

A Discussion of the Han Dynasty's Systems of Coffin Bestowal

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Introduction

Systems of coffin bestowal refer to the systems by which the central and local governments would bestow coffins to the deceased on behalf of the state. Among historical documents of the pre-Qin period (before 221 B.C.), one can find records of rituals concerning the bestowal of various gifts for the deceased and their families,¹ but there is no mention of the systems of bestowing coffins. Therefore, one can assume that, during the pre-Qin period, systems of coffin bestowal had not yet formed. Among the documents of the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.), there is a law regarding the bestowal of coffins for commoners who died in the imperial parks 禁苑 (places designed for the royal family to relax, recreate, or hunt, usually including resting palaces) during *corvée*. During the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220), because death was viewed as another kind of birth, and because tombs were considered the dwelling places of the deceased, in which the coffin was, undoubtedly, the most important item, systems of coffin bestowal were established in various forms, such as through statutes (*lü* 律), ordinances (*ling* 令), and so on.² According to these systems, the receivers of coffins included all the social ranks from commoner to prime minister

¹ According to the funeral rites of the pre-Qin period recorded in the *Liji* 禮記 and the *Yili* 儀禮, the gifts given to the deceased and the mourning family during the funeral are shells and jades, clothes, a shroud, horses, a hearse, money, and so on. The contents of these gifts and the corresponding rituals are referred to in *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), *juan* 43, p. 1218; *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, *juan* 35, p. 664; *juan* 39, pp. 743–47.

² The statutes and the ordinances are two different legal forms that will be elaborated on in the following chapters.

(*chengxiang* 丞相). In the Han dynasty's systems of coffin bestowal, one can see the attention that the government paid to the funerals and burials of people of various social ranks. A discussion of the aforementioned systems of coffin bestowal will be helpful to develop a deeper understanding of the broader system of funeral and burial during the Han dynasty.

Systems of coffin bestowal of the Han dynasty have been acknowledged in other studies, but there has not yet been sufficient discussion. Yang Shuda 楊樹達 enumerated a number of practices related to the Han's systems of coffin bestowal in his *Handai hun sang lisu kao* 漢代婚喪禮俗考, including examples of coffin bestowal from the state to senior officials and the types of coffin bestowed. However, Yang's research is more a collection of related documents than a systematic study, as his discussion of the system itself is not very detailed.³ Sugimoto Kenji 杉本憲司, in his investigation of funeral gift-bestowal during both the Former (206 B.C.–A.D. 8) and Later (25–220) Han, briefly discussed the systems of coffin bestowal for prime ministers' funerals in the Former Han. Sugimoto also discussed the bestowing of a coffin, or the money equivalent, by the governments of the Former and Later Han for victims of natural disasters and plagues. He was the first to address the system of coffin bestowal to commoners in the context of the gift-bestowing systems during the funeral.⁴ Du Linyuan 杜林淵 mentioned examples of coffin bestowal in his discussion but with no specific conclusion.⁵ Some research has been conducted from an archaeological perspective, such as Sun Ji's 孫機 and Li Rusen's 李如森 studies, which discuss the physical form of the high-class coffins bestowed to senior officials during the Han dynasty.⁶

The studies mentioned earlier have laid the foundation for the study of the Han's systems of coffin bestowal. However, there are still some problems that need to be discussed:

(1) Prior research has mostly relied on the examples of coffin bestowal recorded in traditional historical documents, such as *Hanshu* 漢書 and *Hou-Hanshu* 後漢書,

³ Yang Shuda, *Handai hun sang lisu kao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), pp. 54–65. Part of this book was first published under the name of “Handai sangzang zhidu kao” 漢代喪葬制度考, *Qinghua xuebao* 8, no. 1 (December 1932), pp. 8–21.

⁴ Sugimoto Kenji, “Kandai no hōfu ni tsuite” 漢代の法賻について, *Shakai kagaku ronshū* 2 (1971), pp. 31–46.

⁵ Du Linyuan, “Dong-Han fengfu zhidu yanjiu” 東漢贈賻制度研究, *Dongnan wenhua*, 2007, no. 2, pp. 49–54.

⁶ Sun Ji, *Handai wuzhi wenhua ziliao tushuo* 漢代物質文化資料圖說 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1991), pp. 409–12; Li Rusen, *Handai sangzang lisu* 漢代喪葬禮俗 (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 2003), pp. 75–97.

while abundant records regarding coffin bestowal in excavated Han dynasty documents are left unused, among which, particularly important is *Ernian lüling* 二年律令 (laws of the earlier period of the Former Han,⁷ consisting of twenty-seven statutes and one ordinance) of Zhangjiashan Han strips 張家山漢簡 (a batch of strips from the Han dynasty unearthed in modern Zhangjiashan, Hubei in the 1980s). *Ernian lüling* also contains records relating to systems of coffin bestowal. Compared to the examples that prior studies used, the contents of the *Ernian lüling* are more explicit, as they are articles of law. In order to show a more comprehensive picture of the Han dynasty's systems of coffin bestowal, it is necessary to use these valuable excavated documents as well.

(2) Prior research has mostly focused on the system of bestowing coffins for senior officials and the prime minister, with less attention paid to the system of bestowing coffins for commoners and absolutely none paid to the Former Han system of bestowing coffins for soldiers who died during battle. It is necessary that a re-examination of systems of coffin bestowal be conducted that considers all categories of recipients.

(3) There are descriptions of various coffins bestowed to senior officials and the prime minister in traditional historical documents. Prior research mostly concentrates on the meanings of these coffins' names and their forms as well as the corresponding excavations. However, there is no discussion of the problem of how the tradition of bestowing coffins for senior officials and the prime minister developed or in what form of law it was established as a system.

Therefore, in this essay, I collect all of the records and provisions regarding coffin bestowal in historical and excavated documents of the Han dynasty and try to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the various systems of coffin bestowal of the Han through a discussion both of legal systems and of real examples. According to the historical documents I have collected, depending on the social status of the recipient, systems of coffin bestowal can be divided into three types: coffin bestowal for deceased soldiers, for commoners, and for officials. "Commoners" here refers to freemen without official positions. As far as status is concerned, soldiers were freemen who served in the army as well. However, usually coffins would be bestowed for soldiers only if they died during battle or while defending the frontier,

⁷ There are two theories about the promulgation of the *Ernian lüling*—that it either occurred in 205 B.C. or 186 B.C. However, according to Zhang Zhongwei's 張忠燁 research, although not all the terms of the *Ernian lüling* were promulgated simultaneously, most of the contents were compiled during the earlier period of the Former Han. See Zhang, "Ernian lüling niandai wenti yanjiu" 二年律令年代問題研究, *Lishi yanjiu*, 2008, no. 3, pp. 147–63.

which is very different from the case of commoners. Therefore, we will discuss these two categories of coffin bestowal separately. Through this approach, I aim to clarify the ideological roots behind these systems of coffin bestowal and the purpose of the state involving itself in the funerals and burials of members of various social ranks during the Han dynasty.

The Han Dynasty's Systems of Coffin Bestowal for Deceased Soldiers

There is no record in the existing historical documents of coffins bestowed for deceased soldiers before the Han dynasty. However, in the laws of the Qin dynasty, one can find a provision concerning bestowing coffins for those who died during *corvée*. As military service, like *corvée*, was an obligation of the commoners, and the laws and policies established after the First Emperor of the Qin 秦始皇 (r. 221–210 B.C.) united China had a profound influence on the Han dynasty, investigations of the laws of the Qin dynasty relating to coffin bestowal can, to some extent, provide clues for the discussion of the origins of the coffin bestowal systems of the Han dynasty.

