

# THE WAY TO THE WHITE TIGER HALL CONFERENCE: EVIDENCE GLEANED FROM THE FORMATION PROCESS OF THE *BAIHU TONG*

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## Abstract

The White Tiger Hall conference, held in the fourth year (79 C.E.) of the Jianchu 建初 reign in the Eastern Han, was a significant event in both politics and classical learning during and after that time. As the summary of the conference, composed after its conclusion, the *Baihu tong* 白虎通 is the main resource for investigating the details of this conference. Clarifying the formation process of the *Baihu tong* is helpful to elicit information regarding the White Tiger Hall conference from the findings recorded in its text. By tracing the history of the court conferences as an administrative institution and considering the particular nature of manuscript compilation, textual genre formats, and literary circulation during the Han, this paper suggests that the *Baihu yizou* 白虎議奏 referred to in the sources represents the compilation of the positions of the different debaters during the conference by Chunyu Gong 淳于恭 that was eventually sent to Emperor Zhang 章帝 for his approval; the *Baihu tongde lun* 白虎通德論 would be the corpus of the final rulings that had already been compiled before the conference ended and then edited by Ban Gu 班固. Later, the Emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tong* by condensing the *Baihu tongde lun*. According to its formation process, the *Baihu tong* is the work of a collection of experts, rather than a compilation by a single person. Evidence shows that, although Emperor Zhang could weigh in on the court discussions (*chengzhi linjue* 稱制臨決), he could not ignore the consensus, nor could he simply mandate that the conference participants agree with him. In this regard, the *Baihu tong* cannot be considered a synthesis of the court's findings, establishing a single court ideology. Rather, it is best to see the text we have now as evidence of vigorous debates among the conference participants, including the Emperor himself and a range of

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I would like to thank Prof. Michael Nylan at UC Berkeley for fully guiding my study of the *Baihu Tong*, Kevin J. Turner at Peking University for greatly improving my written English, as well as Andrew Hardy at UC Berkeley and two anonymous reviewers for their critical comments and suggestions.

other officials. In conclusion, the best way to uncover the facts about the White Tiger Hall conference via the *Baihu tong* is to reverse the process of textual formation, to glean information about the probable historical basis for the disputes recorded in the text.

During the first half of the Eastern Han dynasty (25–220), the emperors were concerned with building up the ritual institutions for the empire. The Eastern Han founder, Emperor Guangwu (r. 25–57) commissioned the building of sacrificial altars in the southern and northern suburbs of his capital at Luoyang 洛陽, as well as three additional sites: the Bright Hall (Mingtang 明堂), the Spirit Terrace (Lingtai 靈臺), and the Hall of the Circular Moat (Biyong 辟雍). Emperor Ming (r. 57–75), the founder's heir, established the regulations for Carriages and Robes (i.e. sumptuary regulations) in consultation with his ministers. When the third emperor, Emperor Zhang (r. 75–88), ascended the throne, he was ambitious enough to go further than his father and grandfather; he intended to establish a firm Classical foundation for the entire set of imperial rites used at court.

However, classical learning, from its inception, had included a wide range of interpretive lineages, thus making it difficult to reach consensus on many points of ritual. Emperor Zhang deemed this a problem, since without a greater measure of consensus it was hard to know how to proceed with revisions to the imperial rites. Therefore, in 79 C.E., the fourth year of the Jianchu 建初 reign period, Emperor Zhang convened in a great assembly his generals, ministers, and experts in classical learning in the White Tiger Hall to discuss discrepancies in policy matters expressed in the Five Classics, in the hope that prolonged debate might yield more unified understandings of the significance of the court's rites. The White Tiger Hall conference was a remarkable event. The histories of the time show that it lasted for months and the Emperor proclaimed the conference rulings in person.<sup>1</sup> After the conference, Emperor Zhang instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*.<sup>2</sup> Presumably, the *Baihu tongyi*, also known by its shorter title *Baihu tong* 白虎通[義] (the Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall), was a summary of the final conclusions reached by the White Tiger Hall conference participants.<sup>3</sup> Past research has been premised on the belief that the *Baihu tong*

1. Fan Ye, *Hou Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965), 3.138.

2. *Hou Han shu*, 79A.2546.

3. Hong Ye 洪業 claims that the present *Baihu tong* is not the work deriving from the White Tiger Hall conference but a later compilation that was forged between 213 and 245. However, Tjan Tjoe Som 曾珠森 believes that Hong's conclusion is invalid, because Hong's arguments are based on only one quotation, which cannot impugn the general authenticity of the whole book. Nowadays, most researchers take Tjan's side. See further "Baihu tong yinde xu" 白虎通引得序, in Hong Ye, *Hong Ye lunxue ji* 洪業論學集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), 31–36; Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussions in the White Tiger Hall* (Leiden: Brill, 1949 and 1952), Vol. 1, 30–31.

represented the unified nature of the court's ideology,<sup>4</sup> and especially conveyed the imperial will,<sup>5</sup> and that this conference thus exerted a profound influence both during and after Zhangdi's reign, with respect both to classical learning and to political institutions. But was this really the case? It may be worth it for us to go back and review what is known about the White Tiger Hall conference.

The *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, Fan Ye's 范曄 (398–445) history of the Eastern Han, provides several short passages about it. Besides this, the main resource we have for the conference is the *Baihu tong* itself, which is a compilation containing hundreds of short entries in the question-and-answer format relating to classical learning. A first reading of its content shows that the *Baihu tong* explicitly relates to the court politics of Eastern Han. However, this *Baihu tong* text, as we have it today, shows certain conclusions about classical learning which have been disassociated from their precise historical contexts. It is not easy task, in consequence, to elicit information regarding the White Tiger Hall conference as distinct from the findings recorded in the *Baihu tong*. Where should we begin? The author believes that in order to better understand the *Baihu tong* and the historical information underlying it, the formation process of the *Baihu tong* should be clarified. Unfortunately, the *Hou Han shu* passages about the formation process of the *Baihu tong* are vague. The "Annals of Zhangdi" speak of compiling the *Baihu yizou* 白虎議奏 (memorialized debating positions).<sup>6</sup> By contrast, Ban Gu's 班固 (32–92) *Hou Han shu* biography says that Ban Gu was instructed to compile a *Baihu tongde lun* 白虎通德論 (treatise on comprehensive virtues of the ruler);<sup>7</sup> and the *Hou Han shu* "Forest of Classicists" chapter ("Rulin zhuan" 儒林傳) says, "Later, the emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*."<sup>8</sup> Note that all three titles in the *Hou Han shu* differ.

