it is hopeless. If I seek promotion through earnestly serving the superior, it is like using a severed rope to straighten a crooked tree. It is even more hopeless, if through these two means I cannot get promotion, then how can I avoid pressuring the people below to get their wealth in order to serve my superior and thereby request promotion?” The hundred clans say: “I diligently farm to fill the ruler’s granaries first and then use the remnants to feed my parents; I fight selflessly for my superiors so as to attain glory for the ruler and peace for my state. Yet the granaries are empty, the ruler is debased, my house is poverty-stricken; is not it better to seek office?” The relatives intermingle and think about the matter even more intensively. The powerful and eminent diligently study Poems and Documents and then follow foreign powers; the petty and insignificant become merchants and peddlers, engage in skillful arts, and all thereby escape agriculture and warfare. If the people consider this a proper teaching, how can one avoid farmers becoming ever fewer and soldiers ever weaker?
is a single man among them engaged in Poems, Documents, argumentativeness, and cleverness, one thousand people will all become remiss in agriculture and warfare. When one hundred people are engaged in agriculture and warfare, yet there is a single man among them engaged in skillful arts, one hundred people will all become remiss in agriculture and warfare. The state relies on agriculture and warfare for its security; the sovereign relies on agriculture and warfare to be respected. So if the people are not [engaged in] agriculture and warfare, it is because the ruler is fond of words and the officials have lost the constant [norms]. 3.5 When there are constant [norms] in appointing officials, the state is well governed; when there is commitment to the One, the state is rich; when the state is rich and well governed, this is the Way of the Monarch. 3.6 Hence, it is said: the Way of the Monarch is not external—it be personally engaged in the One and that is all.

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3.5: Now, if the ruler appoints [the people] only after considering their talents, abilities, knowledge and cleverness, then the knowledgeable and the clever will observe the sovereign's likes and dislikes and how he employs officials to manage affairs so as to conform to the sovereign's mind. Therefore, [appointment of] officials will lack constant [norms], the state will be in turmoil and not engaged in the One, and argumentative persuaders will not [be reined in by] the law. In this case, how can the people's pursuits not be numerous; how can land not be laid waste?

Poems, Documents, rites, music, goodness, self-cultivation, benevolence, uprightness, argumentativeness, cleverness: when the state has these ten, superiors cannot induce [the people] to [engage in] defense and fighting. 3.7 If the state is ruled according to these ten, then if the enemy arrives, it will be dismembered, and [even] if the enemy does not arrive, the state will be impoverished. If the state eradicates these ten, then the enemy will not dare arrive, and even if he arrives, he will surely be repelled; when an army is raised and sent on a campaign, it will seize [the enemy's land]; whereas if the army is restrained and does not attack, the state will surely be rich. When the state is fond of force, it attacks with what is difficult [to resist]; he who attacks with what is difficult [to resist] will surely prosper. [When the state is] fond of argumentation, it attacks with what is easy [to resist]; he who attacks with what is easy [to resist] will surely be endangered.

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3.6: Thus, whereas the sage and the clear-sighted ruler cannot fully grasp the myriad things, they understand the essentials of the myriad things. Hence, in ruling the state, they investigate the essentials and that is all. [Yet] today many of those who rule the state have no understanding of the essentials. At court, when they talk about orderly rule, they are incessantly engaged in contradicting each other. Therefore, the ruler is benighted by doctrines, officials are confused by words, the people are remiss in agriculture. Hence, all the people within the borders are transformed: they grow fond of argumentation and enjoy learning; they become merchants and peddlers, engage in skillful arts, and escape agriculture and warfare. If this is so, [the state's demise] is not far away. When [such] a state has [military] undertakings, then its students hate the law, its merchants are fond of transformations, and its skilful artisans are useless: hence, this state is easy to destroy. After all, when few are engaged in agriculture, yet "peripatetic eaters" are plenty, this state will be impoverished and endangered.

Now: various sorts of caterpillars are born in spring and die in autumn, but once they appear, the people lack food for several years. And now: when a single person tolls, but one hundred are eating what he produces, it is much worse than all the caterpillars! Hence, even if in every rural canton there is a bundle of Poems and Documents, and in every household one scroll, it is still of no use for orderly rule. It is not the technique to reverse [poverty and danger]. Therefore, the former kings reversed them through agriculture and warfare. Thus, it is said: "He [in whose state] one hundred people farm and a single one lives from their work will be the [True] Monarch; he [in whose state] ten people farm and a single one lives from their work will be strong; he in whose state half of the people farm and another half lives from
their work is endangered." Hence, he who rules the state well wants the people to farm. If the state is not engaged in farming, then it cannot be self-reliant in power struggles with other regional lords: it is because the strength of its multitudes is insufficient. Thus, regional lords exploit its weaknesses and rely on its deterioration; the country is invaded and dismembered, yet none is inspired to rescue it; by then it is already too late.

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3.7: The sage knows the essentials of orderly rule of the state; hence, he causes the people to direct their mind toward farming. If the mind turns toward farming, the people are simple and can be rectified; if they are ignorant, they can be easily employed; if they are reliable, they can be used in defense and fighting. When [committed to] the One, they are rarely deceitful and place great weight on their dwelling; when [committed to] the One, they can be motivated by rewards and punishments; when [committed to] the One, they can be used abroad. After all, the people are close to their superiors and sacrifice themselves for the regulations just because from morning to dusk they are engaged in agriculture. And the people cannot be used whenever they see that talkative peripatetic men-of-service who serve the ruler can attain respect, that merchants and peddlers can enrich their households, and that those engaged in skillful arts can fill their mouths. If the people see how these three enjoy convenience and benefits, they will surely avoid farming; if they avoid farming, the people will treat their dwellings lightly; if they treat dwellings lightly, they surely will not engage in defense or fighting for the sake of their superiors.