One of the most notable characteristics of the Qin state was that, after the reforms of Shang Yang 商鞅 (d. 338 B.C.), instead of relying on the ritual system like the other pre-Qin states, the state of Qin depended on the law as its main means of statecraft.⁸ The laws of the Qin state related to all aspects of state systems and thus made the reign of the state more effective. As is well known, not many traditional historical documents of the Qin dynasty remain. However, a number of strips regarding the laws of the Qin dynasty have been unearthed during archaeological excavations. In 1989, a batch of bamboo strips was excavated in a Qin dynasty tomb located in Yunmeng county 雲夢縣, Hubei province, which was later named Longgang Qin strips 龍崗秦簡. Longgang Qin strips records laws concerning affairs in the imperial parks, legislated between 221 and 207 B.C.,⁹ among which are two strips regarding the bestowal of coffins for commoners who bore the *corvée*. The original texts of these two strips are:

⁸ About Qin's statecraft of Law, see A.F.P. Hulswé, "The Legalists and the Laws of Ch'in," in *Leyden Studies in Sinology: Papers Presented at the Conference Held in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Sinological Institute of Leyden University, December 8–12, 1980*, ed. W. L. Idema (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), pp. 1–22; Charles Sanft, "Law and Communication in Qin and Western Han China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 5 (2010), pp. 690–97.

⁹ Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo 中國文物研究所 and Hubeisheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 湖北省文物考古研究所, eds., *Longgang Qinjian* 龍崗秦簡 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), p. 5.

Strip 196: When a commoner has unfortunately died and remains unburied. . . .

Strip 197: The officers and runners [criminals employed as runners to transport the coffin] should remove the *ban* of the coffin. . . .

196 簡：黔首□□不幸死，未葬□

197 簡：者棺葬具，吏及徒去辦□¹⁰

The two strips were edited separately in prior reports.¹¹ However, based on further study, the *Longgang Qinjian*, published by Zhonghua shuju, claims that these two strips belong to the same article of the law. The word *ban*, mentioned in the strip, is believed to have referred to certifications like *sanban quan* 參辦券. *Sanban quan* was a document of certification used in the Qin and Han dynasties, manufactured by the office in charge of a given affair, drawn up in triplicate, and preserved by the office in charge, the central government, and the person or office the document related to, to prove the legality of the affair concerned and also to serve as a record. The *sanban quan* mentioned in Strip 197 was used to prove the legality of the transportation of the coffin when moving the body.

Laws recorded in Longgang Qin strips are identified as relating to the affairs of imperial parks, so the commoner mentioned in Strip 196 is presumed to have been a commoner who bore the corvée in an imperial park. Although some parts are missing from these strips, the meaning of this article can be conjectured as: When a commoner who bore the corvée in an imperial park has unfortunately died and remains unburied, the related imperial park should provide a coffin (to carry the body back to his family) and the *sanban quan*, and, when the coffin arrives at the hometown of the deceased, the *sanban quan* will be taken by the officers in charge and the runners.¹² This Qin

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 131.

¹¹ In Liu Xinfang's 劉信芳 and Liang Zhu's 梁柱 *Yunmeng Longgang Qinjian* 雲夢龍崗秦簡 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1997, p. 42), these two strips were numbered as 184 and 186.

¹² *Longgang Qinjian*, p. 131. In addition to this explanation, Ma Hyō 馬彪 claims that besides Strips 196 and 197, Strips 122 (“the crime of stealing the coffin is equivalent to larceny” 盜樁，罪如盜 □□□□□□□□□□) and 11 (“people in the imperial places will be given *sanban quan*” □於禁中者，吏與參辦券□) also belong to the same article of the law, and he explains their meaning as when a commoner who bears the corvée in an imperial park has unfortunately died and remains unburied, the local government should provide not only a coffin but also *sanban quan*. If the officer and runner abandon the *sanban quan* or if the coffin is stolen, their crimes are equivalent to larceny. For details, see Ma Hyō, *Sin teikoku no ryōdo keiei: Unbo Ryūkō Shinkan to Shikōtei no kin'en* 秦帝国の領土経営—雲夢龍崗秦簡と始皇帝の禁苑 (Kyoto: Kyōto daigaku gakujyutsu shuppankai, 2013), p. 232. However, although Strip 11 mentions the *sanban quan*, its meaning is not necessarily identical to the *ban* mentioned

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dynasty provision is the earliest law concerning coffin bestowal for commoners that I have seen, and it must have had an impact on the systems of coffin bestowal of the Han dynasty.

The recipients of the coffins stipulated in Longgang Qin strips are the deceased commoners who bore the corvée, whose treatment was far different from the slaves and prisoners sentenced to penal servitude. During the Qin dynasty, slaves and prisoners sentenced to penal servitude, who died in their working places, would be buried nearby without coffins. There are many tombs belonging to prisoners sentenced to penal servitude around the mausoleum of the First Emperor of the Qin (in modern Shaanxi).¹³ Since commoners had personal liberties, when they went to serve corvée in places far from their homes and died there, theoretically, their bodies would be sent back to their hometowns. That was the background of the aforementioned law in the Longgang Qin strips when it was legislated. Because documents regarding the overall legal system of the Qin dynasty are not preserved, it is difficult to know whether systems of bestowing coffin existed for other sections of society. Given that soldiers were actually also commoners, and military service was another form of corvée prescribed by the state, it is reasonable to presume that, during the Qin dynasty, there might also have been systems or laws relating to bestowing coffins for soldiers who died in battle and transporting their bodies back to their hometowns. Moreover, because the establishment of the Former Han's state system basically followed the systems of the Qin dynasty, there is an inextricable connection between the laws of the Qin and Han dynasties.

According to *Hanshu*, after the Qin fell, during the war with Xiang Yu 項羽 (232–202 B.C.), in 203 B.C. Emperor Gaozu of Han 漢高祖 (r. 206–195 B.C.) issued an edict that says, “Bestow clothes and coffins for the soldiers who died in the war, for encoffining and transporting the bodies to their hometowns” 軍士不幸死者，吏為衣衾棺斂，轉送其家。¹⁴ After it was issued, this edict had very positive effects, as *Hanshu* records that Emperor Gaozu “won the hearts and minds of the

(Note 12—*Continued*)

in Strip 197. In the Qin and Han strips, *sanban quan* also has other meanings, such as the indenturing of property. Therefore, we are still not sure whether the *sanban quan* mentioned in Strip 11 is about the coffin or not. Furthermore, there is no evidence showing that Strips 122, 196, and 197 belong to the same article. For these reasons, in this essay I will not refer to Ma's recovery of this article of the law.

¹³ Shihuang ling Qin yongkeng kaogu fajuedui 始皇陵秦俑坑考古發掘隊, “Qin shihuang ling xice Zhaobeihucun Qin xingtu mu” 秦始皇陵西側趙背戶村秦刑徒墓, *Wenwu*, 1982, no. 3, pp. 1–11.

¹⁴ Ban Gu 班固 (32–92), *Hanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), *juan* 1, p. 46.

population” 四方歸心，and thus laid the foundation for his triumph over Xiang Yu and his unification of China. After Emperor Gaozu defeated Xiang Yu and officially established the Han dynasty, he gave an imperial edict in 199 B.C. bestowing clothes and coffins to the soldiers who died in the wars unifying China that says, “Prepare small coffins for the soldiers who died during the war and send these small coffins, carried with the bodies, back to the hometowns of these soldiers. And the local county governments should prepare clothes for encoffining, and coffins [for the burial] for them, sacrificing them with a pig and a goat. And officials of the local county governments will attend the funerals” 令士卒從軍死者為椁，歸其縣，縣給衣衾棺葬具，祠以少牢，長吏視葬。¹⁵

In Wang Hui's 王恢 (d. 133 B.C.) description of the violence of the war with the Huns in *Hanshu*, on the way from the border back to the capital, there were caravans carrying small coffins. Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) explains that the small coffins were not used for encoffining and burial but were used to transport the bodies of the soldiers who died during the war to their hometowns.¹⁶ Juyan Han strips 居延漢簡 (a batch of strips from the middle Former Han to the early Later Han, unearthed in Juyan in modern Inner Mongolia and Pochengzi 破城子 in modern Gansu) show that when a soldier died during the war, the local government would prepare a small coffin to transport the soldier's body to his hometown. The original text of this strip is:

On the *bing zi* day of the month of which the first day is *wu chen*, the border defender of Jiaqu [in modern Gansu] named Yuan informs the Guodong Li of Nanyang's Xinye county [in modern Henan] that Qu Zhu [a soldier who died in Jiaqu, whose hometown was Guodong Li of Nanyang's Xinye] died of disease. His body has been carried in a small coffin.¹⁷ When this document arrives [with his body], it should be received according to the provisions of the law.