According to these three different passages, Emperor Zhang and his officials compiled one or more texts that recorded the substance of those discussions in connection with the White Tiger Hall conference.

4. An example can be found in Chapter 8 ("Diguo yishi xingtai de chongjian—Ban yan 'Guoxian' jichu de Baihu tong sixiang" 帝國意識形態的重建——扮演"國憲"基礎的白虎通思想), in Lin Congshun 林聰舜, *Handai ruxue biecai: Diguo yishi xingtai de xingcheng yu fazhan* 漢代儒學別裁:帝國意識形態的形成與發展 (Taipei: Taida, 2013), 213–62.

5. For instance, Hou Wailu 侯外廬 emphasizes that considering the operation of the White Tiger Hall Conference, as the "national fundamental law" (國憲), *Baihu tong* was finally approved by the emperor who acted as the patriarch and the religious leader. See Hou Wailu, et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi* 中國思想通史 (Beijing: Renmin, 1957), Vol. 2, 226–27.

6. *Hou Han shu*, 3.138.

7. *Hou Han shu*, 40B.373.

8. *Hou Han shu*, 79A.2546.

However, we are still confused as to whether the three *Hou Han shu* accounts refer to one, two, or three texts. In other words, what are the relationships between the *Baihu tong* and the other compilation(s) commissioned by Emperor Zhang and how were these Baihu texts (especially the *Baihu tong*) eventually produced? This essay, after a review of previous research on this issue, attempts to reconstruct the whole production process for the Baihu texts, with the help of our current knowledge about textual formation and circulation procedures generated within the institution of court conferences during the two Han dynasties. Meanwhile, this essay will also reveal something about the important institution of court conferences during the Han, as we consider Emperor Zhang's role during and after the White Tiger Hall conference.

### Literature Review

Discussions about the textual formation process of the *Baihu* texts mainly took place from the mid-Qing dynasty to late Republican eras, prior to 1949. The monumental *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目, as well as discrete works by the classical exegetes Zhuang Shuzu 莊述祖, Zhou Guangye 周廣業, Yao Zhenzong 姚振宗, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, and Liu Shipai 劉師培 are prime examples (see below). When later scholars focused on the events connected with the White Tiger Hall conference, they rarely put forth any new ideas; instead, they selectively recycled ideas borrowed from these six works, making it possible in a brief literature review to summarize all the important findings relating to the Eastern Han conference.

A scholarly consensus today holds that the *Baihu yizou* is the first-stage result of the White Tiger Hall conference and also the basis for the *Baihu tong* compilation, for two reasons. First, the *Baihu tong* seems to be a different compilation from the *Baihu yizou*, given the number of bamboo bundles (*juan* 卷) in each. Cai Yong's 蔡邕 (132–192) "Bajun taishou xieban" 巴郡太守謝版 mentions three works, among them a *Baihu yizou*, which are 212 scrolls in toto.<sup>9</sup> Zhuang Shuzu's (1751–1816) "Baihu tongyi kao" 白虎通義考 then comments on Cai Yong's writing:

The archaic script version of the *Rites* classic (*Li* 禮) totals 56 bamboo bundles (*juan* 卷) in length, while the modern script *Rites* classic is 17 bamboo bundles in length. Of the three versions of the *Shang shu zhangju* 尚書章句 by Master Ouyang 歐陽, and the Elder Xiahou 大夏侯, and the Younger Xiahou 小夏侯, the longest of them does not

9. Cai Yong, *Cai Zhonglang ji* 蔡中郎集, in *Yingyin Wenyuange Siku quanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Shangwu, 1986), 1063 *ce*, 2.171.

exceed 31 bamboo bundles. Together, the *Li jing suzi* 禮經素字 and *Shang shu zhangju* could not possibly add up to no more than 100 bamboo bundles. That means the *Baihu yizou* must certainly be more than 100 chapters (*pian* 篇) in length, so clearly it is not the present *Baihu tongyi*.<sup>10</sup>

Although Zhuang clearly is wrong to conflate “bamboo bundles” (*juan*) with “chapters” (*pian*), as the two terms did not mean the same thing in the Han dynasty,<sup>11</sup> we cannot fail to note the huge discrepancy between the six-bamboo-bundle *Baihu tong* recorded in the *Sui shu* 隋書 bibliographic treatise and the 100-bamboo-bundle *Baihu yizou* that Cai Yong mentioned.<sup>12</sup>

Second, while the *Baihu yizou* has not survived, texts in the same genre afford enough evidence to probably distinguish it from the *Baihu tong* in terms of its function and structure. Liu Shipei’s (1884–1919) “*Baihu tongyi yuanliu kao*” 白虎通義源流考 registers this important observation:

Memorials submitted to an emperor must list the various court-sponsored “sayings” (*shuo* 說, interpretations and explications) and also include their rhetorical defenses. Afterwards, the emperor would write his judgement, approving or disapproving, at the end of each memorial. The “Concluding Discussions at Stone Canal on Ritual” (*Shiqu Li lun* 石渠禮論) quoted in the *Tongdian* 通典 is a surviving example of this. However, when we consult all the passages relating to the Stone Canal Pavilion 石渠閣 conference on the Classics in Ban Gu’s *Han shu* 漢書 bibliographic treatise 藝文志, we find that all the compilations are spoken of [in the same way] as the *Shiqu yizou* 石渠議奏. Therefore, is it not probable that the *Baihu yizou* mentioned in the *Hou Han shu* “Annals of Zhangdi” is the work submitted by Chunyu Gong 淳于恭 (d. 80 C.E.) and approved by Emperor Zhang? ... The present *Baihu*

10. Zhuang Shuzu, “*Baihu tongyi kao*,” in Chen Li 陳立, *Baihu tong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, ed. Wu Zeyu 吳則虞 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1994), Appendix 2.605. Wu, in the process of putting the *Baihu tong shuzheng* in order, also gathered together eight essays on the compilation, including Zhuang Shuzu’s and Liu Shipei’s work as appendices; unfortunately those appendices do not have the normal *juan* numbers. Zhuang’s essay is the second of the eight; hence my way of referring to it.