In general, he who rules the state well is worried that the people will disperse and cannot be consolidated; hence, the sage engages in the One thereby to consolidate them. If the state engages in the One for one year, it will be strong for ten years; if it engages in the One for ten years, it will be strong for one hundred years; if it engages in the One for one hundred years, it will be strong for a thousand years; he who is strong for a thousand years will become the [True] Monarch.

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3.8: The ruler maintains rewards and punishments so as to assist the teaching of the One; hence, his teaching can attain constancy, and governance can yield accomplishments. Yet the [True] Monarch attains the utmost essentials of orderly rule over the people; hence, he does not rely on rewards, yet the people are intimate with their superiors; he does not rely on ranks and emoluments, yet the people follow their occupations; he does not rely on punishments and penalties, yet the people will give up their life to him.

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3.9: When the state is imperiled and the sovereign is worried, persuaders form legions; but they are of no use for assuaging the perils. After all, the state is imperiled and the sovereign is worried because of [rivalry] with powerful enemies and great states. The ruler can neither submit to a powerful enemy nor defeat a great state; hence, he maintains defensive preparations, investigates the lay of the land, and consolidates the people's force so as to prepare himself for external engagements. Only thus can troubles be eradicated and the Monarchy realized. Hence, a clear-sighted ruler cultivates his governance and engages in the One. He eradicates whatever is useless and puts an end to the people's engagement in superficial learning and in excessive occupations. He unifies them in farming; then the state can be enriched and the people's force can be consolidated.

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3.10: Nowadays all the rulers of our age are worried that their states are endangered and their soldiers are weak, so they strive to heed the persuaders. Persuaders form legions; they multiply words and adorn sayings but are of no real use. The sovereign is fond of their arguments and does not seek their substance. The persuaders are satisfied; the roads are full of skilful talkers, and from generation to generation they go on and multiply. The people see that this is the way to reach
kings, lords, and grandees, and all learn from them. They form cliques and associations, debate state affairs, and come in profusion. Lower people are fond of them; grandees like them. Therefore, among the people few are engaged in agriculture, whereas “peripatetic eaters” are plenty; as they are plenty, the farmers are indolent; as the farmers are indolent, the land becomes wasteland.

If learning becomes habitual, the people turn their backs on farming: they follow talkers and persuaders, speak grand words, and [engage in] false debates. They turn their backs on farming and travel to get food, trying to exceed each other in words. Hence, the people abandon their superiors, and those who do not behave as subjects become more and more numerous. This is the teaching that impoverishes the state and weakens the army. If the state makes use of the people according to their words, then the people do not take care of farming. It is only the clear-sighted ruler who knows that being fond of words will neither strengthen the army nor expand the territory. Only the sage in ruling the country engages in the One (i.e., agriculture and warfare); he consolidates [efforts] on agriculture, and that is all.

Chapter 4 occupies a special place in the Book of Lord Shang. First, in terms of its thematic scope, it presents a synopsis of almost all the topics covered in the rest of the book. Social, economic, military, and cultural policies; legal principles; views of the people’s political role; elements of administrative thought—all are mentioned, even if briefly, in this chapter (the only meaningful silences are about ruler–minister relations and about running the state apparatus). Second, in terms of style, it uses short and energetic sentences, some almost sloganlike; everything—including grammatical particles—is sacrificed for the sake of brevity (even the ubiquitous particle ye 也 is present only once). This laconism not only complicates our understanding of the text at times but also creates a peculiar “take it or leave it” effect: policies are proclaimed, but the rationale for the proposed course of action is rarely if ever provided. Third, this is the only chapter in the entire treatise to merit a detailed, line-by-line internal exegesis. This exegesis is provided in two chapters: 20 and 5. The relation between the three chapters was first noticed by Meng Jifu (1942), whose analysis is now widely accepted by the scholarly community. It seems that chapter 4 was conceived as a canonical text, probably a summation of Shang Yang’s wisdom that deserved special commentarial treatment.1

Chapter 4 is also exceptional in the Book of Lord Shang in terms of its notoriety. It is the richest depository of appalling statements, which
misplaced into chapter 20 (see the discussion in the separate introduction to the appendix).

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4.1. One who eliminates the strong with strength is weak; one who eliminates the strong with weakness is strong. When the state engages in goodness, there will surely be many villains. When a rich state is ruled as if poor, it is called multiplying riches; he who multiplies riches is strong. When a poor state is ruled as if rich, it is called multiplying poverty; he who multiplies poverty is weak. He whose army performs whatever the enemy dares not perform is strong; he who in [military] affairs advances whatever the enemy is ashamed of is strong. If the state has few things, it will be dismembered; when the state has many things, it will be strong. When a thousand-chariot state preserves one thousand things, it will be dismembered. When [its] warfare is ordered and the army is [ready to be] used, this is called "strong." When [the people] are chaotic at war and the army is indolent, the state will be dismembered.

20.1: When the people are weak, the state is strong; when the people are strong, the state is weak. Hence, the state that possesses the Way devotes itself to weakening the people. When the people are weak, they are simple; when they are strong, they are excessive. When they are simple, they are strong; when they are excessive, they are weak; when they are simple they are regulated; when they are excessive, they are inclined to overstep [regulations]. When they are weak, they can be employed; when they are inclined to overstep [regulations], they are strong. Hence, it is said: "One who eliminates the strong with strength is weak; one who eliminates the strong with weakness is strong."

20.2: As for the people, if [the ruler] is good to them, then they are close [to him]; if they benefit from being used, they are harmonious; if they are able, they can be appointed; if they are harmonious, they fully dedicate themselves; when they are appointed, they
enrich themselves through government [service]." When superiors abandon the standards and rely on those whom the people consider good, there are many villains.

