

Prenatal Instructions and Moral Education of the Crown Prince in the *Xinshu* by Jia Yi*

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If the cart in front overturns, the cart behind should heed the warning.¹

A clear mirror is what is used to reflect images; the past is what is used to know the present.²

The present study addresses the issues of foetus instructions, *taijiao* 胎教, and moral education of the crown prince within the *Xinshu* 新書 by Jia Yi 賈誼 (c. 200–168 BCE).³

The *Xinshu*, *New Writings*, is a collation of texts ascribed to the Han scholar Jia Yi.⁴ The *Xinshu* is one of the most important texts from the Former Han dynasty (202 BCE – 9 CE) and treats primarily political topics. Some of these texts were memoirs or records written by

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- 1 *Jiazǐ* 5.2 (“Baofu” 保傅), 621: 前車覆而後車戒。In this paper I use the *Jiazǐ Xinshu jiao shi* 賈子新書校釋, edited by Qi Yuzhang 祁玉章 (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua, 1974). Hereafter, I will refer to the text as *Jiazǐ*.
- 2 *Jiazǐ* 10.3 (“Taijiao” 胎教), 1161: [明] 鑑所以照形也，往古所以知今也。
- 3 *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959) 84 and *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962) 48 are the main sources for the study of Jia Yi’s life. Hereafter, I will refer to these texts as *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. We know that he was born in Luoyang 洛陽. Jia Yi became famous in his home commandery for his talent in composition and his skill in reciting the *Shi* 詩 and *Shu* 書. Jia Yi was also a specialist of the *Zuoqzhuàn* 左傳. At that time, the administrator, *shou* 守, of Jia Yi’s commandery was Honourable Wu 吳公. He heard of Jia Yi’s abilities and promoted him to a position in his entourage. Honourable Wu was a student of Li Si 李斯 (d. 208 BCE), the famous Qin 秦 minister. Li Si himself had been a student of Xunzi 荀子 (c. 313–238 BCE). These connections allow us to allocate Jia Yi, who was in favour with Honourable Wu, within the Warring States’ intellectual heritage. When Emperor Wen ascended the throne in 179, he heard of Honourable Wu because his administration was at peace and his commandery was the best in the realm. Wu became commandant of justice (*tingwei* 廷尉), and once at court he recommended Jia Yi’s learning to the emperor, who as a result appointed Jia Yi to the position of court savant.
- 4 As for the claim that the *Xinshu* is a forgery, I follow those studies which have demonstrated that the contents of the text can be attributed to Jia Yi. See Rune Svarverud, *Methods of the Way: Early Chinese Ethical Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Luo Shaodan, “Getting Beyond the Dichotomy of Authenticity and Spuriousness: A Textual Study on the *Xinshu*” (PhD. diss. University of California, Berkeley, 2002) and Luo Shaodan, “Inadequacy of Karlgren’s Linguistic Method as Seen in Rune Svarverud’s Study of the *Xinshu*,” *Journal of Chinese Linguistics* 31 (2003), 270–299. For a study on the *Xinshu*, see Charles T. Sanft, “Rule: A Study of Jia Yi’s *Xin shu*” (PhD. diss. Münster, Westfalen, 2005).

Jia Yi and addressed to Emperor Wen 漢文帝 (alias Liu Heng 劉恆, r. 179–157).⁵ The title of this collation, *Xinshu*, does not refer to the content of these texts, but probably denotes a new edition with annotations.⁶

Jia Yi plays a key role in our understanding of the political landscape of the Former Han dynasty. In 179, Jia Yi arrived at the capital, appointed to the position of court erudite (*boshi* 博士) by Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 179–157).⁷ He was very talented, and in the very year in which the emperor promoted him to the position of Grand Palace Grandee (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫) Jia Yi took the opportunity to present projects of a political nature. According to the standard historical sources, a group of influential elder statesmen at court took umbrage and accused Jia Yi of social climbing.

In my view, this accusation should be considered in the context of the struggle for power between the old retainers of Han Gaozu 漢高祖 (alias Liu Bang 劉邦, r. 202–195). Wendi could not go against the elder statesmen who had supported him in his ascent to the throne,⁸ and he thus probably decided it was wisest to remove Jia Yi from the scene. As a consequence, Jia Yi in 177 was sent to be Grand Tutor (*taifu* 太傅) to the king of Changsha 長沙,⁹ at that time the only non-Liu king within the Han territory. Even so, this was an important position: being the Grand Tutor meant being the moral guide and mentor of the king. Moreover, Changsha was located strategically along the border with the Kingdom of Nan Yue 南越 in the south-east.¹⁰ Jia Yi remained in Changsha for three or four years and then went back to the capital in 174.

5 For example, *Jiazhi* 3.8 (“Qin shu wei luan” 親疏危亂), 379, begins with “Your Majesty” (*bixia* 陛下). Cf. Sanft (2005), 11, fn. 7.

6 See Cai Tingji 蔡廷吉, *Jia Yi yanjiu* 賈誼研究 (Taipei: Wen shi zhe, 1984), 23–27.

7 All the biography part is gleaned from Jia Yi’s biography recorded in *Shiji* 84 and *Hanshu* 48. See also Reinhard Emmerich, “Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in den Informationen des *Shiji* und des *Hanshu* über Jia Yi: Ein Blick auf die Geschichtsschreibung Sima Qians und Ban Gus”, in *Zurück zur Freude. Studien zur chinesischen Literatur und Lebenswelt und ihrer Rezeption in Ost und West. Festschrift für Wolfgang Kubin*, ed. by Marc Hermann and Christian Schwermann (St. Augustin: Steyler, 2007): 731–754.

8 For Wendi’s biography, see *Shiji* 10.

9 While Jia Yi was on his way to Changsha, he crossed the River Xiang 湘 and thought of Qu Yuan 屈原 (343–277), who was supposed to have drowned himself in the River Miluo 汨羅 not far from there. Qu Yuan is the image of the loyal and upright vassal. Qu Yuan was falsely accused and then banished from the court and finally committed suicide. He expressed all his feelings in *Li Sao* 離騷. Jia Yi wrote “Diao Qu Yuan” 弔屈原 (Mourning Qu Yuan), in which he expressed his frustration, comparing his situation to Qu Yuan’s. It is important to highlight that Jia Yi expresses disapproval of Qu Yuan’s suicide: the coiled dragon represents the proper course for the gentleman and the poem suggests he seek another king to serve. Disregarding chronological sequence, Sima Qian sets the biographies of Qu Yuan and Jia Yi side by side in the same chapter. See *Shiji* 84. The fact that Qu Yuan committed suicide and that Jia Yi wrote “Diao Qu Yuan” inspired by his life has led many scholars to infer that Jia Yi killed himself. However, according to the *Rizhe liezhuan* 日者列傳, after King Huai’s death, “[Jia] Yi did not eat; bitter and regretful, he died.” 誼不食，毒恨而死。 *Shiji* 127.3220.