11. In early China, “bamboo bundle” (*juan*) was a unit referring to the length of writing material, but “chapter” (*pian*) was a unit referring to a complete article. See Li Ling 李零, *Jianbo gushu yu xueshu yuanliu* 簡帛古書與學術源流 (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhi sanlian shudian, 2007), 130. A bamboo bundle could contain several short chapters or parts of a long chapter, or it could be exactly equal to a complete chapter. See, Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Hanjian zhuishu* 漢簡綴述 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1980), 305.

12. Wei Zheng 魏徵 et al., *Sui shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1973), 32.937.

*tongyi* of 40-plus chapters (*pian*) has a totally different style and layout, with [usually] only one “saying” per chapter.<sup>13</sup> Sometimes the expressions “another saying” (*yishuo* 一說) and “someone says” (*huoyue* 或曰) appear in the work, but that happens in no more than one-tenth of the whole text. Possibly, the emperor approved of whatever was written down, and it eventually became the *Baihu tongyi*, as other competing theories were attached by categories [to a topic], and thus the text came to be structured around the names of various ritual activities, rather than around the rival interpretations attached to the Classics. All of these are ways in which the *Baihu tongyi* [must have] differed from the *Baihu yizou*.<sup>14</sup>

I believe this account by Liu Shipai to be more or less consistent with the facts of the matter, even if Liu never addressed further complications (principally, the pesky question of the *Baihu tongde lun* and what it was). Importantly, Liu distinguished phases in the textual production process, with the *yizou* (memorialized debating positions) preceding the production of the *tongyi*. If this is correct, the *Baihu yizou* in many bamboo bundles is a record transcribing, in part or in total, a number of administrative documents that took the form of memorials promoting one or more rival theories about the Classics, and this record was transcribed during, or immediately after the conference, and it subsequently received the emperor’s written approval. By contrast, the extant *Baihu tong* is composed mainly of catechistic couplets in a question-and-answer format. As only one precise answer is given for each question in the vast majority of cases, naturally the *Baihu tong* content was considerably shorter than the *Baihu yizou* (more on this below). As an abridged version of the *Baihu yizou*, the *Baihu tong* summary would simply have conveyed the conference’s main conclusions to its readers.

If discussions relating to the *Baihu yizou* seem complicated, the same is true of the *Baihu tongde lun*, only more so. The *Siku quanshu zongmu* claims, for example, that the *Baihu yizou* was named the *Baihu tongde lun* after it was compiled, and then Ban Gu edited it, making the *Baihu tong*.<sup>15</sup> Another view holds that the *Baihu tongde lun* is the *Baihu tong*. Yao Zhenzong’s (1843–1906) “Hou Han Yiwen zhi” 後漢藝文志 says, for example,

After deep immersion into the historical texts, I have concluded that if this *Baihu tongde lun* was not compiled by Ban Gu, then it was

13. The present *Baihu tong* has 43 chapters.

14. Liu Shipai, “Baihu tongyi yuanliu kao,” in *Baihu tong shuzheng*, ed. Wu, Appendix 7:783–84.

15. Yong Rong 永璿 et al., *Siku quanshu zongmu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965), 118.1015.

compiled by the Son of Heaven himself. The *Chongwen* [General] Catalogue 崇文[總]目 wants to establish the fact that it was compiled by Ban Gu, so the catalogue uses the title employed in the *Hou Han shu* biography of Ban Gu, changing it to *Baihu tongde lun*, since the compilers of the Catalogue believe that *Baihu tongde lun* is but another name for the *Baihu tongyi*.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly, Yao believed the conclusion reached in the *Chongwen Catalogue*, that *Baihu tongde lun* and *Baihu tongyi* are alternative titles for the same compilation. Sun Yirang (1848–1908) shared a similar view with Yao, insofar as he, too, believed that the *Baihu tongyi* is the original name of the text compiled during Emperor Zhang's Jianchu reign period and *Baihu tongde lun* represents but a new name for the same text devised by someone unknown during the Six Dynasties (221–588).<sup>17</sup>

Besides these two authoritative stances, another authority, Zhou Guangye (1730–1798), focused on the five graphs that make up the various titles (*bai* 白, *hu* 虎, *tong* 通, *de* 德, and *lun* 論). The Baojing tang 抱經堂 edition (1784) of the *Baihu tong* quotes Zhou to this effect:

I suspect secretly that the two graphs, *tong* 通 and *de* 德, were not originally together, for there is a second work besides the *Baihu tong* called the "De lun" 德論 [i.e. the "[Gong] de lun" as he explained below]. So therefore, these five graphs must not be the name of a single corpus, but rather the names of two different texts by Ban Gu. Li Shan's 李善 (630–689) annotation for the *Wenxuan* 文選 quotes Ban Gu's "Gong de lun" 功德論, as saying, "The vermilion carriage officials are commanded to go far away, like a phoenix flying to Longdui 龍堆." The entirety of the "Gong de lun" can no longer be seen. Is it possible that this is the text to which Fan Ye was referring, but the graph *gong* 功 has been lost? The "Gong de lun" does not appear to be a text which discusses the Classics. Perhaps it was more like the four masters' discussions on virtue (*de* 德), in which case the *Hou Han shu* mistakenly connected them [i.e. the two different texts by Ban Gu] together.<sup>18</sup>

Zhou Guangye was the first scholar to introduce the "Gong de lun" ascribed to Ban Gu into the scholarly debates, but he never really

16. Yao Zhenzong, "Hou Han Yiwen zhi," in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 2002), 914 *ce*, 1.242.

17. Sun Yirang, "Baihu tongyi kao xia" 白虎通義考下, in Sun Yirang's *Zhouqing shulin* 籀虞述林, ed. Xu Jialu 許嘉璐 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2010), 1.46.