戊辰朔丙子甲渠塞尉元移南陽新野亭東里瞿諸病死為椁一櫝書到

□取如律令 (157.20A)¹⁸

It is very likely that this strip was one part of the *sanban quan* that was left with the local government as a record. It records an example of bestowing a coffin for a soldier who died while garrisoning in Jiaqu and transporting his body back to his hometown of Nanyang.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁶ Ibid., *juan* 52, p. 2400.

¹⁷ According to Yan Shigu's annotation, the word *du* 櫝 also refers to a “small coffin used to transport the body.” See *Hanshu*, *juan* 10, p. 311. The *du* is here used as a quantifier.

¹⁸ Xie Guihua 謝桂華, Li Junming 李均明, and Zhu Guozhao 朱國炤, *Juyan Hanjian shiwen hejiao* 居延漢簡釋文合校 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1987), p. 258.

From Wang Hui's description and the Juyan Han strips' record, mentioned earlier, we know that in the Han dynasty there was a system of using small coffins to transport the bodies of soldiers who died in battle or on the borders back to their hometowns.

In Yan Shigu's annotation to the imperial edict of 199 B.C., he cites Chen Zan's 臣瓚 (a scholar of Western Jin [265–316] whose family name and dates of birth and death are unknown. He is frequently cited in Yan Shigu's annotation to the *Hanshu*) interpretation, that is, that they should first use a small coffin to transport the body to his hometown, and then the local county government should provide a coffin and clothes and encoffin him. Yan also cites the words of the "Ordinances on Finance" 金布令 saying:

[For every soldier who] has unfortunately died, the local government of his place of death should provide a small coffin and transport the body to his hometown, and bestow him clothes and a coffin.

不幸死，死所為櫛，傳歸所居縣，賜以衣棺。

The main idea of this extract from the "Ordinances on Finance" is essentially the same as the edict of 203 B.C. and the imperial edict of 199 B.C.¹⁹ The ordinance of the Han dynasty was a collection of edicts that were issued, edited, and compiled based on the edicts about the same items.²⁰ An edict, which was usually an order of the emperor, would have had permanent legal validity after it became an item of the ordinance. The "Ordinances on Finance" is about the edicts relating to the state's coffers, money, textiles, and so on.²¹ Given that the reason Yan Shigu cited this item of the "Ordinances on Finance" was to explain the edict of 199 B.C., we can be sure that this item of the "Ordinances on Finance" corresponds to the edict of 199 B.C., so the deceased person mentioned in the "Ordinances on Finance" should also refer to soldiers who died during a war. Therefore, we can assume that these two aforementioned edicts were eventually collected by the "Ordinances on Finance" and thus became fixed laws of the state with permanent legal validity, officially becoming a system of the state.

¹⁹ Because in 203 B.C. Emperor Gaozu had not become the emperor yet, the orders he gave then cannot be called imperial edicts.

²⁰ Miyake Kiyoshi 宮宅潔, "Kanryō no kigen to sono henshen" 漢令の起源とその変遷, *Chūgoku shigaku* 5 (October 1995), pp. 109–29; Tomiya Itaru 冨谷至, "Shin Taisi ritsuryō e no michi: Daiichibu Shin Kan no ritsu to ryō" 晋泰始律令への道—第一部 秦漢の律と令, *Tōhō gakuho* 72 (March 2000), pp. 121–27.

²¹ According to Yan Shigu's explanation. See *Hanshu*, *juan* 78, p. 3278.

Since the Eastern Zhou (770–255 B.C.), there had been a concept that people killed by weapons should not be buried in the burial grounds of their clans. However, according to Lu Defu's 陸德富 study, "people killed by weapons" mostly refers to those killed as punishment for a crime or during a rebellion. Soldiers who died in the war were not subjected to this treatment. Although eventually deceased soldiers were not always buried in family graveyards, their bodies were transported to their hometowns for the burial if the conditions permitted.²² Therefore, one can say that, in the Han dynasty, transporting deceased soldiers' bodies back to their hometowns and bestowing coffins was a preferential treatment stipulated in the form of a state system.

One can see from the edict of 203 B.C., the imperial edict of 199 B.C., and the "Ordinances on Finance" that when the bodies arrived, local governments were obliged to provide not only coffins but also clothes to encoffin dead soldiers. During the funeral and burial, the coffin and shroud for encoffining were indispensable items. Ideologically, the people of the Qin and Han dynasties believed that the spirit of the dead could live in the netherworld peacefully and permanently as long as the body was buried appropriately.²³ Based on this view of death, Wang Chong 王充 (27–?), an ideologist of the Later Han, analysed the phenomenon in the Han dynasty whereby people excessively emphasized the importance of funeral supplies. Wang Chong writes: "When people heard the story of Du Bo [d. 785 B.C.] turning into a ghost after his death [Du Bo was an official of King Xuan of Zhou 周宣王, killed for admonishing the king. Later, King Xuan dreamed that Du Bo turned into a ghost and wanted to kill him, and the king fell ill and died], and that dying people said they saw those who had already been buried, they began to believe that ghosts exist, and viewed death as another form of birth. People felt sympathy for the deceased because they were buried alone, their spirits lonely without companions, and with the tomb closed, they were without food. Therefore, people made clay figurines to put in the coffins with the dead, and they usually also put a great amount of food and supplies into the coffins for the dead to enjoy. Some people even used up their fortunes in this manner" 外聞杜伯之類，又見病且終者，墓中死人來與相見，故遂信是，謂死如生。閔死獨葬，魂孤無副，丘墓閉藏，穀物乏匱，故作偶人以侍尸柩，多藏食物以歆精魂。積浸流至，或破家盡業，以充死棺。²⁴ From this, we can see

²² Lu Defu, "Zhanguo shidai de 'bingsizhe'" 戰國時代的「兵死者」, http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/srcshow.asp?src_id=702.

²³ Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 165–67; Wu Hung, *The Art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese Tombs* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2010), pp. 38–47.

²⁴ Huang Hui 黃暉, *Lunheng jiaoshi* 論衡校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), *juan* 23, p. 961.

that people in those times were very worried that if not buried appropriately, dead spirits could not live happily in the afterworld and might wreak harm upon the living. Therefore, we can assume that the bestowal of a coffin and shroud for the deceased and the transporting of the body back to its hometown were, at least partially, ways of consoling the spirit of the deceased. In the case of war, the appropriate arrangement of funeral affairs also relieved the worries of the soldiers that they might not be properly buried if they were to die. This might have been one of the reasons the edict Emperor Gaozu issued in 203 B.C. helped him win the hearts and minds of the population.

Furthermore, coffin bestowal also functioned as a kind of economic compensation. There is no record of giving pecuniary compensation to the families of soldiers who died in battle in the historical documents of the Han dynasty. If the state did not offer to take charge of all the funeral affairs for an individual, his family would have to pay all the money for the transportation of the body as well as the funeral and burial, which was no small expenditure for ordinary families. Therefore, bestowing the coffin and shroud was also a form of financial support for mourning families.

The most recently discovered record regarding providing coffins for deceased soldiers in the Former Han is a piece of a strip in the Juyan Han strips from 54 B.C. about bestowing things like small coffins for soldiers who died on the border.²⁵ From this, we can infer that at least until the mid-late period of the Former Han, the “Ordinances on Finance” continued to be in effect. There seem to be no records of providing coffins for deceased soldiers in the Later Han, so we can hardly discuss it. However, considering that, just like the Former Han, the Later Han also placed many sentry posts on the borders and had sentinels on guard, it is very possible that the Later Han also had a similar system of providing coffins for soldiers deceased on the borders.

The Han Dynasty’s Systems of Coffin Bestowal for Deceased Commoners

The “Cilü” 賜律 (Statutes on Bestowal) in *Ernian lüling* records the provisions in the Former Han about the contents and standards of various awards and bestowals, which include the systems of bestowing coffins for commoners who died under special circumstances, as we can see from the following strip:

Strip 288: When there are two deceased in one family, the local county government should provide one coffin. And when there are three deceased in one family, [the local county government] should provide two coffins.

²⁵ Xie, Li, and Zhu, *Juyan Hanjian shiwen hejiao*, strip 267.4, p. 447.