10 A few years earlier, Emperor Gaozu, the founder of the Han dynasty and father of Emperor Wen, sent Lu Jia 陸賈 (ca. 216–172) as ambassador to Zhao Tuo 趙佗 (c. 230–137) to control the political situation in Nan Yue.

I believe that this period in the south was of great impact on Jia Yi's ideas: it is probably during his time in Changsha that he came into contact with beliefs that were circulating at that time and were partially recorded in the texts unearthed at Mawangdui 馬王堆 in the 1970s.¹¹ A few years later, Emperor Wen decided to make Jia Yi Grand Tutor¹² to his favourite son, Liu Yi 劉揖, also known as King Huai of Liang 梁懷王 (ob. 169 BCE). Jia Yi held this position for five years and during this period wrote many commentaries on political affairs. Part of these memoirs is generally considered to be collected in the *Xinshu*.¹³ King Huai died as a result of a riding accident. Jia Yi died one year later, convinced he had failed to carry out his duties as a tutor.¹⁴

Taijiao, the theory of foetus instructions, is imbued with the idea that the mother's behaviour could influence the development of the foetus's attitudes. Several scholars have already analysed this theory, although most of them have focused mainly on medical aspects.¹⁵ But interesting as it is, this is not the only aspect that deserves scholars' attention.¹⁶

This study looks first at the theory of foetus instructions as described in the *Xinshu*, chiefly developed in the chapter on *Taijiao*. Secondly, it examines the relation between this theory of *taijiao* and the search for the ideal monarch during the first decades of the Han dynasty according to Jia Yi. Thirdly, it throws into relief the role of tutors a fundamental component in the education of the crown prince.

11 See fn. 25.

12 One day Jia Yi went to the Xuanshi chamber, where the emperor was receiving meat from the sacrifice. Emperor Wen asked Jia Yi about the supernatural entities involved in the sacrifice, and Jia Yi regaled the emperor until late. The emperor was so impressed that he gave Jia Yi another assignment as Grand Tutor. For the Xuanshi chamber, see *Shiji* 84.2502; *Hanshu* 48.2230. In the *Shiji*, we read that Su Lin 蘇林 (ca. 3rd CE) defines the Xuanshi as the main front chamber of the Weiyang Palace 未央前正室. See *Shiji* 84.2503 note 2. The "Suoyin" commentary quotes the *Sanfu gushi* 三輔故事 and says: "The Xuanshi was to the north of the Weiyang hall." 宣室在未央殿北。According to the "Xingfa zhi" 刑法志 of the *Hanshu*, the Xuanshi was the place where Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (r. 74–49 BC) went to perform his purification rituals before judging criminals. Ru Chun 如淳 (ca. 3rd CE) adds that "The Xuanshi was the chamber for spreading governance and education." 宣室，布政教之室也。Jin Zhuo 晉灼 (ca. 3rd - 4th CE) summarizes as follows: "In the Weiyang Palace, there was the Xuanshi hall." 未央宮中有宣室殿。Yan Shigu agrees with Jin Zhou and comments that the "Jia Yi zhuan" also says that Emperor Wen was receiving the sacrificial meat and was seated in the Xuanshi. Probably this hall was at the side of the front hall, and [Emperor Wen] would stay there when undergoing purification. 晉說是也。〈賈誼傳〉亦云：受釐，坐宣室。蓋其殿在前殿之側也，齋則居之。See *Hanshu* 23.1102–1103. Cf. Sanft (2005), 16 and 23–24, fn. 28.

13 This idea is also based on the fact that some chapters now collected in the *Xinshu* address Emperor Wen. See fn. 5.

14 *Shiji* 127.3220.

15 See, e. g., Catherine Despeux, "Bien débuter dans la vie. L'éducation prénatale en Chine", in *Education et instruction en Chine*, vol. 1: *L'éducation élémentaire*, ed. by Christine Nguyen Tri and Catherine Despeux (Bibliothèque de l'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, 4. Paris and Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 61–98.

16 Anne Behnke Kinney has focused on foetus instructions in a moral context, but mainly analyzing the *Lienii zhuan* by Liu Xiang. See Anne Behnke Kinney, "Dyed Silk: Han Notion of Moral Development of Children" in her *Chinese View of Childhood* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i, 1995): 1–55. See also Annika Pissin, "Elites and Their Children: A Study in the Historical Anthropology of Medieval China, 500–1000 AD" (PhD diss. Leiden University 2009), in particular 246–250.

Foetus instructions in the *Xinshu*

In the *Xinshu*, the longevity of the dynasty is a crucial topic: the Han imperial house was only a few decades old and the question of the political stability and that of the legitimacy of the government were given priority. Gaozu, the first Han emperor, born in humble circumstances in the state of Chu,¹⁷ ascended the throne after a civil war and needed a dependable political environment. The claim that the Han overthrew the Qin because the Qin “lost the Way of Morality”, was a powerful argument in the hands of Han politicians, or persuaders.¹⁸ Jia Yi views Gaozu’s victory and legitimation in terms of rescuing the kingdom, which was in disorder, and not in terms of overthrowing the Qin dynasty. Moreover, Jia Yi describes the founder of the Han dynasty as a man who earned the right to rule through his virtues: “Emperor Gao was perspicacious, wise, majestic, and martial, thus he took the realm” (以高皇帝之明聖威武也, 既撫天下)¹⁹. The Han therefore had authority to rule All under Heaven, but still had to ensure a suitable monarch was actually on the throne. I believe that for Jia Yi, this problem was rooted in the quest for order and was ensured by the system of primogeniture, the success of which had to be guaranteed by the mother taking heed of *taijiao*.