18. First Preface, *Baihu tong* (Baojing tang ed.), in *Congshu jicheng chubian* (Beijing: Shangwu, 1936), 4–5.

explains how and why these two texts came to be connected. To Zhou's speculation, Liu Shiwei added:

The reason why it was connected with the *Baihu tong* is because the conference held in the Jianchu reign period was an important event, since it was at that conference that the emperor personally announced his verdicts. For that reason, there must certainly have been a corpus which summarized or transcribed the achievements of the [White Tiger Hall] court conference. Therefore, the *Baihu tongyi* records what they discussed, and the "Gong de lun" records what they did. Observing the editing process of the *Baihu tongyi*, Fan Ye said, "later, the emperor instructed his archivists to compile a text." Since the record of the compilation of the "Gong de lun" can only be seen in Ban Gu's biography, this must mean that the *Baihu tongyi* was not compiled by only one person, but the "[Gong de] Lun" was compiled by Ban Gu."<sup>19</sup>

All the foregoing theories seem reasonable enough, but all are equally speculative. The *Siku quanshu zongmu* editors nonetheless divided the short passage that appears in the *Hou Han shu* biography of Ban Gu in such a way as to confirm their sense of events. Believing that the *Baihu tongde lun* and *Baihu yizou* mentioned in the *Hou Han shu* "Annals of Zhangdi" are essentially the same text, they punctuate a single passage appearing in Ban Gu's biography in such a way as to establish the equivalence between the two texts, producing the following: "The Son of Heaven assembled the classicists to discuss the Five Classics, and compiled [or had compiled] the *Baihu tongde lun*." They then couple the passage in Ban Gu's biography, which I would read "Ban Gu was instructed to compile it," with a statement made in the "Rulin zhuan" ("Later the emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*"). But there is a problem: if the *Siku quanshu zongmu* editors are correct, it is hard to understand why the *Baihu* text mentioned in the *Hou Han shu* biography of Ban Gu was *not* compiled by Ban Gu, and was instead the *Baihu yizou*, whose compilation should have preceded Ban Gu's commission.

According to my alternative understanding of the relevant historical records, Yao Zhenzong and Sun Yirang were probably not correct when they asserted that the *Baihu tongde lun* represents no more than an alternative name for the *Baihu tong*. The *Hou Han shu* mentions the *Baihu tongde lun* as an independent work, but one may not conclude from this alone that this compilation was essentially the *Baihu tong*.

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19. Liu, "Baihu tongyi yuanliu kao," Appendix 7:785.



Note that nearly all of the historical catalogues and literary works from the Six Dynasties to the Tang dynasty (618–907) quote a *Baihu tong*[*yi*]. Furthermore, no evidence exists for an unknown person during the Six Dynasties changing the name into the *Baihu tongde lun*, contra Sun Yirang. The Northern Song (960–1126) catalogue entitled *Chongwen General Catalogue* is the earliest extant text to identify the *Baihu tong* as the *Baihu tongde lun*, and since it cites no evidence for the equation, this may well be a Song-era view. Similarly, no supporting evidence supports the conflation of the “Gong de lun” with the *Baihu tong*, despite Zhou Guangye’s proposed insertion of the graph (*gong*功) between *tong* and *de*. In the end, to follow all of Liu Shipei’s deductions is simply too much of a stretch.

Reviewing previous research on the formation of the *Baihu tong* compilations, it seems obvious that past scholarship relied on (1) the records preserved in the standard histories; (2) assumed certain models for textual genres; and (3) paid great attention to the bamboo bundle lengths for certain texts. Using the passage preserved in Cai Yong’s “Bajun taishou xieban,” we can deduce that the original length of the *Baihu yizou* was much greater than that of today’s *Baihu tong*. That seems as certain as any evidence from the distant past is likely to be. And since the three discrete *Hou Han shu* entries at present offer our only clues for this conundrum, given the paltry evidential record, we have no recourse except to return to the precise language of *Hou Han shu*, and carefully analyze it, for no reasonable conclusion can contradict the three *Hou Han shu* statements. With respect to genres, two main questions await resolution: (1) What is the *Baihu tongde lun*, if the textual record allows for some similarities and differences between it and two other works, the *Baihu yizou* and the *Baihu tong*? and (2) What does the graph *lun* 論 in its title indicate in Eastern Han times? While more evidence will be adduced below, for the moment I draw the reader’s attention to Liu Shipei’s attempt to compare the *Baihu yizou* with the *Shiqu Li lun*. Unfortunately, Liu ignored the fact that the *Han shu* bibliographic treatise records a *Shiqu lun* 石渠論, apparently an analysis of the *Shiqu yizou*, as I will endeavor to prove in the course of this essay. This bibliographic entry offers a critical clue, and Liu’s failure to consider its implications prevented him from arriving at the correct solution, in my view. So even though historical records are the starting point and the end point of this research project, an analysis of textual genres is still a key factor underlying any analysis devoted to the formation of the *Baihu* texts. Finally, I would note that previous scholarship on the *Baihu* compilations have more or less ignored the Han institution of court conferences, and so created some of the difficulty, it seems.

### Textual Formation and Circulation within the Institution of Conferences in the Han

To start our research, it is best to recapitulate all three records in the *Hou Han shu* regarding the White Tiger Hall conference and the literary works that followed it.

1. In the *Hou Han shu* "Annals of Zhangdi":

On the *renxu* 壬戌 day of the eleventh month of the fourth year of the Jianchu reign period, ... Emperor Zhang commanded the Superintendent of Ceremonial 太常, the Generals 將, the Counselors 大夫, the Academicians 博士, the Gentlemen Consultants 議郎, and the Palace Courtiers 郎官, together with the Academy disciples and the classicists, to convene a conference in the White Tiger Hall and have them expound upon the similarities and differences among [the pronouncements in] the Five Classics. He ordered Wei Ying 魏應, Leader of the Gentlemen of the Palace, All Purposes 五官中郎將, to receive the imperial edicts that posed questions, and Chunyu Gong, the Palace Attendant 侍中, to memorialize the exposition of proposals [to the emperor]. The emperor proclaimed the rulings, having attended in person, as in the preceding case of the Stone Canal Pavilion conference during the Ganlu 甘露 reign period of the Filial Emperor Xuan 孝宣帝 (r. 74–48). And Emperor Zhang it was who ordered the compilation of the *Baihu yizou*.<sup>20</sup>

2. In the *Hou Han shu* biography of Ban Gu:

The Son of Heaven convened the Classicists to expound and discuss the Five Classics, and put in writing the *Baihu tongde lun*, Ban Gu was instructed to compile it.<sup>21</sup>

3. In the *Hou Han shu* "Rulin zhuan":

In the Jianchu reign period, the emperor greatly assembled the Classicists in the White Tiger Hall, to examine minutely the similarities and differences among the Classics. This conference only ended after several months. Su Zong 肅宗 [i.e. Zhangdi] attended in person and proclaimed the rulings, as in the preceding Stone Canal Pavilion conference. Later, the emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*.<sup>22</sup>

20. *Hou Han shu*, 3.138.