20.3: When the people are poor, they strenuously seek wealth; when they strenuously seek wealth, they become excessive; when they are excessive, there are parasites. Hence, when the people are rich and cannot be used, let the people use provisions to attain [ranks]; [ranks] will surely be bestowed according to one's efforts; then the farmers will not be indolent. When the farmers are not indolent, the six parasites will have no sprouts. Hence, the state is rich, and the people are well ordered; this is "multiplying strength." 36

20.4: As for the army: it is easy to weaken it and difficult to strengthen it. When the people enjoy their life, are peaceful and at ease, it is difficult to make them risk their lives in time of danger. 37 When it is easy to do so, the [state] is strong. When one is ashamed of [military] affairs, villainy multiplies. When rewards are few, you will not lose. When numerous villains are stopped, the enemy loses. It is surely beneficial—the army will attain utmost power and awesomeness. When in [military] affairs one is ashamed of nothing, it is beneficial to use the army. He who resides for a long time in the position of benefit and power will surely become the True Monarch. Hence, "the whose army performs whatever the enemy dares not perform is strong; he who in [military] affairs advances whatever the enemy is ashamed of benefits." 38

20.5: When there are standards, the people are at peace with hierarchy; when the sovereign makes changes, he employs the able and attains the suitable; when the state preserves peace, while the sovereign holds power, it is beneficial. Therefore, "the sovereign values multiple changes; the state values minimal changes."

20.6: When benefits come from a single opening, the state has plenty of things; when they come from ten openings, the state has few things. 39 He who preserves a single [opening will attain] orderly rule; he who preserves ten [openings will attain] turmoil. Orderly rule means strength; turmoil means weakness; when one is strong, things will come; when one is weak, things will leave. Hence, "the state that is able to bring things is strong; when it makes things leave, it is weak." 40

20.7: When the people are debased, they value ranks; when they are weak, they respect officials; when they are poor, they take rewards seriously. When one rules the people by punishments, they enjoy being used; when one makes the people fight by rewards, they regard death lightly. Hence, "When [the state's] warfare is ordered and the army is [ready to be] used, this is called 'strong.'" 41 When the people have private [avenues of] glory, they disdain the ranking system and despise officials; when they are rich, they treat rewards lightly. If one regulates the people's shame and humiliation through punishments, then when war comes, they go to war. The people are afraid to die, and their affairs are chaotic, yet they [still are obliged go to] war. Hence, they will be indolent in military service and agriculture, and the state will be weak. 42

4.2: Farmers, merchants, and officials are the three constant functions in the state. The three functions give birth to six parasitic affairs: "end-of-year," "food," "beauty," "likes," "aspirations," "conduct." When the six take root, 43 [the state] will surely be dismembered. The root of the three functions is in the three kinds of people; the root of the six [parasitic] affairs is in one Man. 44 [The state] that is ordered by standards is strong; that which is ordered by administrative measures will be dismembered. 45 When officials who rule according to constant [patterns] order [their affairs] well, they should be promoted. 46 When governance is large, the state is small; when governance is small, the state is large. 47 When you strengthen them [the people], you aggravate dismemberment; when you weaken them, you increase strength. Hence, he who attacks the strong with strength will collapse; he who attacks the strong with weakness will become the [True] Monarch. 48

When a strong state is not engaged in warfare, poison infiltrates its intestines; rites, music, and parasitic affairs are born; [the state] will surely be dismembered. When the state wages war, poison infiltrates the enemy; it lacks rites, music, and parasitic affairs; [the state] will surely be strong. When promotion is based on one's title and appointment on one's merit, that is called "strength"; when parasitic affairs are born, dismemberment is certain. When there are few farmers and many merchants, then the nobles are poor, the merchants are poor,
and the farmers are poor; the three functions are poor, and the state will surely be dismembered.\footnote{21}  

20.8: "Farmers, merchants, and officials: these three are the constant functions in the state." Farmers open up lands, merchants bring products, officials order the people. Three functions give birth to six parasitic affairs that are: "end-of-year," "food," "beauty," "likes," "aspirations," "conduct." When the six take root, [the state] will surely be dismembered." When farmers have extra food, they lavishy feast at the end of year. When merchants have excessive profits due to [the customers'] like of beauty, this harms [production of] utensils. When officials are put in place but are not made use of, they have the distress of "aspirations" and "conduct." When the six parasites become a custom, the army will surely be defeated.

20.8: When laws are crooked, rule is disordered. When the good are appointed, there is much talk. When order is attained through multiple [routes], the state is disordered.\footnote{5} When there is much talk, the army is weak. When laws are clear, governance is moderate; when one relies on force, talk is quelled. When governance is moderate, the state is well ordered. When talk is quelled, the army is strong. Hence: when governance is large, the state is small; when governance is small, the state is large."

20.10: When the government does whatever the people detest, the people are weak; when the government does whatever the people delight in, the people are strong. When the people are weak, the state is strong; when the people are strong, the state is weak. When the government does whatever the people delight in, the people are strong; when the people are strong and are further empowered, the army's weakness multiplies. When the government does whatever the people detest, the people are weak; when the people are weak and are weakened further, the army's strength is multiplied. Hence, employing the strong multiplies weakness; employing the weak multiplies strength and turns one into the [True] Monarch. He who rules the strong by strength is weak; his weakness is preserved; he who rules the weak by weakness is strong; the strong are eliminated.\footnote{23} When the strong are preserved, [the ruler] is weak; when the strong are eliminated, [the ruler becomes] Monarch. Hence: "he who governs the strong with strength, [his] state will be dismembered; he who governs the strong with weakness is the [True] Monarch."\footnote{22}