According to the *Shiji* 史記, one of the urgent matters pressed on Emperor Wen by his ministers was to establish the crown prince (*taizi* 太子) early.²⁰ However, Emperor Wen did not consider this as a priority, at first. Some of his ministers maintained that an early installment of the crown prince was the best way to show high regard for the ancestral temple and the altars of soil and grain.²¹ It is quite possible that these ministers²² stressed the need to establish the heir because the hesitant attitude displayed formerly by Gaozu of Han in installing his successor had let power drift into the hands of the Lü 呂 clan.²³ These ministers were

17 During the first decades of the Han imperial house, the Chu culture was self-consciously maintained. For example, those who could sing the classical songs of Chu were prized with rich rewards. Many erudites were encouraged to study and imitate Chu poetry and culture. Jia Yi was one of them, and this is evident through his *fu* poems inspired by the *Chu*. See Gopal Sukhu, “Monkey, Shamans, Emperors, and Poets”, in *Defining Chu: Image and Reality in Ancient China*, ed. by Constance A. Cook and John S. Major (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i, 1999): 145–169, 151. Moreover, a southern flavor influenced the Han court in everything from clothing styles and lacquerware. See John Major “Huang-lao Daoism and Chu Influence on Han Culture”, in Cook and Major (1999): 121–143.

18 For a deeper analysis of the construction of Liu Bang’s political legitimation according to Jia Yi, see my “La centralità ritrovata e la legittimazione dei primi Han secondo Jia Yi”, in *Cina: La centralità ritrovata. Atti del XII convegno della Associazione Italiana Studi Cinesi* (Cagliari) forthcoming.

19 *Jiazi* 2.3 (“Zhi bu ding” 制不定), 208.

20 See *Shiji* 10.419.

21 *Ibid.*

22 According to *Hanshu*, these ministers were Zhou Bo 周勃 (ob. 169 BCE), Chancellor of the Right (*you chengxiang* 右丞相) from 179 and dismissed in 177, and Chen Ping 陳平 (ob. 178 BCE). *Hanshu* 23.1104. Zhou Bo and Chen Ping were responsible for installing Emperor Wen on the throne in 179 BCE and thus stripping the Lü 呂 clan of their power. See also *Shiji* 10, in particular *Shiji* 10.413.

23 For a study focused on Empress Lü and her political role according to *Shiji* and *Hanshu*, see Hans van Ess, “Praise and slander: The evocation of Empress Lü in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*”, in *Nan ni* 8.2, 2006: 221–254. For a focus on the image of Empress Lü given by the *Shiji*, see Elisa Sabattini, “Donne di potere du-

also interested in influencing Emperor Wen's decisions since theirs was the chief role in the enthronement of Liu Heng himself.

I believe that the theory of foetus instructions and the stress on moral education of the crown prince supported by Jia Yi are part of this discussion. The need to choose the heir must have convinced Jia Yi that the education of the crown prince was pivotal. The continuity of the dynasty required a linear succession, but this could not guarantee meritocracy, which had to be cultivated through constant practice and education.

In the *Xinshu*, the moral education of the crown prince can be divided into two main stages:

- Pre-natal education; that is, foetus education or education in the uterus (*taijiao*)²⁴
- Post-natal education through the selection of good tutors and assistants

The relevance of education as a crucial part of the shaping of the individual was not novel in Chinese thought. However, Jia Yi singles out foetus instructions as the earliest possible opportunity to mould the moral nature of the crown prince.²⁵ The stress on the crown prince is part of his political strategy and is related to the need for stability and the avoidance of political and social disasters.

As for the two terms *tai* 胎 and *jiao* 教, they appear together for the first time in the *Xinshu*. The importance of education at an early age is, however, already alluded to in the *Guoyu* 國語, a collection of historical anecdotes related to (and supposedly originating from) the Chunqiu 春秋 period (770–453). In the “Jinyu” 晉語 chapter, Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公 (r. 636–628) asks his minister Xu 胥 if a teacher named Yang would be a suitable tutor for his son. Xu replies that the success of education depends on *zhi* 質, the basic qualities of the person. If the basic qualities tend to the good, then it is possible to educate the person. On the other hand, if *zhi* is not good, education alone cannot succeed. To explain how to have good basic qualities, Mr Xu offers the example of King Wen of Zhou (d. c. 1047 BCE), whose virtues were the result not only of proper instruction, but also a consequence of the integrity of the king's mother, Tairen 太任, during the foetus's development and her exemplary behaviour throughout the king's early childhood.²⁶ During her pregnancy, Tairen followed all the rules governing the rituals; hence the basic qualities of King Wen were correctly prepared.

rante l'impero Han: il caso dell'imperatrice Lü”, in *Figure al femminile. Il ruolo della donna nella storia della Cina*, ed. by Stefania Stafutti and Elisa Sabattini (Roma: Aracne Editrice, December 2010).

- 24 Jia Yi is more concerned with the development of the heir's virtue than with determining physical qualities.
- 25 Physical transformations of the foetus influenced by the environment were already an important element before the Han. A text discussing this issue was unearthed in the tomb of the son of the Marquis of Dai (ob. 168 BCE), discovered in 1973 at Mawangdui (tomb 3). The text, entitled *Taichan shu* 胎產書 (Book of Pregnancy and Childbirth) does not employ the term *taijiao*, but contains many passages concerning the physical transformation of the foetus. See *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu* 馬王堆漢墓帛書, vol. 4 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1985), 136.
- 26 *Guoyu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1978) 10 (“Jinyu” 4.24), 386–387. Cf. Despeux (2003), 72–73. Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) in the first *juan* of the *Lienü zhuan* 列女傳, reports that Tairen was earnest, serious in nature and had a virtuous attitude. Moreover, Liu Xiang couples the term *taijiao* with Tairen and writes that she could make use of “foetus instructions”. See *Lienü zhuan* (ICS edition) 1.4. The importance of Tairen is underlined in the biographies of the emperors' wives collected in the *Shiji* in which it is stated that she was responsible for the rise to power of the Zhou dynasty. See *Shiji* 49.1967.

The baby, which we may compare to a sponge absorbing any liquid, can be deeply influenced by the mother's behaviour and her environment, which is in a position to affect her feelings and thoughts. Foetus instructions are designed to prevent faults occurring in the personality development of the unborn crown prince.