288 簡：一室二殯在堂，縣官給一棺。三殯在當(堂)，給二棺。²⁶

The original meaning of the word *si* 肆, mentioned in Strip 288, is temporary burial, but here it means the number of deceased in one family. This strip stipulates that the local county government should provide one coffin to a family in which two people have died simultaneously and provide two coffins when three people have died, increasing linearly from there. Strip 288 does not have a clear qualification about the recipients, but considering that when two or three people died simultaneously in one family, it was usually the result of plague, natural disaster, or other special circumstances, Strip 288 should be considered a provision for bestowing coffins, at least sometimes, to commoners.

The “Statutes on Bestowal” also stipulate the ratio of the coffin to the money equivalent based on the twenty titles of honorary nobility 二十等爵制。

Strip 289: If the mourning family wants money instead of a coffin, to the orders above *qing* (chamberlain), the money for the coffin will be increased by one thousand coins order by order, and the money for the outer coffin will be increased by six hundred coins order by order; to the orders below the *wu dafu*, the money for the coffin will be increased by six hundred coins order by order, and the money for the outer coffin will be increased by three hundred coins; to those who have no titles, the money for the coffin will be three hundred coins.

289 簡：賜棺享(槨)而欲受齋者，卿以上予棺錢級千、享(槨)級六百。五大夫以下棺錢級六百、享(槨)級三百。毋爵者棺錢三百。²⁷

As the funeral procedures, like the making and bestowing of a coffin, usually took a long time, the coffins would not always arrive before the encoffining. Therefore, instead of bestowing a real coffin, as is shown in Strip 289, the exchange for a money equivalent was also allowed.²⁸

²⁶ Peng Hao 彭浩, Chen Wei 陳偉, and Kudō Motoo 工藤元男, eds., *Ernian liling yu Zouyanshu: Zhangjiashan ersiqi hao Hanmu chutu falü wenxian shidu* 二年律令與奏讞書——張家山二四七號漢墓出土法律文獻釋讀 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2007), p. 210.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁸ The money, mentioned in Strip 289, refers to the legal tender (coin) of that time. The *Ernian liling* has one statute called “Qianlü” 錢律 (Statutes on Coins), which concerns the monetary system of the time.

Strip 197: The diameter of the coin is over eight tenths of a *cun* [about 1.84 cm]. Despite the wear and chips on it, as long as the words and pattern on it are legible and it is not broken or made of lead, it can be regarded as currency.

197 簡：錢徑十分寸八以上，雖缺鑿，文章頗可智(知)，而非殊折及鉛錢也，皆為行錢。

(Continued on next page)

Strip 289 stipulates the standards for exchanging coffins for money for those who had titles of honorary nobility and those who did not. In Strip 289, *qing* refers to the officials ranked from *zuo shuzhang* 左庶長 (the tenth title of honorary nobility) to *da shuzhang* 大庶長 (the eighteenth title of honorary nobility).²⁹ The strip says “above” the orders of *qing*, so *guannei hou* 關內侯 (the nineteenth title of honorary nobility) and *che hou* 徹侯 (the twentieth title of honorary nobility, the highest order of all), which are above the *da shuzhang*, are also included. In the twenty titles of honorary nobility, the titles below the *wu dafu* 五大夫 (the ninth title of honorary nobility) are awarded to commoners, while the titles above the *zuo shuzhang* are awarded to officials, so there are two standards in Strip 289: the orders above *qing* (above *zuo shuzhang*) and the orders below the *wu dafu*.³⁰

Strip 289 stipulates that, for those ranked above *qing*, the money exchange for the coffin should add 1000 coins per order and the money exchange for the outer coffin should add 600 coins per order; for those below the *wu dafu*, the money exchange for the coffin should add 600 coins per order and the money exchange for the outer coffin should add 300 coins per order. Take *zuo shuzhang*, the lowest order of *qing*, for example. The number of the order of its title is 10, so the money exchange for the coffin should be 10×1000 coins, and the money exchange for the outer coffin should be 10×600 coins. And take *gong shi* 公士, the first title of honorary nobility and the lowest order of all, as another example. The number of the order of its title is 1, so the money exchange for the coffin should be 1×600 coins,

(Note 28—Continued)

As can be seen, Strip 197 stipulates the size and standard of the legal tender, coin. According to the description of the coin’s size, we can assume that it corresponds to the excavated round copper coin of the early Former Han with a square hole and the words of *ban liang* 半兩 on it. This is the kind of coin referred to in Strip 289, which was used as the equivalent for a coffin. See Peng, Chen, and Kudō, *Ernian liling yu Zouyanshu*, pp. 168, 169.

²⁹ Li Junming, “Zhangjiashan Hanjian suo fanying de ershideng juezhi” 張家山漢簡所反映的二十等爵制, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu*, 2002, no. 2, p. 38.

³⁰ There is another division between the titles of honorary nobility awarded to commoners and those awarded to officials, which is that the titles below the *gong cheng* 公乘 are awarded to commoners, while the titles above the *wu dafu* are awarded to officials. Refer to M. Loewe, “The Orders of Aristocratic Rank of Han China,” *T’oung Pao*, 2nd ser., 48, livr. 1/3 (1960), pp. 97–174. However, this division is found in the *Jue zhi* 爵制 of Liu Shao 劉劭 (a scholar of the late Later Han to the Three Kingdoms [220–280] period; the date of his birth and death are unknown), which represents the standard of division for the twenty titles of honorary nobility of the Qin dynasty. The *Ernian liling* was formed at the beginning of the Former Han. Back then *wu dafu* was a title awarded to commoners. See Li Junming, “Zhangjiashan Hanjian suo fanying de ershideng juezhi,” p. 39.

and the money exchange for the outer coffin should be 1×300 coins.³¹ The standards for all the titles of honorary nobility can be seen from the following table:

Table 1

Titles of honorary nobility	Coin exchange for a coffin	Coin exchange for the outer coffin
<i>che hou</i> 徹侯	20,000	12,000
<i>guannei hou</i> 關內侯	19,000	11,400
<i>da shuzhang</i> 大庶長	18,000	10,800
<i>siche shuzhang</i> 駟車庶長	17,000	10,200
<i>dashao zao</i> 大少造	16,000	9,600
<i>shaoshang zao</i> 少上造	15,000	9,000
<i>you geng</i> 右更	14,000	8,400
<i>zhong geng</i> 中更	13,000	7,800
<i>zuo geng</i> 左更	12,000	7,200
<i>you shuzhang</i> 右庶長	11,000	6,600
<i>zuo shuzhang</i> 左庶長	10,000	6,000
<i>wu dafu</i> 五大夫	5,400	2,700
<i>gong cheng</i> 公乘	4,800	2,400
<i>gong dafu</i> 公大夫	4,200	2,100
<i>guan dafu</i> 官大夫	3,600	1,800
<i>dafu</i> 大夫	3,000	1,500
<i>bu geng</i> 不更	2,400	1,200
<i>zan niao</i> 簪褭	1,800	900
<i>shang zao</i> 上造	1,200	600
<i>gong shi</i> 公士	600	300
people without titles 無爵者	300	0

³¹ According to these two presumed standards, there is a huge discrepancy between the money given for the orders above *zuo shuzhang* and the orders below *wu dafu*, which is consistent with the other systems in the *Ernian lüling*. There is also a great discrepancy between the orders above *zuo shuzhang* and the orders below *wu dafu*, in the systems of awarding farmland and houses. Refer to Strips 310, 311, 312, and 313 (pp. 216, 217) and Strips 315 and 316 (p. 218) in Peng, Chen, and Kudō, *Ernian lüling yu Zouyanshu*.

