

Cambridge University Press

0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China

Michael Loewe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Chinese empires were established by force of arms, but sustained by religious rites and intellectual theory. The four centuries from 206 BC to AD 220 witnessed major changes in the state cults and the concepts of monarchy, while various techniques of divination were used to forecast the future or to solve immediate problems. Michael Loewe examines these changes and the links between religion and statecraft. While both mythology and the tradition nurtured by the learned affected the concept and practice of monarchy throughout the period, the political and social weaknesses of the last century of Han rule bring into question the success that was achieved by the imperial ideal. Nevertheless that ideal and its institutions were of prime importance for the understanding of Han times and for the influence they exercised on China's later dynasties.

Cambridge University Press
0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China
Michael Loewe
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 48
Divination, mythology and monarchy in Han China

Cambridge University Press

0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China

Michael Loewe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

A series list is shown at the back of the book

Cambridge University Press
0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China
Michael Loewe
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Divination, mythology and monarchy in Han China

MICHAEL LOEWE
Cambridge University



Cambridge University Press
0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China
Michael Loewe
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521454667

© Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Cambridge 1994

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1994
Reprinted 1995

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Loewe, Michael.
Divination, mythology and monarchy in Han China / Michael Loewe.
p. cm. – (University of Cambridge oriental publications; 48)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 45466 2 (hardback)
1. Religion and state—China. 2. China—History—Han dynasty,
202 BC–220 AD I. Title. II. Series.
BL65.S8L64 1994
299'.512177'09014—dc20 93—28327 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-45466-7 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-45466-2 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2005

Cambridge University Press

0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China

Michael Loewe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

TO THE MEMORY OF TOON HULSEWÉ (1910–93)
AND TO EDWARD SHILS
TWO FRIENDS AND TEACHERS
IN DEEP GRATITUDE FOR THIRTY YEARS OF UNFAILING SUPPORT
AND ENCOURAGEMENT

CONTENTS

<i>List of figures</i>	page xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xv
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xvi
Introduction: the history of the early empires	1
1 Man and beast: the hybrid in early Chinese art and literature	38
2 Water, earth and fire: the symbols of the Han dynasty	55
3 The Han view of comets	61
4 The authority of the emperors of Ch'in and Han	85
5 The term <i>K'an-yü</i> and the choice of the moment	112
6 Imperial sovereignty: Tung Chung-shu's contribution and his predecessors	121
7 The cult of the dragon and the invocation for rain	142
8 Divination by shells, bones and stalks during the Han period	160
9 The oracles of the clouds and the winds	191
10 The Almanacs (<i>Jih-shu</i>) from Shui-hu-ti: a preliminary survey	214
11 The <i>Chüeh-ti</i> games: a re-enactment of the battle between Ch'ih-yu and Hsüan-yüan?	236
12 The failure of the Confucian ethic in Later Han times	249
13 The imperial tombs of the Former Han dynasty and their shrines	267
<i>List of Han emperors</i>	300
<i>Glossary</i>	302
<i>Bibliography</i>	317
<i>Index</i>	343

Cambridge University Press

0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China

Michael Loewe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

FIGURES

1	Map of the Han empire 195 BC; reproduced from <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , vol. I, p. 125.	page xviii
2	Map of the Han empire AD 140; reproduced from <i>The Cambridge History of China</i> , vol. I, pp. 252–3.	xix
3	The silk manuscript from Ch'u; from Barnard (1972–3), vol. II, folded sheet in rear cover pocket.	43
4	The twelve peripheral figures of the Ch'u silk manuscript; from Barnard (1972), p. 2.	44
5	Examples of Tongue and Antler figures; from Barnard (1972), p. 18.	47
6	Decorative figures from the coffins of tomb no. 1, Ma-wang-tui; from <i>KK</i> 1973.4, p. 249, fig. 2.	48
7	The Queen Mother of the West, with suppliants; reproduced from <i>Tōhō gakuho</i> number 46 (Kyoto), March 1974, p. 63, fig. 20.	50
8	Pairs of birds and other animals in the art of Ch'u; from Barnard (1972), pp. 14–15.	51
9	(i) The lacquered screen from Wang shan; from Barnard (1972), p. 17; (ii) Reliefs from I-nan, Shan-tung; from Finsterbusch (1966–71), table 95.	53
10	Illustrations to the <i>Classic of the Mountains and the Lakes</i> ; from an edition of 1893, which reproduces woodcuts of before 1667.	54
11	and 12	
	Illustrations of comets, from the silk manuscript from Ma-wang-tui; from <i>WW</i> 1978.2, plates 2, 3.	63/4
13	Figures seen in the clouds, from the silk manuscript from Ma-wang-tui (for source, see p. 192 note 2).	194
14	Figures seen in the clouds, from <i>Chan yüen ch'i shu</i> (for source, see p. 198 note 25).	199
15	Transcription of strips nos. 730–42, from Shui-hu-ti; transcribed by Dr Howard Goodman and reproduced from <i>Asia Major</i> , third series, vol. I, part II, 1988, p. 6.	219
16	The <i>chüeh-ti</i> as portrayed in the <i>San ts'ai t'u hui</i> .	239