4.3: When the state has rites and music, Poems and Documents, goodness and self-cultivation, filiality and fraternal obligations,\footnote{24} uprightness and argumentativeness—when it has these ten, superiors cannot cause [the people] to fight, and [the state] will surely be dismembered to the point of final collapse. When the state lacks these ten, superiors can cause [the people] to fight, and [the state] will surely prosper to the point of [its] ruler becoming [the True] Monarch. When the state employs good people to rule villains, it will suffer turmoil to the point of dismemberment; when the state employs villains to rule good people, it will be ruled well to the point of empowerment. If the state rules through Poems, Documents, rites, music, filiality, fraternal obligations, goodness, and argumentativeness, then when the enemy arrives, the state will be dismembered; and even if the enemy does not arrive, it will be impoverished. When one does not rule through these eight, then the enemy dares not arrive; and even if he arrives, he will be repelled; and when an army is raised in invasion, it will be able to seize [the enemy's territory] and, after seizing it, will surely be able to hold it; whereas when one restrains the army and does not attack, [the state] will surely be rich. When the state is fond of force, it is called "attacking with what is difficult [to resist]." When the state is fond of talk, it is called "attacking with what is easy [to resist]." When the state attacks with what is difficult [to resist], it raises [an army] once and receives tenfold gains; when it attacks with what is easy [to resist], it dispatches [an army] ten times and loses one hundred.\footnote{25}

5.1: Argumentativeness and cleverness are the assistants of turmoil; rites and music are symptoms of excessiveness and indolence; kindness and benevolence are the mother of transgression; appointment based on reputation\footnote{26} is the rat of villainy. When turmoil has assistants, it is actualized; when excessiveness and indolence have
symptoms, they are practiced; when transgression has a mother, it is born; when villainy has a rat, it cannot be stopped. When the eight come together, the people overcome the government; when there are none of the eight, the government overcomes the people. When the people overcome the government, the state is weak; when the government overcomes the people, the army is strong. Hence, “when the state has these eight, the superiors cannot cause [the people] to put up defense and fight, and it will surely be dismembered to the point of collapse; when the state has none of the eight, superiors can cause [the people] to put up defense and fight, and the state will surely prosper to the point of [its ruler] becoming [the True Monarch].”

5.2: When the good are employed, the people are attached to their relatives; when villains are employed, the people are attached to regulations. Those who are harmonious and cover up for each other are “good”; those who are separate and regulate each other are “villains.” When the “good” are commended, transgressions are concealed; when “villains” are appointed, crimes are punished. When transgressions are concealed, the people overcome the law; when crimes are punished, the law overcomes the people. When the people overcome the law, the state is in turmoil; when the law overcomes the people, the army is strong. Hence, it is said: “When the state employs good people to rule villains, it will suffer turmoil to the point of dismemberment; when the state employs villains to rule good people, it will be ruled well to the point of empowerment.”

5.3: When the state attacks with what is difficult [to resist], it raises [an army] once and receives tenfold gains; when it attacks with what is easy [to resist], it raises [an army] ten times and loses one hundred. When the state is fond of force, it is called “attacking with what is difficult [to resist].” When the state is fond of talk, it is called “attacking with what is easy [to resist].” For the people, it is easy to engage in talk and is difficult to be usable. When the state’s laws encourage the people to make what is difficult for them, the army employs what is difficult for the people, and the state attacks with force, it raises [an army] once and receives tenfold gains. When the state’s laws encourage the people to make what is easy for them, the army employs what is easy for the people, and the state attacks with talk, it raises [an army] ten times and loses one hundred.

4.4: When penalties are heavy and rewards are light, then superiors love the people, and the people are [ready] to die for their superiors. When rewards are heavy and penalties are light, then superiors do not love the people, and the people are not [ready] to die for their superiors. When a thriving state implements penalties, the people benefit and fear [superiors]; when it implements rewards, the people benefit and love [superiors]. When [the state] implements punishments, [it should] inflict heavy [punishments] on light [offences] [and light on heavy [crimes]]: then light [offences] will not arise, and heavy [crimes] will not come. When the state lacks strength yet implements knowledgeable and skillful [policies], it will surely collapse.

Use punishments to handle cowards; they will surely become brave. Use rewards to handle the brave: they will [be ready to] die. When cowards are brave, and the brave are [ready] to die, the state will have no rivals, and it will be strong; the strong will surely become the [True Monarch]. Use punishments to make the poor become rich; use rewards to make the rich become poor. When a well-ordered state can cause the poor to become rich and the rich to become poor, then it will have abundant force; he who has abundant force will become the Monarch. [In the state of the True Monarch], for every nine punishments there is one reward; in a strong state, for every seven punishments there are three rewards; in a due-to-be-dismembered state, for every five punishments there are five rewards.

5.4: When penalties are heavy, ranks are respected; when rewards are light, punishments inspire awe. When ranks are respected, superiors love the people; when punishments inspire awe, the people are [ready to] die for their superiors. Hence, “when a thriving state implements penalties, the people benefit”; when it employs rewards, the superiors are revered. When the law is detailed, punishments are overflowing; when the law is simple, punishments are moderate. The people can be both ordered and in turmoil;
you order them when they are in turmoil, there is even more turmoil. Hence, order them when they are ordered, and orderly rule will come; order them when they are in turmoil, and turmoil will come. The people's disposition is to be ruled well, but their activities bring about turmoil. Hence, "when the state implements punishments, it should inflict heavy punishments on light [offences]: light [offences] will not arise, and heavy [crimes] will have no chance of arriving." This is what is called "ordering them when they are ordered." If in implementing punishments you punish heavily [only the] heavy [crimes] and lightly the light ones, then light [offences] will not be stopped, and heavy [ones] will have no chance to be stopped either. This is what is called "ordering them when they are in turmoil." Hence, when light [offences are punished] heavily, then punishments are eliminated, affairs are accomplished, and the state is strong; when heavy [crimes are punished] heavily and light [offences are punished] lightly, then punishments arrive, and [troublesome] affairs are born: the state will be dismembered.