Tomiya Itaru holds that it was likely uncommon to give the money for a coffin to those who had no titles of honorary nobility, something happening only under special circumstances.³² Strip 289 stipulates the standards for exchanging a coffin for money, but not the qualifications for the reward. According to Strip 288, a coffin was bestowed only when two or more people died simultaneously in the same family, and the number of coffins bestowed should amount to one coffin for each death exceeding the first. The primary recipients of the coffin bestowal stipulated in Strip 288 would be those who had a title of honorary nobility below the *wu dafu* (titles for commoners) or no title.³³ This is consistent with an edict given after a disaster during the late Former Han regarding money bestowed for burials based on the number of deceased in a family. “The Annals of Emperor Ping” 平帝紀 of *Hanshu* records that, in A.D. 2, many places, especially Qingzhou 青州 (in modern Shandong), suffered from severe drought and a plague of locusts, so the habitants were forced to leave their hometowns. “Those families in which more than six died were given five thousand coins for the burial; those families in which more than four died were given three thousand coins for the burial; and those families in which more than two people died were given two thousand coins for the burial” 賜死者一家六尸以上葬錢五千，四尸以上三千，二尸以上二千。³⁴ Emperor Ping (r. 1 B.C.–A.D. 5) gave the edict calculating money for burials according to the number of the deceased in the victims’ family, which also stated that the expense of the coffin must be included in the money for the burial. As this edict was given in the wake of a disaster, we can infer that the provision of bestowing coffins in Strip 288 should apply in special circumstances such as disasters or the plague.

Earlier, we discussed the rules for coffin bestowal in the “Ordinances on Finance” and the *Ernian lüling* of the Han dynasty. The exact year when the “Ordinances on Finance” was compiled is unknown. However, as it was compiled based on either the edict of 203 B.C. or the edict of 199 B.C., it is reasonable to presume that it was compiled during the earlier period of the Former Han. The *Ernian lüling* is also believed to have been compiled during the earlier period of the Former Han. So both the “Ordinances on Finance” and the *Ernian lüling* are codes of the earlier period of the Former Han. Although we have not found similar codes from the later period of the Former Han or the whole of the Later Han, the emperors usually gave edicts after disasters bestowing the victims a coffin or the money equivalent according to the actual situation. The contents of these edicts are summed up in the following table.

³² Tomiya Itaru, *Kōryō Chōkasan nihyakuyonjūnana-gō bo shutsudo Kan ritsuryō no kenkyū* 江陵張家山二四七号墓出土漢律令の研究 (Kyoto: Hōyū shoten, 2006), p. 195.

³³ The coffin bestowal for those who have a title of honorary nobility higher than *wu dafu* (titles for officials) will be discussed in the next section.

³⁴ *Hanshu*, *juan* 12, p. 353.

Table 2

Time	Special circumstance	Contents of bestowal
25 B.C.	Flood	The government of the commandery or kingdom should bestow small coffins for those who died in the flood and were without a family to bury them and bestow two thousand coins for each of those who were already buried. 其為水所流壓死，不能自葬，令郡國給槨槨葬埋。已葬者與錢，人二千。 ³⁵
7 B.C.	Flood (Yingchuan county 潁川郡, in modern Henan)	Bestow three thousand coins for a coffin for each deceased. 賜死者棺錢，人三千。 ³⁶
A.D. 2	Drought, plague of locusts	Refer to the contents of “The Annals of Emperor Ping” cited earlier.
115	Died outside of hometown	Send palace receptionists to encoffin those migrants who died in the capital without a family to bury them and those whose coffins were broken and make a sacrifice for them. For those whose families are too poor to bury them, bestow five thousand coins each. 遣中謁者收葬京師客死無家屬及棺槨朽敗者，皆為設祭；其有家屬，尤貧無以葬者，賜錢人五千。 ³⁷
119	Plague	When Kuaiji [in modern Zhejiang] suffered a plague, a counsellor to the keeper of the palace gate was sent with imperial physicians to inspect the situation of the plague and bestow coffins [for the deceased]. 會稽大疫，遣光祿大夫將太醫循行疾病，賜棺木。 ³⁸
121	Earthquake	Send a counsellor to the keeper of the palace gate to inspect the situation of the earthquake, and bestow two thousand coins for each deceased. 遣光祿大夫案行，賜死者錢，人二千。 ³⁹
122	Storm	Bestow two thousand coins for each drowned person more than seven years old . . . if all the family members died because of the storm or if only the weak ones or children survived, and the government of the commandery or county should gather the bodies of the deceased and lay them into coffins. 賜壓溺死者年七歲以上錢，人二千；……若一家皆被災害而弱小存者，郡縣為收斂之。 ⁴⁰

³⁵ Ibid., *juan* 10, p. 311. “Small coffins” mentioned here does not refer to the coffins used for transporting the body, but to the simply constructed coffins used for burying the victims.

³⁶ *Hanshu*, *juan* 11, p. 337.

³⁷ Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445), *Hou-Hanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), *juan* 5, p. 222.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 230.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 234.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 236.

Time	Special circumstance	Contents of bestowal
128	Earthquake (Changan 長安, in modern Shaanxi), Subsidence (Hanyang 漢陽, in modern Gansu)	Verify the condition of the victims, and bestow the deceased who were over seven years old two thousand coins each. If all the family members died, the government of the commandery or county should gather the bodies of the deceased and lay them into coffins. 實覈傷受害者，賜年七歲以上錢，人二千；一家被害，郡縣為收斂。 ⁴¹
129	Rain	Send officials to verify the number of the deceased. Gather their bodies into coffins and bestow money. 遣使實覈死亡，收斂稟賜。 ⁴²
138	Earthquake (Jincheng 金城 and Longxi 隴西, both in modern Gansu)	Bestow two thousand coins for each of the deceased more than seven years old, and if all the family members died, [the local government should] gather their bodies and lay them into coffins. 賜壓死者年七歲以上錢，人二千；一家皆被害，為收斂之。 ⁴³
149	Flood, earthquake, landslide	Bestow three thousand coins on those whose families are too poor to bury them and three pieces of cloth to the host of the mourning family. If the deceased had no family or relatives, [the local government] must bury them in the unused land of the government, mark their names, and make a sacrifice for them. [It is reasonable to consider that coffin bestowal is also included.] 其有家屬而貧無以葬者，給直，人三千，喪主布三匹；若無親屬，可於官墻地葬之，表識姓名，為設祠祭。 ⁴⁴
155	Flood	The government of the commandery or county should retrieve the bodies of those who were washed away by the flood and bestow two thousand coins for each drowned person more than seven years old. 被水死流失屍骸者，令郡縣鉤求收葬；及所唐突壓溺物故，七歲以上賜錢，人二千。 ⁴⁵
167	Flood, tsunami	The government of the region or commandery should bestow two thousand coins for each drowned person more than seven years old and, if all the family members died, [the local government should] gather their bodies and lay them into coffins. 州郡賜溺死者七歲以上錢，人二千；一家皆被害者，悉為收斂。 ⁴⁶

⁴¹ Ibid., *juan* 6, p. 255.

⁴² Ibid., p. 256.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 267.

⁴⁴ Ibid., *juan* 7, p. 294.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 301.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 319.

This is a table of edicts given under special circumstances that stipulate that the state or the local government should encoffin the deceased who had no family, or bestow a coffin or money to the mourning family. The essence of these edicts is nearly identical with Strip 288, so from this we can see that from the mid-late period of the Former Han to the Later Han, Strip 288 of the “Statutes on Bestowal” had lost its legal value, and the law of bestowing coffins to victims of natural disasters and plagues was supplanted by edicts given in times of emergency.

Both the “Statutes on Bestowal” of the *Ernian lüling* and those edicts given during special circumstances stipulate that the bestowal of a coffin can be substituted with money. In funeral rites, bestowing money to the mourning family to help with the funeral is called *fu* 賻. In reality, since making a coffin demands time, manual labour, and materials, it is difficult to provide coffins for all victims in a short time. Bestowing money equal to the price of a coffin would be more efficient. But the purpose of bestowing money to those commoners is to let them buy coffins themselves, so bestowing money to commoners under special circumstance is just another way of bestowing coffins, which is fundamentally different from the *fu* in the funeral rites.

Coffin bestowal for commoners, as we discussed in this section, happened only under special circumstances, such as natural disasters and plagues, in which entire families died or there were few survivors and it would otherwise have been very difficult for them to prepare funerals for the deceased families. Similar to the purpose of bestowing coffins for deceased soldiers recorded in the “Ordinances on Finance,” we can assume that the establishment of the system of bestowing coffins for commoners and helping to bury them was also meant to console the spirits of the victims and to help the survivors with the preparation of their families’ funerals.

