

# Han Imperial Cult under Emperor Wu

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Entry tags: Chinese State Religion, Chinese Religion, Religious Group

During the reign of Han Emperor Wu (141 – 87 BCE), the imperial government sponsored the worship of a large number of cults, many of which were connected to the emperor's pursuit of immortality. Many of these cults were inherited from earlier, Qin, practice, others were adopted from regional cults of the former Warring States, and others were entirely new. Rather than being a formalized group of religious specialists/practitioners, Emperor Wu's imperial cult, meaning cults sponsored by the emperor, is better understood as a collection of religious practices, which were brought together under the auspices of the Han court, in order to access powerful spirits for both the emperor and his empire. The cults worshipped by the emperor, or on his behalf, were spread out across the empire, and the emperor frequently travelled to perform sacrifices or visit sacred locations. The number of cults grew over the course of Emperor Wu's reign, and there were frequent changes to sacrificial locations and sacrificial rites. This period of imperial cult is thus characterized by experimentation rather than as a coherent cult with a standardized pantheon. Emperor Wu's pursuit of cult was closely connected to his pursuit of immortality as well as to his imperial ambitions – the two cannot be separated. We cannot say for certain what type of immortality the emperor pursued, whether it was the avoidance of death altogether or transcendence, or some combination of the two. It is evident that the emperor believed that one of the clearest paths to immortality could be found by emulating the sage rulers of antiquity, particularly the legendary Yellow Thearch 黃帝, Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹, as well as following precedent set by the First Emperor of Qin. Significantly, the emperor believed that it was important for him to rule over a unified territory in order to perform the legendary Feng 封 and Shan 禪 sacrifices, which he was told, were performed by the Yellow Thearch before he became an immortal. As such, the emperor took over control of territory containing important cult locations, removing regional lords 諸侯 and kings 王 from governing over territories containing the Five Sacred Peaks 五嶽. The emperor also attempted to access the powers of local spirits, mostly in the eastern parts of the empire, to not only access their mantic powers, but to demonstrate his authority over the spirits and land of the empire. Emperor Wu sought the advice on spiritual affairs from both within his own court and by recruiting outsiders who claimed access to mantic knowledge. These outsiders, whom Sima Qian classifies as Fangshi 方士 (Masters of Methods), claimed to have specialized knowledge about immortality. Sima Qian, and others, were highly critical of the emperor's reliance on these Fangshi, and many of the cults that they established were disbanded after the emperor's death. We have no information about the practice of these cults when the emperor was not involved, nor if they continued in some form after the period of imperial patronage.



Date Range: 141 BCE - 87 BCE

Region: Western Han - 202 BCE - 9 CE

Region tags: Asia, East Asia

From Tan Qixiang's "The Historical Atlas of China"

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Filippo Marsili. 2018. *Heaven is Empty: A Cross-Cultural Approach to "Religion" and Empire in Early China*. Albany, SUNY.
- Source 2: Michael Loewe. 1974. *Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 104 BC to AD 9*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Source 3: Marianne Bujard. 2008. "State and Local Cults in Han Religion," in *Early Chinese Religion: Part One; Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)*, Vol. 2. John Lagerway and Marc Kalinowski, eds., 777-811. Leiden: Brill.

Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

- Source 1 URL: <https://ctext.org/shiji/feng-chan-shu>
- Source 1 Description: Sima Qian's *Shiji* 史記: "Treatise on the Feng and Shan Sacrifices" 封禪書
- Source 2 URL: <https://ctext.org/han-shu/jiao-si-zhi>
- Source 2 Description: *Hanshu* 漢書 "Treatise on the Jiao and Si Sacrifices" 郊祀志

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: Emperor Wu's religious practice adopted some cults and sacrifices from a variety of local practices. The sources do not provide any information about the cults other than as they relate to the emperor. It is quite likely, however, that the regional practitioners of these cults continued to worship them as they had before.