5.5: When the people are courageous, reward them with what they desire; when they are cowardly, eradicate this with what they detest. Hence, when cowards are encouraged with punishments, they become brave; when the brave are encouraged with rewards, they are ready to die. "When cowards are brave, and the brave are ready to die, the state will have no rivals, and [its ruler] will surely become the Monarch."

5.6: When the people are poor, they are weak; when they are rich, they are excessive; when they are excessive, there are parasitic affairs; when there are parasitic affairs, the state is weak. Hence, when they [the people] are poor, increase their [wealth] by punishments, and they will become rich; when they are rich, diminish [their wealth] by rewards, and they will become poor. To raise up an ordered state, value causing the poor to become rich and the rich to become poor. When the poor become rich, and the rich poor, the state is strong. When the three functions are without parasitic affairs, the state is strong, and when for a long time they are without parasitic affairs, [the ruler] will surely become the Monarch.

5.7: Punishments give birth to force; force gives birth to strength; strength gives birth to awesomeness; awesomeness gives birth to virtue; virtue is born of force. Hence, when punishments are plentiful, rewards are heavy; when rewards are minuscule, punishments are heavy. The people have things they desire and things they detest; they desire the six excesses and detest the four difficulties. When they follow the six excesses, the state is weakened; when they implement the four difficulties, the army is strong. Hence, the True Monarch punishes nine times and rewards once. When he punishes nine times, the six excesses are stopped; when he rewards once, the four difficulties are implemented. When the six excesses are stopped, there are no villains in the state; when the four difficulties are implemented, the army has no rival.

4.5: If the state engages in the One for one year, it will be strong for ten years; if it engages in the One for ten years, it will be strong for one hundred years; if it engages in the One for one hundred years, it will be strong for a thousand years; he who is strong for a thousand years is the [True Monarch]. Awesomeness is what allows one to take over ten, what allows voice to take over substance. Hence, he who is able to inspire awe will become the Monarch. [The state] that is able to give birth [to force] but not to reduce [it] is called a "self-attacking state"; it will surely be dismembered. [The state] that is able to give birth [to force] and to reduce [it] is called an "enemy-attacking state." It will surely be strong. Hence, attack the [parasitic affairs], attack the [people's] force, attack the enemy. If you are able to do two of these and discard only one, you will be strong; if you are able to do all three of these, you will be awe-inspiring and will surely become the [True Monarch].

5.8: The people's desires are myriad, but benefit comes from a single [opening], if the people are not engaged in the One, they will not be able to satisfy their desires; hence, [have them] engage in the One. When they are engaged in the One, their force is consolidated; when their force is consolidated, they are strong; when they are strong and are used, their strength multiplies. Hence, "[the
state) that is able to give birth to force and to reduce it is called an "enemy-attacking state"; it surely will be strong." When you block the private ways [through which the people hoped to] fulfill their aspirations, and open a single gate [through which and only through which they will] attain whatever they desire, this causes the people first to engage in whatever they desire and only then to attain whatever they desire; hence, the force is abundant. When the force is abundant but is not used, then their aspirations are not exhausted; when their aspirations are not exhausted, they have private interests; when they have private interests, the state is weak. Hence, "the state that is able to give birth to force but not to reduce it is called a 'self-attacking state'; it will surely be dismembered." Hence, it is said: the state of the True Monarch does not store up force, and its households do not hoard grain. The state does not store up force [because] the inferiors can be used; the households do not hoard grain [because] superiors accumulate it.°

4.6: When decisions are made by every tenth hamlet, the state is weak; when they are made by every ninth (fifth?)°° hamlet, the state is strong. He who orders [affairs] by the daytime is the Monarch; he who orders [affairs] by night is strong; he who orders [affairs] by the next day, [his state] will be dismembered.

5.9: This is the orderly rule of the state: when [affairs] are determined by a household, you will become the Monarch; when [they are] determined by officials, you will be strong; when [they are] determined by the ruler [himself], you will be weak. [Punish] heavily for light [offences], [thereby] eliminating punishments; let the officials [adhere to] constant [methods]; then there will be orderly rule. Restrict punishments and bind the people through mutual surveillance.°°° [Promises of] rewards should not be broken.°°° If criminals are invariably denounced, then the people will make decisions in their hearts. When superiors issue orders and the people know to respond, when utensils take shape in the household and are utilized by officials,°°° then affairs are determined by a household. Hence, [in the state of] the True Monarch, punishments and rewards are determined by the people's hearts; the use of the utensils is determined at the household level.

When orderly rule is clear, [the people are] uniform; when it is dim, they differ. When they are uniform, [policies] can be implemented; when [the people] differ, [policies] are stopped. When they are implemented, there is orderly rule; when they are stopped, there is turmoil. When there is orderly rule, decisions are made by a household; when there is turmoil, they are made by the ruler. The well-ordered state values decisions made below. Hence, [the state] in which decisions are made by every tenth hamlet is weak; [the state] in which decisions are made by every fifth hamlet is strong.

When decisions are made by the household, one has extra time; hence, it is said: "he who orders [affairs] by the daytime is the Monarch." When officials make decisions, [the time] is not sufficient; hence, it is said: "he who orders [affairs] by night is strong." When the ruler himself makes decisions, there is turmoil; hence, it is said: "he who orders [affairs] by the next day, [his state] will be dismembered." In the state that possesses the Way, orderly rule is attained without heeding the ruler, and the people have no need to follow officials.

4.7: In registering the number of the people, record the living and erase the dead. When the people do not ascend from [producing] grain,°°°°° fields will not be covered by wild grasses. Then the state is rich. He whose state is rich is strong.