Cambridge University Press

0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China

Michael Loewe

Frontmatter

[More information](#)xii *List of figures*

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| 17 | Scene from a relief from a Han tomb in Nan-yang, interpreted as <i>chüeh-ti</i> ; from <i>WW</i> 1973.6, 19 and 21, fig. 3. | 240 |
| 18 | The imperial tombs of the eleven Former Han Emperors; after Liu Ch'ing-shu and Li Yü-fang (1987), p. 2, fig. 1. | 275 |

PREFACE

I am glad to express my thanks to the Publications' Committee of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge, for the opportunity to reprint these articles. They concern three themes that recur in most aspects of China's early imperial history, and which drew the attention of many of the leading men of the day, i.e., the ever present call of mythology, the prevalence of divination in public and private life and the development of concepts of imperial sovereignty. To these I have added an introductory chapter which seeks to show how the study of this period of history has developed in the last few decades, and in doing so to acknowledge my deep debt to those scholars from Asia, America, Australia or Europe who have made such developments possible. It is a matter of satisfaction that a number of the articles that are reproduced here owed their origin to invitations to contribute to volumes published in honour of some of those colleagues. Tributes to Werner Eichhorn, Karl Büniger, Derk Bodde, Anthony Hulswé and Tilemann Grimm are thus included here as chapters 2, 4, 7, 11 and 12.

As each of the following chapters was written for publication independently, there is necessarily some degree of duplication, which has not been removed in the process of editing for inclusion in this volume. The chapters thus remain as separate studies; and while the later ones build on themes set out at earlier stages, they are not dependent on one another and may be read as individual items. New information or references that have become available since the original publication have usually been added to the notes within square brackets; on a few occasions extra information has been placed separately in an addendum to a chapter. As different conventions and methods of reference had been required for different publishing houses, it has been necessary for the sake of consistency to redraft all the footnotes, and to provide a complete bibliography.

The following have kindly given permission to reprint from books or periodicals that they have published or edited:

The Editor of *Asia Major*, Princeton
Attempto Verlag, Tübingen
E. J. Brill and the Editors of *T'oung Pao*, Leiden

Cambridge University Press
0521454662 - Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China
Michael Loewe
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xiv *Preface*

The Editor of *Early China*, Chicago
Gesellschaft für Natur-und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, Hamburg
Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden
Hong Kong University Press
The Editor of *Numen*, Bremen
Östasiatiska Museet, Stockholm
The School of Oriental and African Studies, London

Where it is necessary to distinguish between homophones, letter references are appended to proper names and terms, both in the text and the glossary. These are usually included at the first occurrence of a term in a chapter, but they are not necessarily repeated where ambiguity is unlikely; nor are they included for well-known expressions such as dynastic titles. The names and titles that are given in the bibliography are not repeated in the glossary.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks the editors and publishers of the following books and journals in which the articles collected in this volume have previously appeared:

1. *Numen*, vol. 25, fascicule 2 (1978), 97–117.
2. *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens/Hamburg*, vol. 125 (1979), 63–8 (this article was dedicated to Werner Eichhorn on his eightieth birthday).
3. *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities*, vol. 52 (1980), 1–31
4. Dieter Eikemeier and Herbert Franke (eds.), *State and law in east Asia; festschrift Karl Büniger* (Wiesbaden, 1981), 80–111.
5. *Early China*, vol. 9/10 (1983–5), 204–17.
6. S. R. Schram (ed.), *Foundations and limits of state power in China* (London and Hong Kong, 1987), 33–57.
7. Charles le Blanc and Susan Blader (eds.), *Chinese ideas about nature and society: studies in honour of Derk Bodde* (Hong Kong, 1987), 195–213
8. *T'oung Pao*, vol. 74 (1988), 81–118.
9. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 51, part 3 (1988), 500–20.
10. *Asia Major*, 3rd series, vol. 1, part 2 (1988), 1–27.
11. W. L. Idema and E. Zürcher (eds.), *Thought and law in Qin and Han China: studies dedicated to Anthony Hulsewé on the occasion of his eightieth birthday* (Leiden, 1990), 140–57.
12. Peter Kuhfus (ed.), *China Dimensionen der Geschichte: Festschrift für Tilemann Grimm anlässlich seiner Emeritierung* (Tübingen, 1991), 179–202.
13. *T'oung Pao*, vol. 78 (1992), 302–40.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the notes and bibliography