The Han Dynasty's Systems of Coffin Bestowal for Officials

In the previous sections, we discussed the systems of coffin bestowal for soldiers and commoners. During the Han dynasty, there were also systems of coffin bestowal for officials. The “Statutes on Bestowal” of the *Ernian lüling* describes the rules for coffin bestowal for deceased officials as follows:

Strip 283: Bestow an upper garment and a short lined gown, a coffin, and an upper garment and a lower garment of the official's uniform for two thousand picul officials who have died.

Strip 284: For chief commandants, bestow an upper garment, a coffin, and a lower garment of the official's uniform. For deceased one thousand picul officials to six hundred picul officials, the local county government should bestow a coffin and the upper garment of the official's uniform. For the

deceased officials from five hundred picul officials to county aides and county commandants, the local county government should bestow a coffin.

283 簡：二千石吏不起病者，賜衣、襦、棺及官衣常（裳）。

284 簡：郡尉，賜衣、棺及官常（裳）。千石至六百石吏死官者，居縣賜棺及官衣。五百石以下至丞、尉死官者，居縣賜棺。⁴⁷

According to these strips, one can see that *Ernian lüling* stipulates the bestowal of a coffin and clothes for deceased officials ranking from two thousand piculs to county aides and county commandants (below five hundred piculs). In Strip 284, it says clearly that, for officials ranking from one thousand piculs to county aides and county commandants, a coffin should be provided by the local county government. However, as for chief commandants and two thousand picul officials, the providers are not mentioned. The “Zhilü” 秩律 (Statutes on Salary) of the *Ernian lüling* describes in detail the ranks of salary of all the officials, among which the highest is two thousand piculs.⁴⁸ Chief commandants, mentioned in Strip 284, are also of two thousand picul rank. Given that two thousand picul officials usually work in the government of a commandery or the central government, it is very possible that coffins bestowed to them were provided by the governments they were working for.

Although in Strips 283 and 284 there is no specific provision about the differences between the types of coffins bestowed to officials below two thousand piculs, Strip 289 (Table 1) stipulates the standards of exchanging a coffin for money based on the titles of honorary nobility. In the twenty titles of honorary nobility of the *Ernian lüling*, the titles above the *zuo shuzhang* were awarded to officials, so it is highly possible that the *Ernian lüling* stipulates the type of coffins according to the officials' titles of honorary nobility but not their ranks of salary. That means that although Strips 283 and 284 of *Ernian lüling* stipulate that all the officials ranking from two thousand piculs to county aides and county commandants below five hundred piculs were qualified to be bestowed a coffin when they died, the value of the coffin would correspond to the titles of honorary nobility of the deceased official according to Strip 289.

⁴⁷ Peng, Chen, and Kudō, *Ernian lüling yu Zouyanshu*, p. 208.

⁴⁸ In these two strips, the highest rank of salary is two thousand piculs but not that of middle two thousand piculs 中二千石. According to Yan Buke's 閻步克 research, the rank of middle two thousand piculs had not developed by the time of the *Ernian lüling*, so there is no rank above two thousand piculs in *Ernian lüling*'s system of salary. Cf. Yan Buke, *Cong juebenwei dao guanbenwei: Qin-Han guanliao pinwei jiegou yanjiu* 從爵本位到官本位——秦漢官僚品位結構研究 (Beijing: Shenghuo, Dushu, Xinzhi Sanlian shudian, 2009), pp. 356, 357.

The aforementioned systems of coffin bestowal stipulated in the *Ernian liling* were for officials below two thousand piculs. As the documented examples of coffins bestowed to these officials are extremely few, it is difficult to discuss the specific nature of the bestowing. In traditional documents of the middle Former Han, there are several examples of coffins bestowed for officials above two thousand piculs. Using these examples, we can consider the systems of coffin bestowal for higher officials and the prime minister. However, different from the *Ernian liling*, these systems were stipulated in the form of *gushi* 故事 (precedents). The precedents, not a proper form of law, prevailed from the Han dynasty until the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589). The precedents of the Han dynasty each formed based on one certain incident or act, and gradually became customary rules. Finally, this customary rule was identified as a law by the state, written down, and compiled.⁴⁹ Eventually, these precedents developed into *ge* 格 (a legal form specially used to stipulate the detailed rules of government affairs) of the Tang dynasty (618–907). Therefore, the precedents can be considered a written customary law.

I have published an article discussing gift-bestowal for deceased officials during the Han dynasty with the conclusion that, beginning in the days of Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (r. 73–49 B.C.) and Emperor Yuan 元帝 (r. 49–33 B.C.), the precedents for the state to bestow gifts to important deceased ministers or prime ministers took place.⁵⁰ The precedents relating to bestowing gifts for deceased officials formed against the background of Confucianism being established as the ruling ideology of the state under Emperors Xuan and Yuan.⁵¹ Under the influence of Confucianism, funerals for important officials were given great attention by the emperor. Huo Guang's 霍光 (d. 68 B.C.) funeral is a good example. “The Biography of Huo Guang” 霍光傳 of *Hanshu* says,

After Huo Guang died, Emperor [Xuan] and the empress dowager attended his funeral. Ren Xuan, the grand palace counsellor, and five secretaries of the censorate conducted the funeral services. The middle two thousand picul official put up a tent [for sacrifice] over Huo Guang's tomb. He was bestowed money, silk, a hundred embroidery quilts, fifty boxes of clothes, a round

⁴⁹ About the development of the precedents, cf. Hirose Kunio 廣瀬薫雄, *Shin Kan ritsuryō kenkyū* 秦漢律令研究 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2010), p. 257.

⁵⁰ Liu Kewei 劉可維, “Kansin niogeru bōfuseido nitsuite” 漢晉における贈賻制度について, *Kyūshū daigaku Tōyōshi ronshū* 42 (March 2014), pp. 52–77. In this article, I mostly discussed gifts such as horses and money bestowed to the mourning family, in which a coffin was not included.

⁵¹ Fukui Shigemasa 福井重雅, *Kandai Jukyō no shiteki kenkyū: Jukyō no kangakuka o meguru teisetsu no saikentō* 漢代儒教の史的研究—儒教の官学化をめぐる定説の再検討 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin, 2005), p. 106.

flat piece of jade, pearls, beads, clothes made of jade, and one *zigong*,⁵² one *bianfang*,⁵³ one *huangchang ticou*,⁵⁴ fifteen *waicang guo* made of fir,⁵⁵ and a *wenming* of Eastern Park,⁵⁶ all according to the standards of the emperor. A hearse was used to transport Huo Guang's body. The circular covering of the hearse was made of yellow silk. The left of the hearse was decorated with yak tail. Skilled soldiers, light chariots, and troops of the five commandants of the Northern Army were sent to escort the hearse to Maoling [in modern Shaanxi]. 光薨，上及皇太后親臨光喪。太中大夫任宣與侍御史五人持節護喪事。中二千石治莫府冢上。賜金錢、繒絮，繡被百領，衣五十篋，璧珠璣玉衣，梓宮、便房、黃腸題湊各一具，椁木外臧椁十五具。東園溫明，皆如乘輿制度。載光尸柩以輜輅車，黃屋左纛，發材官輕車北軍五校士軍陳至茂陵，以送其葬。⁵⁷

Among the gifts that were bestowed to Huo Guang, the *zigong*, the *bianfang*, the *huangchang ticou*, and the fifteen *waicang guo* are especially remarkable. According to the explanations Yan Shigu cites in his annotation, *zigong* refers to the inner coffin, while *bianfang*, *huangchang ticou*, and *waicang guo* refer to the outer coffin. Because people then considered the coffin chamber as their residence for the afterlife, they styled the outer coffin after the real world residence and built rooms with all kinds of functions.⁵⁸ These outer coffins were originally for the emperors' exclusive use; however, there were some similar outer coffins discovered in the tombs of the Han's princes and marquises.⁵⁹

⁵² According to Yan Shigu's annotation, *zigong* refers to the coffin made of ovate catalpa wood. As it was usually occupied by an emperor, it was called *zigong*. The following annotations 53 to 56 come from Yan Shigu's annotation of *Hanshu* to the corresponding records. Cf. *Hanshu*, *juan* 68, pp. 2948, 2949.

⁵³ According to Fu Qian's 服虔 (a scholar of the Later Han; the date of his birth and death are unknown) explanation, *bianfang* refers to the wing-room in the coffin chamber.