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4.8: When one eradicates punishments through punishments, the state is ordered; when one brings punishments through punishments, the state is disordered. Hence, it is said: "when in implementing punishments you [punish] heavily for light [offences], punishments are eradicated, affairs are accomplished, and the state is strong; when you [punish] heavily for heavy [offences] and lightly for light [ones], punishments are brought in, [more] affairs are born, and the state is
dismembered.” Punishments give birth to force; force gives birth to strength; strength gives birth to awesomeness; awesomeness gives birth to kindness; kindness is borne of force. One puts forward force to accomplish valiant fighting; fighting is used to accomplish clever stratagems.

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4.9: When grain is born, gold is dead; when gold is born, grain is dead. When basic commodities are cheap, yet producers are many while consumers are few, then farmers will face difficulties, and deceitful undertakings will be encouraged; the army will be weak, and the state will surely be dismembered to the point of final collapse. When a liang (ounce) of gold is born within the borders, twelve shi (jins) of grain are dead outside the borders. When twelve shi of grain are born within the borders, one liang of gold is dead outside the borders. When the state is fond of giving birth to gold within the borders, then both gold and grain are dead, both granaries and treasury are empty. When the state is fond of giving birth to grain within the borders, then both gold and grain are born, both granaries and treasury are full, and the state is strong.

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4.10: A strong state should know thirteen numbers within its borders: the number of granaries and residents; the number of adult men and women; the number of the old and infirm; the number of officials and men-of-service; the number of those who obtain emoluments by talking; the number of beneficial people; the number of horses, oxen, hay, and straw. If one wants to strengthen one’s state but does not know these thirteen numbers, then even if the state’s soil is advantageous and residents are numerous, it will be increasingly weakened to the point of dismemberment.

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APPENDIX: ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER 20

The last segment of chapter 20 is neither related to the exegesis of chapter 4 nor shares the stylistic characteristics of the rest of chapter 20. It is likely that it was misplaced in this chapter from another text. The first sentences of this segment overlap with a segment of chapter 9, and the last section appears as a belated (and historically inaccurate) abridgment of a discussion borrowed from the Xunzi. Judging from the historical information in this segment, it clearly could not have been produced before the mid-third century B.C.E. Its extensive reference to recent history resembles chapter 15 of the Book of Lord Shang (again, one of the latest in the treatise), which may reflect a common trend of late Warring States period thinkers (as exemplified in many chapters of, for example, Xunzi, Han Feizi, and Lishi chunqiu) to resort to history in order to demonstrate the correctness of their arguments.

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20.11: When a clear-sighted ruler employs his ministers, their utilization should be related to their merits, and rewards should reflect the full exertion of their labor. When the sovereign lets his people trust him as they trust the sun and moon, he will have no rivals. Now, Li Lou could see an autumn hair from the distance of one hundred paces but could not exchange his eyes with others; Wu Hao could lift the weight of one thousand jun but could not exchange his superior strength
with others. The worthiness of the sage is his disposition, but it cannot be lent to others. Now, all the power holders of our age want to be supremely sagacious, yet the realization of this goal is in what is called upholding standards. Rejecting standards yet trying to attain orderly rule is like carrying heavy luggage along a distant road without horses or oxen or crossing a great river without boat or oars.

Now, multitudes of subjects and a strong army are the assets of thearchs and monarchs, yet if one does not utilize clear standards to preserve them, this means placing oneself next door to danger and ruin. Hence, when the clear-sighted ruler examines the standards, among the people within the borders no one has a deviant and excessive heart, all the drifting and resident men-of-service are pressed into battle lines, and the myriad people are fully committed to tilling and fighting.

How do I know that this is so? The people of Chu are swift in arranging ranks and fast like the whirlwind; their steel produced at Wazi and iron spears are sharp as wasps and scorpions; their armor made of shark skin and rhinoceros hides is as hard as metal and stone. The Yangzi and the Han River serve as their moats; the Ru and the Ying Rivers serve as their boundaries; they are protected by the Deng Forest and are surrounded by Fangcheng. Yet when the Qin army arrived, Yan and Ying were overturned like a withered tree; Tang Mie died at Chuisha, Zhiang Qiao started [rebellion] from within, and Chu was divided into five. It is not that its territories were not vast, its soldiers numerous, or its armor, weapons, and resources lacking. It is because it lacked standards that it was neither victorious in fighting nor steadfast in defense. [It abandoned scales and weights and tried to estimate what is heavy and what is light.]
exchange for engaging in farming and warfare (6.4, 6.5). This means—as recommended in chapter 3—blocking the ways to social and economic advancement for all those who are not engaged in these two primary occupations, be they men-of-service (shu), artisans, or merchants (6.6). The authors furthermore recommend—in an echo of chapter 4 and in anticipation of chapter 7—to make full use of negative incentives against evildoers, meaning employment of harsh punishments to deter villainy (6.10). Third, socioeconomic and military policies should be designed to prevent the people from emigrating; this means making land rather than one's “body” (i.e., individual skills) the chief repository of a person's “capital” (6.6, 6.8). The combination of these policies will critically empower the state in its competition with its neighbors.

The philosophical sophistication and refined style of chapter 6 may be indicative of its belonging to a later layer of the book than, say, chapters 2, 3, and 4. Yet the chapter cannot have come too late: its mention of the usage of a small mu of 100 paces' length and its dissatisfaction with that usage (6.2) are indicative of its being penned during the process of Qin's move from using a small mu to a larger, 240-pace-long mu. Because the latter was surely the norm in Qin by the end of the fourth century B.C.E., the chapter is likely to have been composed much earlier, either during Shang Yang's lifetime or shortly thereafter.