21. *Hou Han shu*, 40B.1373.

22. *Hou Han shu*, 79A.2546. The translations of these three passages are based on Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussions*, Vol. 1, 5–7. But I have also altered them in places for greater precision and to maintain consistency.

These passages are generally consistent in their description of the conference proceedings, but there are obvious discrepancies in their accounts concerning the formation of the literary work (or works) called *Baihu*. Of course, in historical writings historians sometimes present differing accounts of the same event, when citing different sources. Notably, however, these three records are consistent regarding the convening of the conference, suggesting that any discrepancies we find in passages discussing the post-conference stage may not simply be dismissed, let alone explained by contradictions in the sources available to Fan Ye. Moreover, these passages all provide different titles for the compilations, and, based on Cai Yong's account (summarized by Zhuang Shuzu) mentioned above, we imagine different bamboo bundle lengths for the two compilations entitled *Baihu yizou* and the *Baihu tong*. Thus, we may ask, what precisely is the reality reflected in these three different passages in Fan Ye's *Hou Han shu*? To answer this, we must trace the history of the court conferences as an administrative institution and consider as well the particular nature of manuscript compilation, textual genre formats, and literary circulation during the two Han dynasties.

During both the Western and Eastern Han, whenever the court confronted a difficult issue, it was wont to convene court officials to a disputation or debate regarding it, allowing the court to gather and then consider a range of policy suggestions. Such court conferences happened fairly often throughout the two Han dynasties, from 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E., and there were two ways of holding conferences: one was predominately oral, and the second written (i.e. when policy positions were submitted in the form of written memorials). Written submissions certainly entailed prior circulation of administrative documents (many in edited form). Even in oral debates, with the emperor in attendance, the emperor convened a particular conference by sending out invitations to the conferees, in the form of imperial edicts summoning the participants. After a given conference was concluded, its main conclusions were then to be circulated in another form of literary production undertaken by the imperial administration. Thus, the conferences invariably entailed the preparation and circulation of many texts. As some excellent research has already explored the Han conference system,<sup>23</sup> this essay will try to

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23. See, for example, "Jiōshō to chōgi" 丞相と朝議, Chapter 2 (Part 1), in Ōba Osamu 大庭脩, *Shin Kan hōseishi no kenkyū* 秦漢法制史の研究 (Tōkyō: Sōbunsha, 1982), 46–50; Nagata Hidemasa 永田英正, "Kandai no shūgi ni tsuite" 漢代の集議について, *Tōhō gaku* 43 (1972), 97–136; Rong Yuanda 榮遠大, "Han Jin jiyi zhidu chutan" 漢晉集議制度初探, *Nanchong shiyuan xuebao* (*Zhexue shehui kexue ban*) 1989.1, 118–24; Chapter 3 ("Zhongyang juece xitong" 中央決策系統), in Meng Xiangcai 孟祥才, *Zhongguo zhengzhi zhidu tongshi* 中國政治制度通史 (Beijing: Renmin, 1996), Vol. 3 (Qin Han juan),

*footnote continued on next page*

make use of that research in light of what we know about the formation process of the text(s) for the White Tiger Hall conference.

The first stage in the formal proceedings was the initial edict (命議詔書) issued by the court that summoned various officials at different ranks (and sometimes technical experts) to attend the conference. These kinds of formal invitations were usually sent out in the emperor's name. For example, in the "Annals of Gaodi" (高帝) in the *Han shu*, we find an entry dated to the twelfth year of Gaozu's reign (195 B.C.E.), saying that Liu Bang 劉邦 wanted to reinstate King Wu (吳王, d. 154 B.C.E.), but sent an edict to ask his officials to "discuss and approve it."<sup>24</sup> Sometimes, the edict would take the form of a "ruling" (*zhiyue* 制曰) appended to a high-ranking official's memorial.<sup>25</sup> The *Han shu* biography of Liu Chang 劉長 (198–174), King of Huainan (淮南王), says that the Chancellor (丞相) Zhang Cang 張蒼 (d. 152 B.C.E.) and others memorialized together that Liu Chang should be executed in accordance with the law for his improper behaviors, but when Emperor Wen (r. 180–157) refused their suggestion, he appended a ruling, which said, "We cannot tolerate extending the law to him, so you Nobles (列侯) and high officials commanding a 2000-bushel (二千石) salary are to discuss this issue further."<sup>26</sup> This is a good example of an emperor responding to an initial finding by his officials at a court conference.

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118–53; Liao Boyuan 廖伯源, "Qin Han chaoting zhi lunyi zhidu" 秦漢朝廷之論議制度, in *Qin Han shi luncong* 秦漢史論叢 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2008), 130–69; Li Xueming 李學銘, "Dong Han zhongyang jiyi zhidu zhi tantao" 東漢中央集議制度之探討, *Xinya xuebao* 29 (2011), 1–64; and Qin Tao 秦濤, *Liling shidai de "Yishi yi zhi": Handai jiyizhi yanjiu* 律令時代的"議事以制": 漢代集議制研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo fazhi, 2018).