In the *Xinshu*, the term *taijiao* refers to a ritual context. In the *Taijiao* chapter, Jia Yi quotes an earlier text:

青史氏之記曰：古者胎教之道：王后有身，七²⁷月而就窀室，太師持銅而御戶左，太宰持斗而御戶右，太卜[持]蓍龜而御堂下，諸官皆以其職御於門內。此三月者，王后所求音聲非禮樂，則太師撫樂而稱不習。所求滋味者非正味，則太宰荷斗而不敢煎調，而曰：不敢以侍王太子。²⁸

The records of the scribe Qing say:²⁹ “According to the method of foetus instruction of the ancients, when the queen was pregnant, from the seventh month onward she had to go into the ritual chamber.³⁰ The Grand Music Master was on the left of the door, holding a bamboo pitch pipe.³¹ The Grand Steward was on the right of the door, holding a bowl. The Grand Diviner was below the ceremonial hall, holding milfoil stalks and a tortoise-shell. All the officials, according to their office, were in the court. During these last three months [of pregnancy], if the sounds and music the queen requested did not conform to the rites and [proper ritual] music, then the Grand Music Master, while plucking his instrument,³² praised that he did not rehearse; if the flavours the queen demanded did not conform to the proper flavour, the Grand Steward while holding the bowl declared that he did not dare to boil those blends, and he said he did not dare to serve that to the Crown Prince.

According to the method of foetus instructions developed in this passage, from the seventh month of pregnancy onward, the queen had to be in the ritual chamber to attend rituals. The aim of the process was to instil correct conduct in the mother and thus transfer it to the foetus. Hence, during the last three months of pregnancy, the queen had to listen to appropriate ritual music and eat approved food to avoid the foetus being contaminated. To ensure a correct ritual education, the Grand Music Master was placed on her left and the Grand Steward on her right to guide her choices and if necessary refuse to serve unsuitable food or perform music that was inappropriate. For Jia Yi, educating the crown prince in the appropriate manner is not just an advisable practice, but a *necessity* in order to ensure political and social harmony. According to him, this is the way to guarantee a long-lasting dynasty. The stability of the empire depends on the rectitude of the emperor, who has to become accustomed to proper conduct through education and daily practice. The best way to produce a worthy monarch is thus to surround him with good teachers. It is striking that Jia Yi refers to the queen, *wanghou* 王后, and not simply to the mother of the crown prince. The mother of the future

27 Emending *shi* 十 to *qi* 七. See *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1121.

28 *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1121.

29 This text was not transmitted, but the *Hanshu*, in the “*Xiaoshuo*” 小說 section of the *Yimen zhi* 藝文志, reports a text named *Qingshi* 青史子 in 57 *pian* 篇. See *Hanshu* 6.1744.

30 The parallel passage in the *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 writes *yanshi* 偃室, “rest room”. See *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1122, fn.3.

31 *Tong* 銅 means *liuguan* 律管 “bamboo pitch-pipe”. See *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1123, fn. 4.

32 The parallel passage of the *Da Dai Liji* records that the Grand Music Master was playing his *se* 瑟 zither. *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1125, fn. 9.

emperor has to be the queen, the first wife of the emperor, and she should be well educated. This idea is connected to the *dichang* 嫡長 principle, which concerns primogeniture and goes against the ideas circulating during the Warring States period, with their stress on meritocracy rather than hereditary rank. Jia Yi manages to combine the two approaches in his ideas. According to him, this is the best way to prevent, and if necessary eliminate, friction between possible heirs:

夫勢明則民定而出於一道，故人皆爭為宰相，而不姦為世子，[...] 今以為知子莫如父，故疾死置後者，恣父之所以比³³，使親戚不相親，兄弟不相愛，亂天下之紀，使天下之俗失，[...] 疾死³⁴致後，復以嫡長子，如此則親戚相愛而³⁵兄弟不爭，此天下之至義也。³⁶

If the circumstances³⁷ are clear, then the people will be settled and will follow a single way. Therefore, each person will be content to be grand counsellor and not cause disquiet [to seek] to become heir designate, [...] Now, it is held that in knowing sons well, none is like the father. Thus, in the case of one who establishes his succession when sick unto death, [other people] carelessly [accept the one] to whom the father was close. This causes relatives not to be close to each other and brothers not to cherish each other, disrupts the structure of the realm, and causes the customs of the realm to be lost [...] In establishing the successor when sick unto death, [the father] replaces³⁸ [the nominee] with the oldest son. If you do this, then relatives will love each other and brothers will not be rivals – this will be the height of duty toward the realm.

Succession should be clear and accepted, usurpation is thus condemned:

為人臣而放其君，為人下而弑其上，天下之至逆也。³⁹

To banish a lord while a vassal or to kill a superior while a subordinate is the greatest perversion in the realm.

To guarantee the ideal monarch, Jia Yi links the principle of succession by primogeniture, held to subdue social discord and consequent disorder, to the theory of *taijiao*. The importance of paying special attention to the early stages of life is highlighted by the very first sentence of the “Taijiao” chapter, which is a quotation from the *Yijing* 易經:⁴⁰

易曰：「正其本而萬物理，失之毫釐，差以千里，故君子慎始。」⁴¹

The *Yi* says: “When you rectify the origins, the ten thousand beings are patterned. A mistake small as a hair can lead to an error of a thousand li. This is the reason the exemplary person takes care of the inception.”

33 Emending 此 to 比. *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi” 立後義), 1170.

34 Emending 此 to 死. *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1171.

35 Emending 也 to 而. *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1171.

36 *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1170–1171. Cf. Sanft (2005), 121.

37 Emending 執 to 勢. *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1170.

38 Emending 驕 to 嫡. *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1172.

39 *Jiazi* 10.4 (“Li hou yi”), 1176. Cf. Sanft (2005), 129, fn. 45.

40 This quotation does not occur in the transmitted text, but we find it in other Han texts: *Da Dai Liji*, *Shiji*, *Shuiyuan* 說苑.

41 *Jiazi* 10.3 (“Taijiao”), 1115.

Jia Yi's early stages for proper education refer to an even earlier stage than that of the mother's pregnancy with the foetus. According to him, the moral qualities of the crown prince may at least in part be determined *a priori* through the selection of the mother and her family.⁴² Later, during the mother's pregnancy, the womb is an important 'container' for the foetus's nourishment and for the transmission of what we may now define as cognitive and experiential data. In the "Taijiao" chapter, the transformative potential of foetus instructions is presented as the key to birth of the ideal ruler. Jia Yi refers to the Queen of Zhou, wife of King Wu 武王 (r. c. 1073–1068) of the Western Zhou 西周 dynasty (1122–771) and mother of King Cheng 成王 (r. 1042–1021), as the proper example of the practice of *taijiao*.⁴³

周妃后妊成王於身，立而不跛，坐而不差，獨處不倨，雖怒不罵，胎教之謂也。⁴⁴

When the Queen of Zhou was pregnant with King Cheng, she used to stand up without limping and to sit without failure. When she remained alone, she did not sit with her legs crossed; although angry, she did not curse. This is called "foetus instructions".