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6.1: In general, the trouble of the rulers of our age is that when using the army, they do not assess its strength, and when managing grass and weeds, they do not measure the land. Thus, if the land is narrow but the people are numerous, this means that the people exceed the land; if the land is extensive but the people are few, this means that the land exceeds the people. When the people exceed the land, devote yourself to opening up [new lands]; when the land exceeds the people, engage in attracting [immigrants]. When one opens up, [lands] can be multiplied. When the people exceed the land, achievements of the state are few, and the army is weak; when the land exceeds the people, the resources of mountains and marshlands are not utilized. Casting away Heaven's resources and following the people's indulgence means that the rulers of our generation are committed to erroneous [policies]; yet superiors and inferiors are engaged in these [behaviors]. Thus, even if the people are plentiful, the army is weak; even if the land is vast, strength is minuscule.

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6.2: Hence, in ruling the state and making use of the land, the correct standard of the former kings was: mountains and forests occupy one-tenth; swamps and marshlands occupy one-tenth; valleys, dales, and running rivers occupy one-tenth; towns, settlements, paths, and roads occupy one-tenth; [in]fertile fields occupy two-tenths, fertile fields occupy four-tenths. Hence, when ruling the state, apportion the fields by calculating proportions [as follows].

The territory of five hundred small mu is enough to provide for one serviceman; [yet] this means that the land is not properly utilized. A territory of one hundred li squared can provide for ten thousand soldiers; [yet] the number is [still] small. Cultivated fields should suffice to feed the people; towns, settlements, and roads should suffice to settle the people; mountains, forests, marshes, swamps, valleys, and dales should suffice to provide benefits; marshes, swamps, dikes, and dams should suffice to accumulate [water]. Hence, when an army is dispatched, provisions are ample, and resources are abundant; when the army is at rest, the people are working, and the accumulated [surplus] suffices for a long time. This is what is called the standard of utilizing territory and being ready for battle.

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6.3: The rulers of our generation possess the territory of several thousand li squared, but their provisions do not suffice to prepare for battle or fill the granaries, and their army is comparable to that of their neighbors. Therefore worry about this on behalf of the rulers of our generation. After all, when the territory is large but is not cultivated, it is as if you have no territory; when the people are numerous but are not used, it is as if you have no people. Hence, the method
of ruling the state is to commit oneself to developing wastelands; the way of using soldiers is to commit oneself to unifying rewards.' When external private profits are blocked, the people are committed to farming; when they are committed to farming, they are simple; when they are simple, they fear orders. When private rewards are forbidden below, the people concentrate their force on fighting the enemy; when they concentrate on fighting the enemy, [the army] is victorious. How do I know that? The people's disposition is that when they are simple, they generate labor and take their strength lightly; when they are impoverished, they generate knowledge and weigh benefits. When they take their strength lightly, they are not fearful of death and are glad to be used [in the army]; when they weigh benefits, they are fearful of punishments and are at ease with bitter [toil]. When they are at ease with bitter [toil], the strength [that is, potential] of the soil is fully utilized; when they are glad to be used, the strength of the army is fully utilized.

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6.4: The ability of the well-governed state to fully utilize its land resources and to cause the people to die [for its sake] is due to the name (repute) and benefit that it brings to the people. The nature of the people is to seek food when they are hungry, to seek respite when they are beloved, to seek joy when they are embittered, to seek glory when they are humiliated; this is the people's disposition. In seeking benefit, the people lose the standard of ritual; in seeking name, they lose the constant of their nature. How can I demonstrate this? Now, criminals above violate the prohibitions of rulers and superiors and below lose the ritual of subjects and sons; hence, their name is dishonored and their body endangered, but they still do not stop; this is because of benefit. In the generations of old, there were men-of-service (shu) who did not have enough clothes to warm their skin or enough food to fill their bellies; they exerted their four limbs and injured their five internal organs above, but they behaved ever more broad-heartedly; this is because of name (repute). Hence, it is said: wherever name and benefit meet, the people will go in this direction.

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6.5: When the sovereign holds the handles of name and benefit and is able to bring together merit and name, this is the method [of proper rule]. The sage examines [the nature of] authority to operate the handles; he examines the method to direct the people. The method is the technique employed by the ministers and the sovereign; it is the essential [matter] of the state. Hence, it never happened that a ten-thousand-chariot [state] lost its method and was not endangered or that ministers and the ruler lost the techniques and there was no turmoil. In our generation, the ruler wants to open up land and order the people, and yet he does not examine the method; the ministers want to fully perform their affairs and yet do not establish the techniques; hence, in the state there are disobedient people, and the ruler has ministers who do not heed orders.

Thus, in ruling his state, the sage causes the people to follow farming at home and to plan for war abroad. Farming is what the people consider bitter; war is what the people consider dangerous. Yet they brave what they consider bitter and perform what they consider dangerous because of calculation [of name and benefit]. Thus, in [ordinary] life, the people calculate benefits; facing death, they think of name (repute). One cannot but investigate whence name and benefit come. When benefits come from land, the people fully utilize their strength; when name comes from war, the people are ready to die. When at home you direct the people to fully utilize their strength, wastelands will not remain uncultivated; when abroad you cause the people to be ready to die, you will overcome the enemy. When the enemy is overcome and grass does not cover wastelands, then without moving you will acquire the merit of being rich and strong.