⁵⁴ According to Su Lin's 蘇林 (a scholar of the late Later Han to the Three Kingdoms period; the date of his birth and death are unknown) explanation, this refers to the outer coffin made of yellow-centred cypress wood.

⁵⁵ According to Fu Qian's explanation, this refers to the outer coffin, symbolizing the room for maidservants, or a kitchen or stable.

⁵⁶ According to Fu Qian's explanation, this is a square box with a mirror inside it hanging over the dead body.

⁵⁷ *Hanshu*, *juan* 68, p. 2948.

⁵⁸ For prior research of these four kinds of coffin, refer to Zhao Huacheng 趙化成 et al., *Qin-Han kaogu* 秦漢考古 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2002), pp. 78, 79.

⁵⁹ Yu Weichao 俞偉超, "Handai zhuhouwang yu liehou muzang de xingtai fenxi" 漢代諸侯王與列侯墓葬的形態分析, in idem, *Xian-Qin liang Han kaoguxue lunji* 先秦兩漢考古學論集 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1985), pp. 117–24; Li Rusen, *Handai sangzang lisu*, pp. 75–97.

Huo Guang served three emperors in his life, Emperors Wu 武帝 (r. 141–87 B.C.), Zhao 昭帝 (r. 87–74 B.C.), and Xuan, and his daughter became the queen of Emperor Xuan. Since Huo Guang's status was very special, his funeral exceeded those of all the other contemporary officials. In the following ages, Huo Guang's funeral gradually became a standard for the funerals of especially important officials, finally developing into a precedent. Examples of bestowing deceased officials gifts according to this precedent can be found as early as the age of Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33–7 B.C.) of the Former Han; for instance, in the records of Wang Yin 王音 (d. 14 B.C.) and Wang Shang 王商 (d. 12 B.C.) in “The Biography of Empress Wang” 元后傳 of *Hanshu*:

As the order of Wang's family's titles of honorary nobility kept rising, only [Wang] Yin was cautious in his behaviour. He gave remonstrance to the emperor several times and was very loyal. After assisting the emperor for eight years, he died. The gifts that the emperor bestowed on him at the condolence were chosen on the standard of the general-in-chief. He was given a posthumous title of Marquis Jing. . . . [Wang] Shang died. The gifts that the emperor bestowed on him at the condolence were based on the precedent of the general-in-chief. He was given a posthumous title of Marquis Jingcheng.

王氏爵位日盛，唯音為修整，數諫正，有忠節，輔政八年，薨。弔贈如大將軍，諡曰敬侯。……商薨，弔贈如大將軍故事，諡曰景成侯。⁶⁰

Both Wang Yin and Wang Shang were relatives of the emperor on his mother's side and had successively served in several important positions. In addition, both of them had been assisting in governing the country and had had very high social status. The gifts bestowed for them after they died and the funeral rites followed the standard of the precedent of the general-in-chief.

Because Huo Guang had occupied several important positions, such as general-in-chief 大將軍 and grand marshal 大司馬, and was given the title of nobility Marquis of Bolu 博陸侯, the precedent that formed on the basis of Huo Guang's example was also called the precedent of the general-in-chief, the precedent of the grand marshal, or the precedent of Marquis of Bolu. The precedent of the general-in-chief, mentioned in “The Biography of Empress Wang,” was referred to as the precedent of Huo Guang. It is very likely that the abovementioned record of “The Biography of Huo Guang” is the specific content of the precedent of Huo Guang concerning gift-bestowal.⁶¹ Among the gifts bestowed upon Huo Guang, the coffin

⁶⁰ *Hanshu*, *juan* 98, p. 4027.

⁶¹ According to Li Xian's 李賢 (655–684) annotation, the precedent of Huo Guang here includes the ceremony of Huo Guang's funeral and gift-bestowal. See *Hou-Hanshu*, *juan* 16, p. 615.

was an extremely important component. Therefore, when the precedent of Huo Guang was referred to, the bestowal of the coffin would have followed. In *Hanshu* and *Hou-Hanshu*, only four people enjoyed the special treatment of the precedent of Huo Guang, and they were either assistants in governing the country or meritorious retainers in founding the Later Han.⁶² Therefore, the coffin bestowal recorded in the precedent of Huo Guang can be considered the highest level of coffin bestowal in the Han dynasty.

Besides the precedent of Huo Guang, contemporary coffin bestowal for the prime minister gradually became a tradition as well, eventually turning into the precedent of the prime minister. “The Biography of Zhai Fangjin” 翟方進傳 of *Hanshu* says,

When [Zhai] Fangjin committed suicide, the emperor kept it secret and sent nine highest ministers to award him seals and ribbons attached to the chops of the prime minister, as well as Marquis of Gaoling to bestow him an imperial coffin and the privy treasurer to prepare the mourning hall and cover the pillars and banisters with white cloth. The emperor went to pay his condolences several times. The level of rites and gifts bestowed exceeded that paid following the other precedent of the prime minister.

Yan Shigu says in *Hanjiuyi* that when the prime minister falls seriously ill, the emperor should visit him in person and enter from the West Gate. After the prime minister has passed away, the emperor should pay his condolences and bestow him a coffin, encoffining supplies, money, and a burial ground.

方進即日自殺。上祕之，遣九卿冊贈以丞相高陵侯印綬，賜乘輿祕器，少府供張，柱欄皆衣素。天子親臨弔者數至，禮賜異於它相故事。

師古曰：「《漢舊儀》云丞相有疾，皇帝法駕親至問疾，從西門入。即薨，移居第中，車駕往弔，賜棺、棺斂具，賜錢、葬地。葬日，公卿已下會葬焉。」⁶³

⁶² Besides the aforementioned Wang Yin and Wang Shang, the funerals of Wu Han 吳漢 (d. 44) and Zhai Zun 祭遵 (d. 33), both of whom were meritorious retainers in founding the Later Han, also followed the precedent of Huo Guang. Cf. *Hou-Hanshu*, *juan* 18, p. 684; *juan* 20, p. 741. In addition, during the Later Han, upon the death of Deng Hong 鄧弘 (d. 115), a relative of Emperor He 和帝 (r. 88–105) on his mother’s side, some officials suggested that his funeral should follow the precedent of Huo Guang. However, this suggestion was eventually rejected. See *Hou-Hanshu*, *juan* 16, p. 615.

⁶³ *Hanshu*, *juan* 84, p. 3424. The words “賜棺、棺斂具” mentioned in *Hanjiuyi* are written as “賜棺斂具” in *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜. As in the cite of *Hanjiuyi*, there are two words of 棺 that occurred at the same time, the latter 棺 probably is a superfluous word. See Wang Qinruo 王欽若 (962–1025), *Cefu yuangui* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), *juan* 318, p. 3756.

The precedent of the prime minister, mentioned in “The Biography of Zhai Fangjin,” was a set of provisions concerning the funeral affairs of the prime minister. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the funerals of prime ministers were conducted following the precedent of the prime minister. Zhai Fangjin (53–7 B.C.) was the prime minister, but he was forced to commit suicide under pressure from Emperor Cheng. In order to console his spirit, Emperor Cheng bestowed him funeral supplies exceeding the standards of the precedent of the prime minister given in the *Hanjiuyi*, which include the bestowal of a coffin. Zhai Fangjin died in 7 B.C.; as the formation of the precedent must have taken time, we can presume that the precedent of the prime minister was formed at least as far back as the time of Emperor Yuan, before Emperor Cheng. In the Former Han, the prime minister was one of the highest officials, subordinate only to the emperor. The organization of a funeral following the precedent of the prime minister shows that the coffin bestowal for a prime minister exceeded the systems of coffin bestowal for ordinary officials and became an independent standard.

Both the precedent of Huo Guang and the precedent of the prime minister, formed during the time of Emperors Xuan and Yuan in the Former Han, include contents related to coffin bestowal, which, together with the “Statutes on Bestowal” of the *Ernian lüling*, were the basis for the Former Han’s systems of coffin bestowal for especially important officials and officials from the prime minister down to those ranking below five hundred piculs. However, fundamentally different from the provisions of coffin bestowal for ordinary officials in the *Ernian lüling*, both the precedent of Huo Guang and the precedent of the prime minister were written customary laws that formed based on the precedents of actual funerals; they were referential standards but not compulsory decrees.