We consider the upright position of the mother of the future King Cheng as the early training for the moral values the child will develop. Physical posture is important in transforming personality traits: "foetus instructions" imply that an upright external bearing – the posture of the queen – corresponds to an upright inner posture – the basic qualities of the crown prince.⁴⁵ Proper posture is highly relevant for rituals and is identified as one of the hallmarks of ritual behaviour in general. This stress on physical bearing might have originated in medical and dietary theories. However, Jia Yi seeks to show the moral consequences of the foetus's transformation and links it with the ritual context:⁴⁶ just as food could affect the physical development of the foetus, so the moral attitudes of the mother could influence the development of the child's tendencies. Jia Yi applies a general rule related to several prohibitions associated with the effect food could have on the physical development of the foetus, and applies it to the ritual context the embryo has to experience through the mother. Ritual food and music were not the only things influencing the basic qualities of the future crown prince; specific postures were also forbidden for pregnant women: sitting with crossed legs, lying on the side and standing on one foot. Catherine Despeaux points out that these positions were used by

42 *Jiazǐ* 10.3 ("Taijiao"), 1121. Hans van Ess has underlined that many empresses actually came from an extremely lowly background. Sima Qian despises them for this fact, but on the other hand this could be a positive factor for families who held power at court: they did not have to fear the competition of a new empress's family. The whole period of the Former Han is dominated by this struggle between empresses of high and low background (Hans van Ess, private conversation, December 14, 2009). See also *Shiji* 49. It is possible that Sima Qian and Jia Yi agreed that the empress should be of noble birth. For Jia Yi this point is important in order to practice *taijiao* properly. On the other hand, considering the selection of women from low origins is very strong.

43 In the *Guoyu* 10 ("Jinyu" 4.24), 386–387, the mother of King Wen is given as an example, while in the *Hanshi waizhuan* 漢詩外傳 (Siku quanshu edition) 9.1 we read of the mother of Mencius.

44 *Jiazǐ* 10.3 ("Taijiao"), 1132.

45 See also Pissin (2009), 246–250.

46 For foetus instructions in medical texts, see the manuscripts from Mawangdui. In contrast to these texts, which discuss the possibility of every woman practicing *taijiao*, Jia Yi clearly addresses his theory exclusively to the queen.

magicians to expel demons, hence they have to be avoided to keep the unborn child away from their possible bad influence.⁴⁷ Foetus instructions should not be taken as a method of instilling the unborn child with knowledge, but rather as a means of moulding it in such a way as to create the fundamental preconditions for correct behaviour and the acquisition of knowledge. Through physical practices the mother supposedly models the physical body of the child, preparing the ground for future success in the shaping of the social body.⁴⁸

In order to practise the cardinal virtues and imbue the foetus with proper moral values, the mother also needed the crucial cooperation of her entourage. Prevention is a key idea in Jia Yi's thought. Promoting prenatal education means pre-empting problems: fashioning the heir's attitudes and qualities to promote stable government and to ensure the new imperial house will endure.

Turning to the point of the mother's personal background, it is revealing to realize the example of King Cheng is not chosen at random: he came from an honourable family, and Jia Yi wants to stress the importance of the mother's entourage in the proper development of the heir. King Cheng was the son of King Wu and Yi Jiang 邑姜, the well-educated daughter of the great legendary strategist Jiang Taigong 姜太公.⁴⁹

Moral education and the selection of worthy assistants

The second stage of the moral education of the crown prince starts at birth. In the same passage of the *Taijiao* chapter quoted above, Jia Yi stresses the importance of the entourage of the baby born King Cheng.

成王生，仁者養之，孝 [者] 繼之，四賢傍之。成王有智，而選太公為師，周公為傅，前有與計，而後有與慮也。是以封於泰山而禪 [於] 梁父，朝諸侯，一天下。由此觀之，主左右不可不練也。⁵⁰

When King Cheng was born, benevolent people reared him, filial people carried him on their back, four worthy people were at his side. When King Cheng's intellect was mature enough, they selected for him the Duke of Tai as teacher and the Duke of Zhou as tutor. [Good] strategists and experts surrounded him. This is why he then performed the *feng* sacrifice at Mt. Tai and the *shan* sacrifice at Mt. Liangfu; he received the feudal lords at court and united All under Heaven. From this we understood that leading the entourage has to be done with due attention.

The last sentence of this passage links the crucial role of tutors and assistants to the moral education of the crown prince. The entourage of the crown prince has to be carefully selected, and King Cheng is again adduced as a positive example. In the “Baofu” chapter⁵¹ we read that

47 Despeux (2003), 82–83.

48 Pissin (2005), 249.

49 See *Shiji* 32.1477. See also Sarah Allan, “The Identities of Taigong Wang 太公望 in Zhou and Han Literature”, *Monumenta Serica* 30 (1972), 57–99.

50 *Jiazi* 10.3 (“*Taijiao*”), 1132.

51 The text of the “Baofu” chapter occurs nearly *verbatim* in the chapter of the same title in the *Da Dai Liji*, and it is part of the biography of Jia Yi contained in the *Hanshu*. In addition, the “Baofu” chapter of the *Da Dai Liji* contains *verbatim* portions of other chapters of the *Xinshu*, namely the “Fuzhi” 傅職, “*Taijiao*” and “*Rongjing*” 容經 chapters.

when King Cheng was young, he had the Duke of Shao 召公 as Grand Protector, the Duke of Zhou 周公 as Grand Tutor and the Grand Duke Tai 太公 as Grand Teacher. The duties of the Three Dukes 三公 were to guard the crown prince, to assist him in acquiring virtues and a sense of justice, and to guide him in his education respectively.⁵² In addition, together with the Three Dukes, there were the Three Adjutants 三少, whose duty was to accompany the heir during his leisure time. The Three Dukes and Three Adjutants were forceful in pointing out the cardinal virtues: filial piety, benevolence, sense of ritual, and sense of justice.⁵³ These instructors guided the prince in practice.⁵⁴ In this ideal situation, King Cheng was able to see and hear correct conduct and words from his birth. Any person around him was upright and moral.⁵⁵ As a general rule, according to Jia Yi, one who lived alongside upright people could not help being upright oneself; a person absorbs the customs of the place he lives in. Childhood education is a crucial moment in time, because during this phase in life a person may be imbued with proper conduct. In the “Baofu” chapter, Jia Yi writes about children who are born and grow up in the states of Chu 楚 and Qi 齊; their natures at birth are not different but their cultural environment influences them. Thus a person from Chu learns how to speak the language of Chu, while a person from Qi learns to speak the dialect of Qi.⁵⁶ What can change the original nature is constant practice (xí 習).