24. Ban Gu, *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 1A.76.

25. Because the emperor replies to the memorials, there are the two characters of *zhiyue*, which is why they are often mistaken as a "decision" (*zhishu* 制書), but this is not the case. Cai Yong's *Du duan* 獨斷 says that edicts have three types, of which the second type is: "when the ministers have something to memorialize and the Director of the Secretariat memorializes it for them, at the end of the memorial there is *zhiyue*, and the Son of Heaven responds to this by saying 'Approval' or by 'Hand this down to such-and-such officials', and so on, then this, too, is called an edict." Therefore, it is known that the memorials become a second kind of edict after having the emperor's replies attached with the phrase *zhiyue*. See, Cai Yong, *Du duan*, in *Yingyin wenyuange siku quanshu*, 850 ce, 1.78. For more on this issue see Dai Guoxi 代國璽, "Handai gongwen xingtai xintan" 漢代公文形態新探, *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 2015.2, 23–49. Additionally, the *Du duan* translation is from Enno Giele, but I have modified his translations in some places for precision and to maintain consistency. The same is the case for all following *Du duan* translations. See, Enno Giele, *Imperial Decision-Making and Communication in Early China: A Study of Cai Yong's Du duan* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 234–35.

26. *Han shu*, 44.2141.

In the second stage of the formal proceedings, participants at the conference were each to express their own positions in the debate. As Cai Yong says in his *Du duan*:

If there is a doubtful matter with no clear resolution, the senior ministers and the various officials 公卿百官 will meet to discuss it. If the Secretariat ([*Shangshu*] *taige* [尚書]臺閣) has come to a rough consensus on how to deal with the issue at hand, but there are those who cling to an opposing position regarding the issue, then a “rebuttal” 駁議 shall be composed. In the beginning, a rebuttal writes, “Such-and-such [one or more official post(s)] so-and-so [the author’s or authors’ name(s)] argues and believes a position like this ... ” At the end, it says, “Your minister has in all stupidity foolishly argued differently.” Those who do not counter a specific argument [achieved by consensus] but simply would formulate their own views do not use the phrase “argue differently.” Those positions that match the [current] throne’s intention are responded to in writing with the notation “Such-and-such so-and-so discussed and approved it.”<sup>27</sup>

This account of the second stage of the process offers several surprises: that court conferences could be convened even when the court already held a fixed set of practices based on a specific premise, history of interactions, or principle; also, that in the end all those holding views that were contrary to the consensus view could compose rebuttals that would give their lines of reasoning. For example, the *Han shu* biography of Yu Dingguo 于定國 (d. 40 B.C.E.), who was the Chancellor at the start of Emperor Yuan’s reign (48–33), says,

Chen Wannian 陳萬年 (d. 44 B.C.E.), as the Imperial Counselor 御史大夫 (i.e. assistant to the Chancellor) who cooperated with Yu for eight years, during which time Chen Wannian never openly opposed Yu in numerous court conferences. Afterwards, when Gong Yu 貢禹 (124–44) replaced Chen Wannian in the post of Imperial Counselor, Gong Yu rebuked Yu repeatedly.<sup>28</sup>

Here is the back story to that set of remarks: during Western Han, the Chancellor held supreme power over the court officials, power that in Eastern Han would devolve to the Secretariat. Yu Dingguo was adept at handling administrative affairs and often pushed his own proposals. But his nominal assistants, Chen Wannian and Gong Yu, acted very differently with respect to the proposals that Yu Dingguo expressed during

27. *Du duan*, 1.79 (mod. from Giele’s trans., as above, 186).

28. *Han shu*, 71.3043.

court conferences. Gong often presented rebuttals to show his disagreement with Yu.

However, if the court was likely to be badly divided on an issue, a careful collection of reports and position papers needed to be compiled *even before participants met* at the conference, to help those participants sort through the range of options and positions presented by conference participants, so that eventually the assembly of participants could reach a decision, after due consideration of the entire range of debating positions. This required all the invited participants to formulate their individual views in writing, and it was common to refer to these written opinions as *yi* 議 (literally discussions,<sup>29</sup> meaning debating positions or opinions). For example, Cai Yong's "Da zhai yi" 答齊議 says:

The edict asks the Secretariat: should a fast be held on the first day of spring to welcome the wind in the east suburbs [as is customary]? Left-Assistant of the Secretariat 尚書左丞 Feng Fang 馮方 fought and killed the Commander 指揮使 in the west temple of the Secretariat. In this situation a response is required to the question, Is it suitable to fast or not? Your Gentlemen Consultant Cai Yong and Academician Ren Min 任敏 risk death by giving their reply (*sizui dui* 死罪對): ... Your servant Cai Yong has in all stupidity spoken foolishly and should put to death (*yugang sizui* 愚戇死罪).<sup>30</sup>

The passage above is a good example of part of a jointly-coauthored "discussion" (*yi*) put in writing by Minister Cai Yong and the Academician Ren Min, in reply to the question posed in an imperial edict.<sup>31</sup> One noteworthy aspect is Cai's use of the two formulae *sizui dui* 死罪對 and *yugang sizui* 愚戇死罪, phrases that typically accompany a public presentation or *biao* 表.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, after each of the invited respondents composed his own *yi*, they need not be directly

29. The *yi* represents in many cases the exposition of the discussions, which discuss policy proposals.

30. *Cai Zhonglang ji*, 2.173.

31. Because this *yi* is seen in *Cai Zhonglang ji*, it was probably written by Cai Yong himself and Academician Ren Min just appended his name to it to show his support.

32. The *Du duan*: "Presentations do not require a 'head.' At the beginning of a written presentation, those who submit it state, 'Your minister so-and-so reports the following.' At the end, they state, 'Truly fearful and terrified, I keep knocking my head to the floor, doubly deserving capital punishment.' At the end of the text on the accompanying boards appended to the left they add at the bottom, 'Submitted by Your official so-and-so from such-and-such office.'" See, *Du duan*, 1.79 (mod. from Giele's trans., as above, 135).

submitted to the emperor for his approval;<sup>33</sup> instead all the submissions were compiled together before being sent on to the emperor, a process called “compiling the dossier of [all the] texts of the *yi* [submitted for review]” (彙集議文).