<i>AM</i>	<i>Asia Major</i>
<i>BEFEO</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Ecole Française de l'Extrême Orient</i>
<i>BIHP</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology</i>
<i>BMFEA</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities</i>
<i>BSOAS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
<i>CC</i>	Michael Loewe, <i>Crisis and Conflict in Han China 104 BC to AD 9</i>
<i>CCFL</i>	<i>Ch'un-ch'iu fan-lu</i>
<i>CFL</i>	<i>Ch'ien-fu lun</i>
<i>CHOC</i>	<i>Cambridge History of China</i> , vol. I
<i>CPAM</i>	Committee for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments
<i>CS</i>	<i>Chin shu</i>
<i>CYYY</i>	See <i>BIHP</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early China</i>
<i>FSCS</i>	<i>Fan Sheng-chih shu</i>
<i>GSR</i>	Bernhard Karlgren, <i>Grammata Serica Recensa</i>
<i>HFHD</i>	Homer H. Dubs, <i>The History of the Former Han Dynasty</i>
<i>HHC</i>	<i>Hou Han chi</i>
<i>HHS</i>	<i>Hou Han shu</i>
<i>HHSCC</i>	<i>Hou Han shu chi-chieh</i>
<i>HJAS</i>	<i>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</i>
<i>HNT</i>	<i>Huai-nan-tzu</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Han shu</i>
<i>HSPC</i>	<i>Han shu pu chu</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
<i>KGYYW</i>	<i>Kaogu yu wenwu</i>
<i>KK</i>	<i>Kaogu</i>
<i>KKHP</i>	<i>K'ao ku hsüeh pao</i>
<i>LC</i>	<i>Li chi</i>
<i>LH</i>	<i>Lun heng</i>

<i>LSCC</i>	<i>Lü shih ch'un-ch'iu</i>
<i>MH</i>	Édouard Chavannes, <i>Les mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien</i>
<i>MSOS</i>	<i>Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen</i>
<i>PHT</i>	<i>Po hu t'ung</i>
<i>SC</i>	<i>Shih-chi</i>
<i>SCC</i>	Joseph Needham <i>et al.</i> , <i>Science and Civilisation in China</i>
<i>SHC</i>	<i>Shan-hai ching</i>
<i>SKC</i>	<i>San kuo chih</i>
<i>SMYL</i>	<i>Ssu min yüeh ling</i>
<i>SPPY</i>	<i>Ssu pu pei yao</i>
<i>SPTK</i>	<i>Ssu pu ts'ung k'an</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Sui shu</i>
<i>SSC</i>	<i>Shih san ching chu shu</i>
<i>TCTC</i>	<i>Tzu-chih t'ung-chien</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>T'oung Pao</i>
<i>TPYL</i>	<i>T'ai-p'ing yü-lan</i>
<i>TSCC</i>	<i>Ts'ung shu chi ch'eng</i>
<i>TSK</i>	<i>Tōyōshi kenkyū</i>
<i>WW</i>	<i>Wen wu</i>
<i>YTL</i>	<i>Yen-t'ieh lun</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

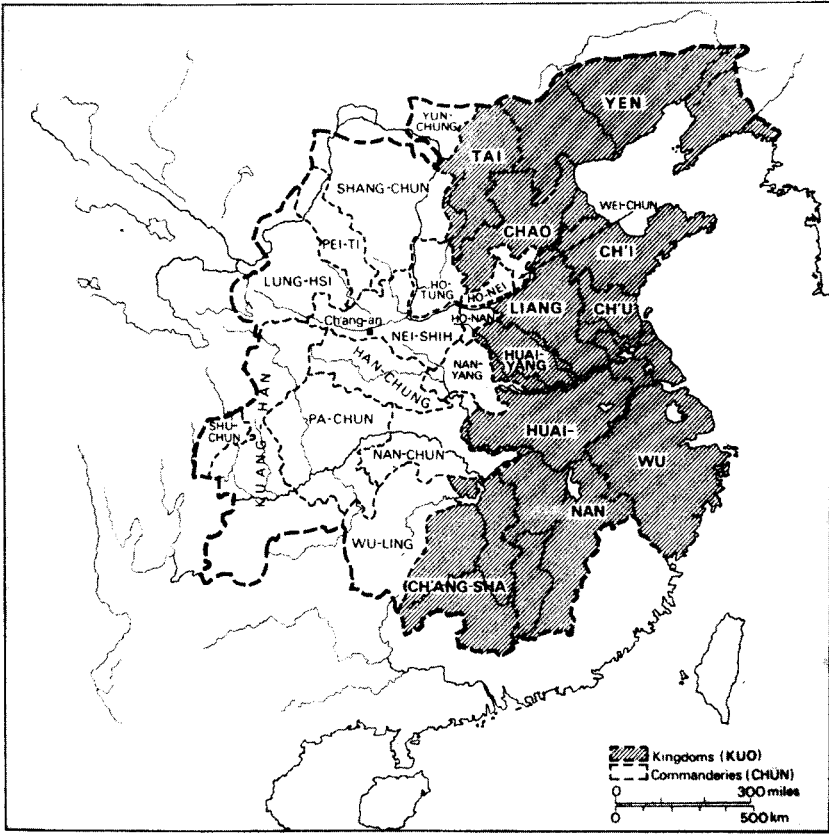


Figure 1 Map of the Han empire 195 BC.



Figure 2 Map of the Han empire AD 140.