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– No

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: Emperor Wu recruited new advisors who claimed to have access to mantic knowledge, but

there was no general or broad-based membership.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– Yes

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– Yes

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– Yes

Notes: Sort of. As the primary officiant of cult, Emperor Wu was ultimately in charge of determining which sacrifices should be performed. There were certain sacrifices (the Feng and Shan 封禪) that only he could perform. The Feng and Shan sacrifices were legendary sacrifices that were said to have been performed by the Yellow Thearch (Huangdi 黃帝), as well as other legendary and historical rulers of antiquity. At the time of Emperor Wu, the sacrifices were closely connected to political legitimacy and immortality: a ruler could only perform the sacrifices if he ruled over a united territory at a time of great peace, and performing the sacrifices was an important step on the path to immortality.

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– No

Notes: However, there were officials in the government who were responsible for religious affairs.

↳ Is religious observance enforced by the polity:

– No

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– No

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– No

Notes: Religious sites were maintained by either the central or local governments

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: The main adherents of the imperially-sponsored cults were Emperor Wu and his officials, but many of the cults received worship from others.

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: Occasionally received texts feature in religious decision making, but generally they are interpreted as omens at a given moment.

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

Notes: Several altars and palaces were built for the purposes of offering sacrifice or welcoming immortal spirits. While the altars, according to description, would have been quite large and elaborate structures, they were likely not accessible except to sacrificial officials. They were also built primarily of wood, and therefore were not long-lasting structures.

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Field doesn't know

Is iconography present:

– No

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Notes: Five Sacred Peaks 五嶽 were deemed of religious/political importance: Mt. Song 嵩高, Mt. Hua 華山, Mt. Tai, 泰山, Mt. Heng 衡山, and Mt. Heng 恆山

– No

Notes: While the Five Sacred Peaks were important sites, not all sacred sites were oriented to environmental features.

Are pilgrimages present:

– No

Notes: Emperor Wu travelled to sacred locations to offer sacrifice, but these travels were not in the sense of a pilgrimage.

## Beliefs

### Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: We do not have a concrete answer about conceptions of the afterlife in this period, but there was a belief that some sort of "soul" would be separated from the body after death, and/or that the body could transcend death to become an immortal.

↳ Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– No

Notes: We do not have a concrete definition of what constituted immortality in the mind of Emperor Wu, but it is likely that he pursued the extension of his mortal life (i.e. the avoidance of death), as well as the transcendence of the earthly, to become an immortal (xian 仙). This is the experience of the Yellow Thearch (Huangdi 黃帝) who lived for hundreds of years before transcending.

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: Emperor Wu's imperial cult specifically aimed to transform the emperor into an immortal, thus transcending the earthly realm. There were several conceptions of the afterlife in circulation in Han China, many of which contributed to his pursuit of immortality.

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– No

Notes: No specific burial practices came from Emperor Wu's cult practice, but the Han elite did perform elaborate burials.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Are grave goods present:

– No

Notes: No specific burial practices came from Emperor Wu's cult practice, but the Han elite did perform elaborate burials which included the burial of important grave goods. See Ken Brashier's entry "Ancestral Cult of the Han" on burial practices <https://religiondatabase.org/browse/178/#/>

Are formal burials present:

– No

Notes: There is nothing in Emperor Wu's imperial cult that discusses burials.

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: Heaven (Tian 天) could be considered a form of supreme high god, but a fairly ambiguous one. The emperor was expected to model his state on the patterns of Heaven, and omens from Heaven were interpreted as comments on his behaviour. Other spirits of heaven and earth were worshipped by the emperor (most important were Taiyi 太一 and Houtu 后土), but these spirits too were equally ambiguous and somewhat ambivalent to the actions of man.

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:

– No

Notes: No, but according to belief, Heaven (tian 天), would only receive sacrifices from the emperor, the Son of Heaven 天子

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:

– No

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– No

↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:

– No

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Heaven (tian 天) is able to react to imbalances in the world caused by humans, but how precisely this knowledge is attained is unknown.

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– No

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:

– No

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:

– No

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– No

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

– No

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– No

Notes: No direct communication, but natural events (disasters, astronomical phenomena, etc.) may be interpreted as omens from Heaven (tian 天)

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: The emperor only encountered one immortal (or, one man who claimed to be an immortal), Li Shaojun, early in his reign. Li Shaojun spoke vaguely about his origins, but dropped hints that he had been alive for hundreds of years. He claimed to have been in contact with Master Anqi, an immortal who possessed the secret to immortality. When Li Shaojun died, the emperor believed that he had transformed himself into a spirit. Other Fangshi claimed to have contact with the immortals, and Occasionally evidence of their presence was visible (e.g. footprints).