Education is crucial not only for the psychological development of a child but also for the correct shaping of the person’s attitudes and virtues. This aspect is obviously momentous for the heir to the throne since he will have to be able to rule All under Heaven. To become a worthy monarch also depends on the environment, and to have a good teacher is a decisive aspect of being a long-lasting king:⁵⁷

其君賢君也，而又有師者王；其君中君也，而有師者，伯；其君下君也，而群臣又莫若者，亡。⁵⁸

The ruler who is a worthy ruler and has also a [good] teacher will be a true king. The ruler who is a mediocre ruler and has a [good] teacher will become an overlord. The ruler that is an inferior ruler, and who has none among his vassals to match him, will perish.

To illustrate this idea more persuasively, Jia Yi applies it on the reasons of the failure of the Qin dynasty. He attacks the methods used by the rulers and ministers of the Qin dynasty and criticises the immoral instructors of Huhai 胡亥, the Second Emperor. The condemnation is explicit: Jia Yi criticises Zhao Gao 趙高, who was Huhai’s tutor and had a decisive role in

52 *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 586.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 587.

57 At this point, Jia Yi quotes Kongzi’s 孔子 adage: 少成若天性，習貫若自然。(What is completed in childhood becomes like inborn nature; what is familiar through constant practice becomes like spontaneity.) *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 587.

58 *Jiazi* 7.1 (“Xian xing” 先醒), 813.

helping the prince ascend the throne.⁵⁹ The question raised in the chapter is clear: why did the Qin dynasty only reign for two generations before being destroyed, while the Zhou 周 (ca. 1045–256), the Yin 殷 (ca. 1600–1046) and the Xia 夏 (ca. 2000–1600) ruled for generations? According to Jia Yi, the lack of imperial stability depends on the poor selection of tutors and assistants. In the “Guo Qin lun zhong” 過秦論中 chapter, Jia Yi says:

嚮使二世有庸主之行 而任忠賢臣主一心而憂海內之患 (...) 天下息矣。⁶⁰

If the Second Emperor had conducted himself even as a mediocre ruler and employed the loyal and the worthy, and if the ruler and the ministers had joined their hearts to worry about the calamity of the people within the seas (...) the world would have found peace.

With loyal and worthy assistants, Huhai could have rectified the First Emperor’s mistakes and restored order to the empire. According to the “Guo Qin lun xia” chapter, the First Emperor was complacent and never asked for advice. He followed and acted in accordance with his mistaken ideas and never corrected them. The Second Emperor accepted these mistakes and did not change them, thus intensifying the damage.⁶¹ Things went from bad to worse, and the Qin emperors never realised what was wrong with their administration. According to Jia Yi, their failure was predictable and fitting. Hence, Jia Yi highlights the First Emperor’s over-reliance on himself rather than seeking the advice of his ministers as the chief problem. This situation was inherited by the Second Emperor and caused the fall of the dynasty. His assistants did not dare dissent and did not offer their honest advice, terrified as they were of being executed.⁶²

59 *Shiji* 6.264–265 and 275, *Shiji* 7.315, *Shiji* 27. On the question of whether or not Zhao Gao was an eunuch, see Michael Loewe, “The Terms Bao Zi, Yin Gong, Yin Guan, Huan, and Shou. Was Zhao Gao a Eunuch?,” *T’oung Pao* XCI (2005), 301–319.

60 *Jiazi* 1.2 (“Guo Qin lun zhong”), 45. In the same chapter, Jia Yi reports a similar statement in relation to Ziyang.

61 *Jiazi* 1.3 (“Guo Qin lun xia”), 68.

62 *Ibid.* Jia Yi is probably referring to the story of Li Si: Li Si served as chancellor under the First and the Second Emperor of Qin. When the First Emperor of Qin’s imperial ambitions were fulfilled, Li Si became one of his Three Dukes. According to Li Si’s biography in the *Shiji*, after the death of the First Emperor, Huhai, who ascended the throne instead of the formerly designated crown prince Fu Su, fell under the influence of Zhao Gao and intensified the severity of the laws and punishments daily. Several times Li Si tried to obtain a private audience to admonish the Second Emperor, but without success. Since Li Si was unable to gain an audience with the emperor, he wrote a report highlighting Zhao Gao’s faults. He recorded that: “Your servant has heard that a vassal equal to his lord will always endanger the state. A wife equal to her husband will always endanger the household. At the moment, there is a great minister beneath your majesty who monopolises rewards and punishments, so that there is no distinction between him and your majesty. This is utterly inappropriate. In ancient times, when Zi Han was minister of the city, he became prime minister of Song. He personally handled punishments and penalties and in this he inspired awe. After a year he managed to force his lord to [abdicate]. When Tian Chang was a minister of Duke Jian of Qi (r. 484–481 BCE), his title and rank were without match in the state and the wealth of his private household was equal to that of the ducal house. By distributing his grace and bestowing his kindness, he won the favour of the common people below and the favour of the various officials above. Thus, he secretly took over the state of Qi, killed Zai Yu, murdered Duke Jian at court and finally came to rule over the state of Qi. This is well known throughout the world. Now, Zhao Gao’s corrupt intentions and subversive acts are like those of Zi

Similarly, in the “Baofu” chapter, Jia Yi argues that the reason for the premature end of the Qin dynasty was its “immorality” and that the Qin emperors underestimated the importance and worth of loyal attendants.

及秦而不然，其俗固非貴辭讓也，所上者告訐也；固非貴禮讓 [義] 也，所上者刑罰也。使趙高傳胡亥而教之獄，所習者非斬劓人，則夷人之三族也。故今日即位，明日射人，忠諫者謂之誹謗，深為之計者謂之妖言⁶³。其視殺人若艾草菅然，豈胡亥之性惡哉：其所以習⁶⁴道之者，非理故也。鄙諺曰：「不習為吏，而視已事。」又曰：「前車覆而後車戒。」⁶⁵

During the Qin (Empire), it was not like this. Its customs certainly did not promote yielding, and what they emphasised was making accusations. Their customs certainly did not put value on ritual propriety and righteousness, and what they emphasised was punishment. Zhao Gao was employed as tutor of Huhai, and taught him punitive measures. When he was not practising capital punishments and cutting off the nose, then he applied the penalty of extinguishing three generations of the culprit's family. Thus, if such a person ascended the throne today, tomorrow he would shoot at people. Loyal remonstrators would be called slanderers; profound strategic planners would be called inauspicious. He would teach that killing people is simply like cutting grass. Was it the inner nature of Huhai that was immoral? Rather, it was because of the way he was guided, and not because of [Huhai's intrinsic] structure. A popular proverb says: “If you have not been trained as an official, then just look at the work an official has completed.” Another one says: “If the cart in front overturns, the cart behind should heed the warning”.