During the Western Han, documents other than the *yi* dossiers were usually submitted to the Chancellor first and then sent on to the Imperial Counselor, who would present them with a memorial to the emperor.<sup>34</sup> However, the extant historical records suggest that the process for submitting compilations of these debating positions or *yi* differed from that for other types of compilations, where the Chancellor almost always took the lead. The *Shi ji* biography of Yuan Ang 袁盎 (d. 148 B.C.E.) records a scene where Yuan wanted to discuss a certain matter in private with Chancellor Shentu Jia 申屠嘉 (155 B.C.E.). Shentu Jia replied, however, “If what you have to say concerns some public matter, you may go to the office and discuss it with the Senior Officer 長史, and in due time I will submit your proposal to the throne.”<sup>35</sup> This remark shows that it was customary for chancellors to collect and then memorialize to the emperor what any lower-ranking officials had to say on the matter, as their duty.<sup>36</sup> In Eastern Han, the Chancellor (now renamed the *da situ* 大司徒) was equally responsible for such memorializing, in theory, although over time we note a trend by which the Secretariat gradually took over this important duty. In the “Da zhai *yi*” cited above, the Secretariat received the edict and asked others for their positions, making it only natural that the Secretariat would then be responsible for compiling the participants’ responses in one or more memorials. A single piece

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33. The *Du duan* states that memorials and petitions require a “head,” but that the presentations do not require a head. “Require a head” refers to the ministers leave a few blank bamboo strips when presenting their memorials and petitions to the emperor so that he can attach his words of approval. See Dai Guoxi, “Handai zhangzou wenshu ‘Xutou’ yu ‘Yanxing’ wenti kaolun” 漢代章奏文書“需頭”與“言姓”問題考論, *Lanzhou xuekan* 2017.8, 31–41.

34. The beginning of the Juyan 居延 Han bamboo text of “Yuankang wunian zhaoshu ce” 元康五年(61 B.C.E.)詔書冊 reorganized by Ōba Osamu says: “The Imperial Counselor Ji 吉 dares speak on risk of death: the Chancellor Xiang 相 submits the Superintendent of Ceremonial’s writings: ...” This clearly reveals the order in which Han dynasty memorials were submitted. See Ōba Osamu, *Kankan kenkyū* 漢簡研究 (Kyōto: Dōhōsha, 1992), 19.

35. Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1982), 101.2741. This translation is Watson’s, modified for precision and to maintain consistency. See, Burton Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China: Han Dynasty*, Vol. 1 (Hong Kong: Columbia University Press, 1993), 523.

36. The conference reports quoted below have the Han chancellors directly submitting the *yi* file for the imperial inspection; naturally the chancellors would have put their names at the beginning, to show that they were responsible for the compilation.

of evidence suggests that other important figures could undertake this task as well: a *Han shu* entry in the “Annals of Xuandi” 宣帝 had Xiao Wangzhi 蕭望之 (47 B.C.E.), Senior Tutor for the Heir Apparent (太子太傅), discharging this responsibility during the Stone Canal Pavilion conference of 51 B.C.E.<sup>37</sup>

The administrative work of compiling the collective dossier of debating positions (*yi*) was not limited to simply collecting a formal statement in writing from every participant; there was further editing to be done to prepare the document for the imperial review. The editing work required the editors to offer fair summaries of the differing views offered by the participants, and calculate how many people were behind each position, so that the different positions could be presented in an orderly account. The *Han shu* biography of Wei Xuancheng 韋玄成 (d. 36 B.C.E.) records a case in which Wei along with others submitted the compilation summarizing their collective discussions (*yi*) one month after Emperor Yuan had ordered the removal of the ancestral temples in the commanderies and kingdoms in 40 B.C.E.:

Wei Xuancheng and forty-three other ministers memorialized their debating position, which said: “... Your minister foolishly believes that Gaodi received a mandate from Heaven to pacify all the land under the heavens, so he is suitable to be enshrined in the Emperor’s Temple as Supreme Ancestor (Taizu 太祖), for all eternity. The temples of subsequent emperors with no current relations to the throne should be destroyed. Nowadays, these ancestor temples are situated in different places, and the lineages they represent are in disarray, so it is best to bring all of their memorial tablets into Taizu’s temple, by rank, as befits the rites. The temples of the Gaozu’s 高祖 father, Filial Emperor Hui (r. 195–188), Filial Emperor Wen, and Filial Emperor Jing (r. 157–141) should all be destroyed because your lineage has no relationship with them, while the temple of Huangkao 皇考 [enshrining Emperor Xuan’s real father] should be kept as usual, because your relationship with that lineage continues. Marshal of State 大司馬 and General of Chariots and Cavalry 車騎將軍 Xu Jia 許嘉 (d. 28 B.C.E.) and twenty-eight other ministers claim that the Filial Emperor Wen ... should be enshrined as Taizong 太宗 in an ancestral temple. The Superintendent of Trials 廷尉 Yin Zhong 尹忠 believes that the Filial Emperor Wu (r. 141–87) ... should be enshrined as his majesty’s Generational Ancestor (Shizong 世宗) in an ancestral temple. Advisory Counselor 諫大夫 Yin Gengshi 尹更始 and seventeen others argue that it is inappropriate, according

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37. *Han shu*, 8.272.



to the *zhaomu* 昭穆 system,<sup>38</sup> to house the temple of his majesty's father within an imperial ancestral temple, pointing out that to do so would not be the rites befitting a ruler, and so cult offerings to his majesty's father should be destroyed.<sup>39</sup>

How Chancellor Wei Xuancheng handled the ministers' proposals can be inferred from the passage translated here. Wei first collected the views of every participant, and then organized all of their different views, counting the number of people who supported one position, and verifying the specific points where they agreed or dissented. On this basis he formulated the majority position in a memorial, and then offered what he considered the important dissenting views, attaching the names and the number of people who supported each of the dissenting views. Note that the significance of counting the number of people was clear: the view treated most extensively by the Chancellor usually had to be said to reflect a majority view.