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Previously human spirits have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

↳ Human spirits' knowledge restricted to particular domain of human



affairs:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits' knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits' knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits' knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirit's can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits know your basic character (personal essence):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Field doesn't know

↳ Human spirits have other form(s) of knowledge regarding this world:

– Yes [specify]: Secrets to immortality

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: Immortal spirits may be able to cure sickness. In Wu's imperial cult, it was also believed that they would be able to bestow the secrets to immortality.

↳ Human spirits can reward:  
– No

↳ Human spirits can punish:  
– No

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:  
– No

↳ Human spirits have memory of life:  
– Yes

↳ Human spirits exhibit positive emotion:  
– No

↳ Human spirits exhibit negative emotion:  
– No

↳ Human spirits possess hunger:  
– No

↳ Human spirits possess/exhibit some other feature:  
– No

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:  
– Yes

↳ In waking, everyday life:  
– Yes  
Notes: Some men claimed to been taught by immortals

↳ In dreams:  
– Yes

↳ In trance possession:  
– Field doesn't know

↳ Through divination processes:

– No

Notes: There were no recorded attempts to divine the will of an immortal spirit in Emperor Wu's imperial cult, though divination was an important part of Han (and earlier Chinese) religions.

↳ Only through specialists:

– Yes

Notes: Specialists claimed access to the immortal spirits, but there was no claim that others could not contact them.

↳ Only through monarch:

– No

↳ Communicate with living through other means:

– Yes [specify]: Revealed texts are sometimes claimed to be from the immortals, but these are often shown to be forgeries

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: The majority of sacrifices in Han Emperor Wu's cult were dedicated to various deities of heavens and earth. The Feng and Shan sacrifices were purportedly ancient sacrifices which were "revived" by the emperor, as it was only possible for rulers who had received positive omens from Heaven to perform them. The main group of sacrifices which were inherited from the state and empire of Qin was the Jiao 郊 sacrifice to the Five Di 五帝/ Supreme Di 上帝. These were traditionally performed at Yong 雍. The most important new sacrifices established by Emperor Wu were also to cults of Heaven and Earth, to Taiyi 太一 "Great Ultimate/Great Unity" and Houtu 后土 "Sovereign Earth" respectively. These cults represented Emperor Wu's ability to offer sacrifices to heaven and earth, broadly, claiming access to the spiritual powers of both realms.

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Notes: Yes, but only very broadly. Heaven (tian 天) may approve or disapprove of the rulers' actions, and may accept or not accept the rulers' sacrifices

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including

obviously “moral” or “ethical” norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– No

Notes: There is no monitoring of individual pro- or anti-social actions. What is most important is that the emperor maintain cosmic balance (which can be affected by morally transgressive behaviour).

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about lying:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:

– No

|

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Notes: It was determined that certain sacrifices needed to be performed at certain intervals (e.g. the feng sacrifice was to be renewed every five years, sacrifices to mountains were performed annually).

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There seems to be little causal relationship between rituals performed and omens sent from Heaven (tian 天).

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:

– No

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– No

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

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↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done only by high god:

– Yes

Notes: In Emperor Wu's cult, Heaven (tian 天) could send disasters (in the form of natural disasters) to express disapproval.

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– No

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

↳ Done by other entities or through other means [specify]

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– No

Notes: Not usually, but attempts are made to understand the reasons for heavenly omens (e.g. disasters)

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– No

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

Notes: Favourable environmental conditions could be interpreted as a form of reward. Ultimately, Emperor Wu believed that the supernatural beings could either grant him immortality or reveal to him the path to immortality.

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– No

Notes: Not usually, but attempts are made to understand the reasons why omens are sent.

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– No

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The main goal of the cult was for the emperor to achieve immortality, which he believed might be accomplished through entreating immortal spirits.

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of political success or power:

– No

Notes: Emperor Wu's pursuit of cult suggests that political success was necessary for him to achieve immortality, but there is no suggestion that his political successes were bestowed by Heaven (tian 天).

↳ Reward in this life consists of success in battle:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: On two occasions sacrifices were performed to gain supernatural support for Han campaigns, but we don't know if this was considered an important factor in the military campaigns.