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6.6: But now things are different. The rulers of our age are devoted exclusively to matters that are of no urgency to the state. They behave as if they are Yao or Shun, but their merits do not compare with those of Tang and Wu: this is the fault of power holders. I, your subject, would like to discuss their errors:
In ruling the state, if you discard the power of authority and rely on the persuaders’ talk, then you personally will be cultivated but will have meager achievements. Thus, when you employ the shi engaged in Poems, Documents, and persuaders’ talk, the people will wander and disregard their ruler; if you employ reclusive shi, then the people will be estranged and reject their superiors; if you employ brave shi, then the people will quarrelsome and disregard the prohibitions; if you employ shi who are skillful artisans, then the people will be volatile and easily migrate; when the shi who are merchants and peddlers are at ease and yet reap benefits, then the people follow their lead and question their superiors. Hence, when these five types of people join the ranks of state employees, the fields are covered by weeds, and the army is weak.

The capital of persuading shi is their mouth; the capital of reclusive shi is their mind; the capital of brave shi is their fighting spirit; the capital of skillful artisan shi is their hands; the capital of merchant and peddler shi is their bodies. Hence, for them, All-under-Heaven is just one home, and they move across it with their bodies as their capital. The people’s capital is accumulated in their bodies, and they can empower themselves anywhere abroad; carrying their accumulated capital, they flock to any place as if to their home: even for Yao and Shun it would be difficult [to make this situation orderly]. Hence, [kings] Tang and Wu prohibited it; thereby they established their achievements and accomplished a good name.

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6.7: The sage is not able to rely on what the world considers easy so as to overcome what is considered difficult; rather, he must rely on what is considered difficult to overcome what is considered easy. Hence, when the people are ignorant, they can be overcome by knowledge; when the generation is knowledgeable, they can be overcome by force. When the people are ignorant, they treat their force as easy, while treating sophistication as difficult; when the generation is sophisticated, they treat knowledge as easy, while treating force as difficult. Hence, Shennong taught plowing and became the king of All-under-Heaven; [the people] accepted him as teacher due to his knowledge. Tang and Wu devoted themselves to force and attacked [their enemies]; the regional lords submitted to their power. Nowadays, the generation is sophisticated, and the people are indulgent, which is modeled after the times of Tang and Wu. Yet [the rulers] perform the activities of Shennong, thereby damaging the prohibitions [appropriate to our age]; hence, the country of one thousand chariots is confused and disordered. To be further devoted to this [behavior] means to err.

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6.8: The nature of the people is such that when measuring, they take what is longer; when weighing, they take what is heavier; when using scales, they seek profits. The clear-sighted ruler carefully observes these three [behaviors]; only then can he establish orderly rule in the state and attain the people’s abilities. There are only a few things that the state demands of the people but many ways through which the people can avoid these demands. [What the state demands is,] at home, to direct the people to agriculture [and], abroad, to focus the people on waging war. Hence, in ruling the state, the sage multiplies prohibitions to stop the able and relies on force to eradicate deceitfulness. When the two are used simultaneously, then the people within the borders [focus on] the One; when they are [focused on] the One, they engage in agriculture; when they engage in agriculture, they are simple; when [they are] simple, they are at peace in their dwellings and hate going abroad. Hence, the sage, in ruling the state, causes the people’s capital to be stored in the soil and causes them to be endangered anywhere abroad. When capital is (accumulated) in the soil, they are simple; when they are endangered abroad, they are suspicious. When the people are simple within [the state] and are suspicious abroad, they will exert themselves in agriculture and be victorious in war. When the people exert themselves in agriculture, their capital is accumulated; when they are victorious in war, their neighbors will be endangered. When capital is accumulated, it cannot be carried off while running away; when the neighbors are endangered, the [people] will have no home [abroad] to which they can flock. Without capital,
without a home to flock to, and endangered abroad; even a crazy man will not do it (will not leave his country).

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6.9: Hence, in ruling the state, the sage establishes laws after observing customs and then attains orderly rule; he inspects the roots of the state's affairs and then acts appropriately. Without the observation of current customs and without the inspection of the roots of the state, laws can be established, but the people will be in turmoil; undertakings will be numerous, but achievements few. This is what I, your subject, call "to err."

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6.10: So punishments are used to prohibit evil, and rewards are to support prohibitions. Disgrace, humiliation, toil, and bitterness are what the people detest; prominence, glory, leisure, and joy are what the people are devoted to. Hence, when the punishments in the state are not detested, whereas ranks and emoluments are insufficient to cause devotion—this is the omen of a ruined state. Thus, when those penalized can escape and have their punishment revoked, petty men are deprived and licentious and do not consider punishments bitter; then they behave haughtily toward their superiors and seek benefit. When the gates of prominence and glory are not unified, then superior men serve the powerful to accomplish their name. When the petty men do not avoid prohibitions, punishments multiply; when the superior men do not follow orders, penalties are imposed. When punishments multiply and penalties are imposed, the state has many villains. In this case, the rich will be unable to preserve their wealth, and the poor will be unable to engage in their occupation; the fields will be covered with weeds, and the state will be impoverished. When the fields are covered with weeds, deceit is born among the people; when the state is impoverished, the superiors lack [the means to grant] rewards.

Hence, when the sage exercises orderly rule, convicts have no position in the state, and felons hold no office. When convicts are ranked [together with superior men], superior men disregard their position. When [felons] wear brocade and eat meat, petty men hope [to gain] similar benefits. When the superior men disregard their position, they are ashamed to claim merits; when petty men hope to reap benefits, they are proud of their depravity. So punishments and penalties are to stop the villains; offices and ranks are to encourage [gaining] merits. Now, if the state has ranks, but the people are ashamed of them, or when it establishes punishments, but the people are fond of them, this means that the techniques and the methods are in deep trouble.

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6.11: Hence, when the superior man holds authority, he establishes techniques of rule by rectifying everything; he establishes offices and makes rank esteemed so as to correspond to office; he investigates one's labor, elevates the meritorious, and then makes the appointments. Then superior and inferior are balanced. When superior and inferior are balanced, then ministers are able to fully commit their strength, and the sovereign is able to monopolize the handles of authority.