During the Later Han, coffin-bestowing practices for marquises and princes, generals, *tejin* 特進 (Lords Specially Advanced), and others were also given. The “Treatise on the Rites” 禮儀志 of the *Xu-Hanshu* 續漢書 says,

To marquises and princes, grandees, princesses, dukes, generals, and Lords Specially Advanced, [the emperor should] bestow twenty-four funeral supplies used in the palace and send an imperial commissioner to make the funeral arrangements, dig the graves, and construct the outer coffins from cypress. Officials of all ranks and descriptions should attend the funeral together following the rules in the precedent. For marquises and princes, princesses, and grandees, use coffins made of camphor wood, all red, with cloud patterns. For dukes and Lords Specially Advanced, use coffins made of camphor wood, all black. For officials below middle two thousand piculs, use coffins painted with *kanhou qi*.

諸侯王、貴人、公主、公、將軍、特進皆賜器，官中二十四物。使者治喪，穿作，柏椁，百官會送，如故事。諸侯王、公主、貴人皆樟棺，洞朱，雲氣畫。公、特進樟棺黑漆。中二千石以下坎侯漆。⁶⁴

From the aforementioned records, we can see that, during the Later Han, coffin bestowal to important people, such as imperial relatives, special officials, and so on, followed the provisions of the precedent as well. This precedent stipulates the content of the gifts bestowed for these people and assigns an imperial commissioner to make the funeral arrangements, dig the graves, and construct the outer coffins from cypress. In addition, the “Treatise on the Rites” also provides the provisions of the textures and patterns of the inner coffins these people should use. Since inner coffins were usually used combined with outer coffins to encoffin the dead, it is very likely that the precedent mentioned in the “Treatise on the Rites” also contains the provisions concerning the inner coffins.

Different from the provisions in the *Ernian lüling* that coffins bestowed for officials were provided by the local government, in the provisions of the aforementioned three precedents in the Han dynasty, coffins were all bestowed by the emperor. Therefore, coffin bestowal stipulated in the precedents was not practised by the governmental agencies but by the office in charge of imperial affairs. Given that in the Han dynasty it was the Office of Eastern Park 東園署, a unit under the privy treasurer 少府, that was in charge of manufacturing imperial funeral supplies, it is very possible that in the systems of coffin bestowal stipulated by the precedents, coffins were provided by the Office of Eastern Park.

In the Han dynasty, coffins were bestowed because of the material needs of soldiers who died away from home and commoners who died under special circumstances. However, the original reason for the establishment of the systems of bestowing coffins for officials was not that these mourning families had difficulty affording the funeral. One must notice that there were no additional conditions in the systems of bestowing coffin for officials, which means every official could receive a coffin that corresponded to his rank after his death. This is obviously different from the coffin bestowal practices for soldiers and commoners. Coffin bestowal for officials can be viewed as a part of their remunerations. Moreover, *Ernian lüling* stipulates that the type of coffin bestowed for the deceased official accorded with his title of honorary nobility. In the coffin bestowal systems seen from these three precedents, the coffin’s type also depended on the title of the deceased. Therefore one can say

⁶⁴ *Hou-Hanshu*, zhi 6, p. 3152. *Kanhou* refers to *konghou* 箜篌, an instrument. *Kanhou qi* means to paint the coffin as one paints the instrument *konghou*. Cf. Du You 杜佑 (713–812), *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), *juan* 86, p. 2325.

that one of the most important characteristics of the Han's systems of coffin bestowal for officials was that the standard of coffin bestowal practices would correspond to the ranks of the deceased officials. The differences in the coffin bestowal practices were undoubtedly meant to establish an institutionalized, hierarchical order among the officials, an integral part of establishing the order of the state.

Conclusion

This article is an investigation of the systems of coffin bestowal for the deceased in the Han dynasty based on traditional historical documents and newly excavated documents. I discuss the contents, purposes, and legal forms of these systems of coffin bestowal.

In this article, we have discussed the provision in the “Ordinances on Finance” of bestowing small coffins for soldiers who died during war to transport their bodies home, and the requirement for the local government to provide a coffin for the burial. We have also discussed the system of bestowing coffins or a money equivalent for commoners who died under special circumstances, as shown in the *Ernian lüling* and in edicts after the middle Former Han. Based on the provisions in the “Ordinances on Finance” and the *Ernian lüling*, I conclude that the systems of coffin bestowal for commoners and soldiers were established based on the actual needs of the deceased and to provide help and console the spirits of the deceased.

In the *Ernian lüling* of the Former Han, officials ranking from two thousand piculs to county aides and county commandants were qualified to receive a coffin when they died, but the type of coffin corresponded to the title of honorary nobility of the deceased official. From the middle Former Han to the Later Han, there were systems of coffin bestowal stipulated in the form of the precedents. These precedents record the provisions of the standards of coffin bestowal for special officials that were not stipulated in the *Ernian lüling*. No matter in what kind of legal form these systems of coffin bestowal were stipulated, they were all established based on official position and can be seen as a means of differentiating the value of different officials.

As discussed earlier, the systems of coffin bestowal of the Han dynasty were organized in various forms, such as the statutes, the ordinances, and the precedents, and, depending on the recipients of the coffin, the purpose of establishing the system was also different. Therefore, one can say that there never developed a unified, systematized system of coffin bestowal in the Han dynasty, but, instead, there were several independent systems of bestowing coffins in various forms. Provisions framed in the forms of the statutes, the ordinances, and the precedents in the Han dynasty were not systematically and simultaneously stipulated by the state, and their legal functions cannot be clearly distinguished either. The statutes of the Han dynasty related to a wide range of contents, which included administration, land, the financial

system, and so on, as we can see from the *Ernian lüling* cited in this article. The ordinance of the Han dynasty refers to the collection of edicts that were edited and compiled with permanent legal validity, whose contents depended on the contents of the edicts and therefore were not limited to a specific situation. The precedents of the Han dynasty were written customary laws formed on the basis of various affairs. Because in the Han dynasty there were no fully formed laws with distinguished functions, the Han's systems of coffin bestowal were established in different legal forms.

During the last years of the Three Kingdoms, the King of Jin 晉王, Sima Zhao 司馬昭 (211–265), ordered Jia Chong 賈充 (217–282) to collect all the laws legislated during the Han dynasty so that he could uniformly establish all kinds of state laws, which were issued in A.D. 267 (the third year of Taishi 泰始), after the Western Jin was founded, as *Taishi lüling* 泰始律令. *Taishi lüling* is composed of three codes with distinguished functions: the statutes, used specifically for criminal law, the ordinances, used specifically for administrative guidelines, and the precedents, used specifically for the detailed rules and regulations of administration. As these three codes organically constituted the legal system of the state, the *Taishi lüling* is regarded as representative of the formation of a sound legal system in ancient China. Given the significance of the *Taishi lüling*, it is also necessary to note the systems of coffin bestowal in the laws of the Western Jin and afterward, which I hope to discuss in my future research.

漢代贈棺制度論考

(摘要)

劉可維

棺槨是喪葬過程中最為重要的用品之一。在筆者所見的先秦史料中，沒有關於贈送給死者棺槨的禮儀或法律。然而，在漢代的律、令中，已明確規定了涉及贈棺的制度。這些制度所涉及的對象不僅限於各級官員，還包括陣亡士兵以及一般平民。此前的研究主要利用傳世文獻中的記載，考證了贈送給高等級官員棺槨的具體內容和形制，但對於面向士兵和平民的贈棺制度卻關注極少，並且完全忽略了考古出土的漢代法制史料中有關棺槨贈與的記錄。上世紀八十年代發現的張家山漢簡中的二年律令是漢代初年制定的法律，其中有專門涉及贈與各級官員和平民棺槨的律文。本文希望通過結合出土的法制史料和傳世文獻，更為全面的探討漢代的贈棺制度，並進一步闡述漢代各種贈棺制度的思想根源。

關鍵詞： 漢代 喪葬 贈棺制度 二年律令

Keywords: Han dynasty funeral and burial coffin-bestowal systems *Ernian lüling*