↳ Reward in this life consists of peace or social stability:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

Notes: Insofar as the emperor acted in accordance with the will of Heaven (tian 天), then correct environmental conditions would prevail.

↳ Reward in this life consists of success on journeys:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of mild sensory pleasure:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of extreme sensory pleasure:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:

– No

↳ Reward in this life consists of fortune visited on descendants:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– No

### Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

### Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– No

Notes: The pursuit of these cults by the emperor were primarily linked to his own quest for immortality, so there is no noted concern for social norms. We do not have information for the practice of local cults outside of the emperor's patronage.

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– No

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– No

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):



– No

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Yes

Notes: The emperor and court officials offered animal sacrifices, alongside other foodstuffs and wine. Jade was offered in certain sacrifices.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Notes: Most of the sacrifices were performed either by the emperor or by sacrificial officials who were employed for that purpose. On some occasions, the regional lords (zhu hou 諸侯) were required to be in attendance to witness the sacrifices.

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale “ceremonies” and “festivals.”

– No

Notes: Large-scale rituals are a feature of Emperor Wu's imperial cult, but there is no group membership per se.

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– No

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– No

# Society and Institutions

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## Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

- A state
- An empire

*Notes:* The Han was a highly centralised bureaucratic state, which on some occasions, also pursued an imperialist agenda, conquering and colonising lands in the north-west.

## Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

- No

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

- Yes

*Notes:* The state kept surplus grain in warehouses which could be distributed to the population at times of natural disasters.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

- No

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

- Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

- No

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

- Field doesn't know

## Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

### Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Advisors recruited by the emperor were given titles and sometimes positions within the formal state bureaucracy, but there was no formal bureaucratic structure in the cult itself.

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

### Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– Yes

Notes: In one specific instance: In 109 BCE, Emperor Wu initiated a major public works project to repair a breach of the Yellow River that occurred in 132 BCE. This breach repair was connected to his pursuit of immortality, as a demonstration that he was able to control the waters, like Yu the Great 大禹.

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other

than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– No

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Yes

Notes: Some Fangshi 方士 advisors were executed by the emperor for forging omens or lying about their abilities.



Do the institutionalized punishments include execution:

– Yes



Do the institutionalized punishments include exile:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include corporal punishments:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include ostracism:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include seizure of property:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include execution:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include exile:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include corporal punishments:

– Yes

↳ Do the institutionalized punishments include seizure of property:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Notes: While there was no direct connection between the military and the religious practices of the emperor, the emperor's expansionist agenda was not entirely disconnected from his pursuit of

immortality. As he conquered new territories, he adopted spiritually important locations into his cult. The most important of these was Ganquan 甘泉, a site which was said to have been sacred to the Xiongnu 匈奴 and which became the location for the sacrifice to Taiyi 太一.

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

### Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Notes: The new Han calendar established in 105/4 BCE ("Grand Inception" Taichu li 太初曆) was created as part of Emperor Wu's quest for immortality. The calendar was part of a larger reform to the court's ritual system, including the adoption of the colour yellow, which, according to some ritual specialists, should have taken place at the beginning of the Han. A Fangshi, Gongsun Qing, informed the emperor that in 104 BCE, the winter solstice would fall on the first day of the first month (of the Xia calendar, the tenth month after the Vernal Equinox). The Yellow Thearch, who had himself created a new calendar, was said to have ascended to heaven on a winter solstice which occurred on the first day of the first month of the year, and this motivated Emperor Wu to pursue immortality through calendrical reform.

Reference: Christopher Cullen. "Motivations for Scientific Change in Ancient China: Emperor WU and the Grand Inception Astronomical Reforms of 104 B.C.". *Journal for the History of Astronomy* Journal for the History of Astronomy, 24(3)

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

## Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– No

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes



Please characterize the forms/levels of food production [choose all that apply]:

– Large-scale agriculture (e.g., monocropping, organized irrigation systems)

## Bibliography

### Entry/Answer References

Reference: Christopher Cullen. "Motivations for Scientific Change in Ancient China: Emperor WU and the Grand Inception Astronomical Reforms of 104 B.C.". *Journal for the History of Astronomy* *Journal for the History of Astronomy*, 24(3)