Failing to ensure filial piety, benevolence, ritual propriety and righteousness, Zhao Gao only taught punitive measures. As a result, the Second Emperor was unaware of the proper rules of government and did not know how to administer the people and the state. The responsibility for this dramatic failure was not Huhai's, who could even have been a modest ruler, but it was rather Zhao Gao, his minister, who had to be reproached, whose job it was to teach Huhai the proper rules of conduct.

Now it is easier to understand Jia Yi's concern about the education of the crown prince. The persuasive formula that the continuation of political and social harmony depends on the heir points to the underlying idea that ethical principles are determined by the selection of

Han when he served Song as prime minister. The wealth of his private household is like that of the Tian clan of Qi. His conduct combines the self-willed ways of both Tian Chang and Zi Han, and he snatches away your majesty's power and [your subjects'] trust; his ambitions are those of Han Qi in serving An of Han (238–230 BCE) as prime minister. If your majesty does not curb his actions, your servant fears that he will revolt.” 臣聞之，臣疑其君，無不危國；妾疑其夫，無不危家。今有大臣於陛下擅利擅害，與陛下無異，此甚不便。昔者司城子罕相宋，身行刑罰，以威行之，暮年遂劫其君。田常為簡公臣，爵列無敵於國，私家之富與公家均，布惠施德，下得百姓，上得群臣，陰取齊國，殺宰予於庭，即弑簡公於朝，遂有齊國。此天下所明知也。今高有邪俠之志，危反之行，如子罕相宋也；私家之富，若田氏之於齊也。兼行田常、子罕之逆道而劫陛下之威信，其志若韓玘為韓安相也。陛下不圖，臣恐其為變也。 See *Shiji* 87.2559. Cf. the earlier translation in *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 7: *The Memoirs of Pre-Han China*, ed. by William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington et al.: Indiana University, 1994), 352–353.

63 The same sentence occurs with slight differences both in the *Da Dai Liji* and in the biography of Jia Yi in *Hanshu* 48. In the *Da Dai Liji* the character 之 is omitted, while the *Hanshu* neglected to write the two characters 為之.

64 Emending 習集 to 習. See *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 621.

65 *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 621.

good retainers and early instruction.⁶⁶ In the context of the *Xinshu*, the common proverb “If the cart in front overturns, the cart behind should heed the warning” is clearly intended to mean that the Han dynasty has to learn from the Qin’s faults. The power that had been conferred to Zhao Gao was an error that led the dynasty to catastrophe.

According to Jia Yi, the good monarch must seek the counsel of upright officials. Again, this is not novel in the political discussion of ancient China, except that in Jia Yi’s view this is the most urgent topic and is what the emperor should concentrate on:

故是以明君之於政也，慎之，於吏也，選之，然後國興也。⁶⁷

Therefore the bright ruler’s attitude toward governance is to be circumspect, and his attitude toward officials it to be selective. Only then will the state flourish.

Additionally, Jia Yi, in the *Baofu* chapter says:

選左右蚤誦教最急。夫教得而左右正 [則太子正] 矣，太⁶⁸子正而天下定矣。⁶⁹

Selecting the entourage and early transmission and education are the most urgent [matters]. If education is successful and those around him are upright, then the crown prince will be upright. If the crown prince is upright, the realm will be stable.

Conclusion: analogies with the past and the criticism of the present

The beginning is decisive because it lays the foundation for a stable government. The reason for this emphasis is related to the historical period: the Han dynasty is just a few decades old and the need for stability is a priority. The relevance given to prenatal education as fundamental for the proper development of the foetus’s potentials is linked to the beginning of the Han dynasty as well. During the first decades of the new dynasty, proper patterns had to be established to ensure the longevity of the empire. Two solutions that complemented each other were proposed: to conform to the *dichang* principle and to carry out the practice of *taijiao*. In order to achieve this objective, it was crucial to select loyal and worthy assistants.

Jia Yi maintains that pre and post natal education and the selection of good assistants are the *most urgent matters*: these are determining factors for a stable government. Why does Jia Yi insist on this issue? We know that when Emperor Wen was enthroned, some ministers discussed an urgent matter with him: establishing the position of the crown prince. They said that this was the only way to show regard for the ancestral temple and the altars of soil and grain, in order to legitimise the empire. However, I believe that their true purpose was to secure a stable and powerful position for the emperor’s assistants and ministers. In the beginning, Emperor Wen did not consider this a priority, therefore it is possible that Jia Yi addressed the issues of foetus instructions and the selection of worthy assistants on the wake of the report presented to Emperor Wen. The goal was to prevent political disasters and avoid a civil war breaking out. But most importantly, this issue was linked to the selection of ministers, a subject that interested Jia Yi personally. For these reasons, I believe that the problem Jia Yi raises is to ensure an adequate monarch in the prevalent system of hereditary succession. By Jia Yi’s

66 *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 626.

67 *Jiazi* 9.2 (“Dazheng xia” 大政下), 1008.

68 Emending *tian* 天 to *tai* 太. See *Jiazi* 5.2 (“Baofu”), 626.

69 *Ibid.*

time, the unification of the empire and the creation of the figure of the omnipotent monarch had combined to make this problem more urgent than ever. How to prevent a potentially inept monarch reaching the throne? The answer is – at least for the mother of the future crown prince – to act on *taijiao*. The role of good ministers is obviously of paramount importance, too.

To persuade the emperor, Jia Yi recalls the dramatic failure of the Qin dynasty. However, Jia Yi is in fact addressing the contemporary situation, which displays several analogies with the historical period Jia Yi uses as examples, namely the crowning of King Cheng of Zhou and the political situation after the death of Qin Shi Huangdi, and the present he is living in.

A positive example used for motives of persuasion is the transition period during the reigns of King Cheng of Zhou and Emperor Wen of Han.

According to the *Shiji*, the world was not yet settled when illness struck King Wu of Zhou, who overcame the Shang. For this reason all the dukes were alarmed and concerned about the stability of the kingdom. When King Wu died, he was succeeded by his heir, Song 誦, who became King Cheng of Zhou.⁷⁰ At that time, King Cheng was young. The Duke of Zhou, afraid that the feudal lords would rebel against the young king, personally took charge of the political administration of the state for seven years.⁷¹ King Cheng promoted and modified rituals and music; standard measures and the legal system were changed; the people lived in harmony.⁷² King Cheng was in turn afraid that his heir, Zhao 釗, would not be ready to face his duties. He thus ordered the Duke of Shao 召公 and the Duke of Bi 畢公 to serve the crown prince and enthrone him.⁷³ Zhao was duly enthroned as King Kang 康王 (r. c. 1030–1005 BCE), and when he ascended the throne, he informed the feudal lords of the initiatives undertaken by King Wen and King Wu in order to instruct them. As a consequence, the reigns of King Cheng and King Kang were extremely peaceful, and during their rule corporal punishments were not inflicted.⁷⁴ Hence, when King Cheng ascended the throne, the world was at peace, but his was the onerous responsibility of governing in a new reign and his grand tutor, the Duke of Zhou, was on hand to assist him.

A corresponding negative example was the transition period during the crowning of the Second Emperor of Qin to compare to the one of Emperor Wen of Han. After the death of the First Emperor in 210 BCE, the Qin dynasty faced enormous difficulties at court. The heir apparent was the emperor's eldest son, Fu Su 扶蘇 (d. 210 BCE), who was at the northern frontier together with General Meng Tian 蒙恬 (d. 210 BCE). Zhao Gao, at that time a powerful attendant, persuaded Chancellor Li Si⁷⁵ to place Huhai, the emperor's favourite, on the throne instead of Fu Su. Fu Su and Meng Tian were forced to commit suicide and Huhai, whose tutor was Zhao Gao himself, ascended the throne as the Second Emperor, Er Shi Huangdi. By 208 BCE, all power had been transferred into the hands of Zhao Gao, who induced the Second Emperor to arrest, mutilate and finally kill Li Si. After this, Zhao Gao obtained the position of chancellor.

70 *Shiji* 4.131–132. See *The Grand Scribe's Records*, vol. 1: *The Basic Annals of Pre-Han China*, ed. by William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington *et al.*: Indiana University, 1994), 63–64.

71 *Shiji* 4.132. See Nienhauser (1994), vol. 1, 63–64.

72 *Shiji* 4.133.

73 *Shiji* 4.134.

74 *Ibid.*

75 See fn. 62.

The authority of the Qin dynasty was already very weak and by 207 BCE the Second Emperor was also dead, having reigned only three years. It was now the turn of Ziyang, probably a grandson of Shi Huangdi. In an attempt to shore up his position, Ziyang took the title of ‘King of Qin’, rather than ‘emperor’. Ziyang promptly had Zhao Gao killed, but rebellions throughout the land were already making the country ungovernable. Only forty-six days after his accession, Ziyang found himself in turn deposed when the founder of the Han dynasty Liu Bang occupied the capital city and the state of Qin perished.⁷⁶

This negative example is not antithetical to the positive one; they complement each other. According to Jia Yi, the First Emperor of Qin never asked for advice, he was too proud and complacent. Worthy assistants did not dare to contradict him and their honest words never reached the Emperor because they were too afraid of his brutal and disrespectful reaction. The First Emperor did not pay attention to the heir’s teachers and tutors; he did not recognise loyal and worthy ministers but forced them to hide away. So when he died there was no one in a position to prop up the Qin Empire. In contrast, King Cheng of Zhou was well assisted and had had worthy instructors since his birth. His mother was known as a virtuous woman, and while pregnant she practised “foetus instructions”.

Emperor Wen’s time was not without political tension. After the death of Gaozu, fundamental questions concerning the succession to the imperial throne needed to be addressed.⁷⁷ Liu Heng, the son of Gaozu and Empress Dowager Bo 薄太后, known as Consort Bo 薄姬, was not in the strongest position. Consort Bo was believed to possess a noble character, and apparently this played a crucial role in deciding who should succeed. Faced with the possibility of having to deal with another mother who might emulate the example of Empress Lü, the ministers faithful to Gaozu backed Liu Heng.⁷⁸ Ministers and assistants did not want to lose their power at court, and they felt undermined because of Empress Lü’s decisions to replace people near Gaozu with others closer to her clan. After Liu Heng was enthroned as Emperor Wen, assistants at court needed to reinforce their positions, and one way was to control and influence the education of the heir apparent. This was the response to Empress Lü’s unsuccessful attempt to seize the reins of power.

Even though Jia Yi’s theory of *taijiao* should be set in a broader discussion, it can be seen that its originality lies in its reinterpretation of the standard theory of *taijiao*, based on medical texts from the south, in order to apply it to a ritual context and introduce good educators at court. His ideas are to be seen in relation to the political changes occurring at that time. During the first decades of the Han imperial house, the *shi* 士 (man of service) depended for his advancement upon writing and speaking abilities, unlike the other servants of the emperor.⁷⁹ On this point, Lewis writes that as

76 *Shiji* 6.264–265 and 275, *Shiji* 7.315, *Shiji* 27.

77 Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1: *The Ch’in and Han Empires: 221 B.C. – A.D. 220* (Cambridge et. al.: Cambridge University, 1986), 136.

78 After the death of Empress Lü in 180 BCE, members of her family were determined to eliminate the imperial house of Liu. Three descendants of Gaozu still survived and held the kingdoms of Chu, Huainan and Dai (Liu Heng). Moreover, there were loyal statesmen who were not suborned by the empress. The grandson of Gaozu, who had his own troops, marched to Chang’an and called other kingdoms for help. The Lü family was then eliminated. See *Shiji* 9.411; *Hanshu* 3.100.

79 See David Schaberg “Playing at Critique: Indirect Remonstrance and the Formation of *Shi* Identity”, in *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. by Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington, 2005): 194–225, 196. See

[...] royal power increased, the character of office holding changed completely. From being a hereditary element of a government in which power was distributed among the nobility, office became an extension of royal power. [...] The career pattern of these cadres entailed a new ideal type, the 'man of service' (*shi* 士), who through powers of mind and tongue won for himself the position of guide to the ruler."⁸⁰

The theory of *taijiao* and the quest for hereditary succession are linked to the importance of selecting good ministers and assistants, whose most urgent aspiration was to consolidate their position at court.

also Hsu Cho-yün, *Ancient China in Transition: An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722–222 B.C.* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1965).

80 Mark Edward Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999), 604.