The *Han shu* treatise on imperial sacrifices (*Jiaosi zhi* 郊祀志) records that in the beginning of Emperor Cheng's reign (33–7 B.C.E.), Chancellor Kuang Heng 匡衡 and Imperial Counselor Zhang Tan 張譚 memorialized that a conference should be held to determine the site on which to conduct the suburban sacrifices. At that conference, the participants' vote split into two main positions, one of which was clearly in the majority. Wang Shang 王商 (d. 25 B.C.E.), General of the Right (右將軍), and forty-nine others thought that the sites for sacrifices to heaven and earth should be moved to the southern and northern suburbs of Chang'an respectively, basing their views on the *Rites Record* (*Li ji* 禮記). However, Xu Jia, Marshal of State and General of Chariots and Cavalry, with seven others thought that the earlier precedents should be followed. In response, Kuang Heng and others stated:

At present, fifty out of fifty-eight participants say that a plan to move the sites for the imperial sacrifices is suitable 宜 on three grounds: that it is so written in a Classic, that this would be in accordance with earlier generations, and that this is also convenient for both officials and civilians. However, eight participants neither examined the Classics

38. Here the *Zhaomu* system referred to the correct sequence in which the imperial ancestral temples should be placed: they should be placed alternately to the west and the east sides of the original founder of the line until a total of seven had been built. For more, see Michael Loewe, "Imperial tombs" in *China's Early Empire*, ed. Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 215.

39. *Han shu*, 73.3118–19. The *Zhonghua* edition of the *Han shu* punctuates this citation such that it ends Wei's direct quote with the main position and then reports the other dissenting views in the narrator's voice. This is a misunderstanding due to a confusion regarding the textual format of court conferences during the Han.

nor investigated the antique institutions, so they believe that the sites for sacrifices should not be moved. Indeed, they said that because the debate itself was improper, it is hard to predict whether the proposed change will be auspicious or not.

After noting this dissenting position, Kuang Heng concluded: "In such a case, the sites for sacrifices should be moved to the southern and northern suburbs of Chang'an, so as to be a solid foundation of all generations." The Son of Heaven agreed to Kuang's suggestion.<sup>40</sup> In this example, even though Kuang Heng was in favor of moving the sacrificial sites to Chang'an, he was still required to go through the lengthy process of convening a conference and gathering views first. As the overwhelming majority voted in favor of moving the sites, his policy proposal was finally deemed "suitable."

There are, of course, times when the compiler of various proposals (*yi*) would only list the various positions taken by the participants, without apparently highlighting the majority view. In the *Shi ji* biography of Gongsun Hong (公孫弘, 200–121), Noble of Pingjin 平津侯, it says, "Whenever court conferences were held, Gongsun Hong would simply state the pros and cons of the question and leave the emperor to make his own decision. He never ventured to contradict the emperor face to face or argue with the emperor in court."<sup>41</sup> Put another way, Gongsun Hong only relayed the content of the various views expressed, as this allowed the emperor to decide for himself, even though such conduct abnegated his responsibility to act as Chancellor.<sup>42</sup>

As soon as the texts of the participants' discussions (*yi*) have been compiled, edited, and submitted to the emperor, they became a new kind of textual record known as the *yizou* 議奏 [memorialized debating positions], which compilation was usually kept together with the initial edict convening the conferences.

Essentially, these two stages of the textual formation during written discussions—ministers writing out their debating positions individually and a high-ranking official (usually the Chancellor) compiling a dossier that represented all the debating positions—happened during so-called "oral arguments" at court conferences as well. During oral arguments, each minister expressed his own views, which were then transcribed by a court archivist or scribe, resulting in a formal record. Then, after oral arguments were concluded, a summary of the various arguments

40. *Han shu*, 25B.1253–55.

41. *Shi ji*, 112.2950 (mod. from Watson's trans., as above, 188).

42. See Qin, *Lüling shidai de "Yishi yi zhi"*, 135–36.

presented at the conference would then be reflected in a suitably worded memorial transmitted to the emperor, at which point the entire memorial reflecting the range of important policy proposals became an *yizou* (memorialized summary of the debating positions). Because of the need, sooner or later, to summarize and edit arguments, whether written and oral, there was no major difference between oral and written debates in a conference devoted to one or more policy issues.

A final stage of the conference took place after the *yizou* had been sent to the emperor, for the emperor was still required to express his formal approval by appending a ruling signaled by phrase *zhiyue* 制曰 to the end of each document. Generally speaking, we know this from reports signifying four different levels of commitment by the emperor:

1. A unanimity of views meant that the emperor simply wrote "Approved" (*ke*). For example, the *Han shu* records an edict dated to the spring of the second year of Empress Gao's reign (186 B.C.E.) that says: "Now, order the court ranks of the nobles according to their various achievements, so that they will be conserved in the temple of Gaozu for all time, and their heirs may inherit the rank corresponding to such achievements. You shall discuss this and reach consensus with the nobles and then submit your conclusions." Chancellor Chen Ping (陳平, ?–178 B.C.E.) memorialized: "The nobles have been fortunate to receive food and money from their fiefs, and your majesty now wants to provide them with even more benefits, by correlating their ranks with their merits. Your minister requests that this order be preserved in the temple of Gaozu." Because this conference was reported after the agreement had been reached, the report of Chen Ping's views is simple and in line with the wishes of Empress Gao, so they were forthwith approved.<sup>43</sup>

2. Where there were a range of views, the emperor would write simply, "The imperial ruling is that So-and-So's views are approved," selecting one view among many. The *Han shu* treatise on imperial sacrifices reports that a bronze tripod was found in Meiyang 美陽, after which it was offered to the court, which debated where the bronze tripod should be housed. A majority thought it should be placed in the ancestral temple, but Zhang Chang 張敞 (d. 47 B.C.E.), Governor of the Capital (京兆尹), submitted an alternative view, stating that, according to the engravings on the tripod, the vessel "was not suitable to be placed in the ancestral temple," and the emperor's ruling was that he approved the view of the Governor of the Capital.<sup>44</sup>

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43. *Han shu*, 3.96.

44. *Han shu*, 25b.1251.

3. The emperor occasionally not only announced his approval of a particular stance, but appended his own remarks to it, so that the content of the ruling would reflect the emperor's own position. For example, the *Hou Han shu* treatise on sacrifices (*Jisi zhi* 祭祀志) records a court conference on the establishment of the ancestral temple system during early Eastern Han, where Chancellor (大司徒) Dai She 戴涉 (d. 44 C.E.), a ritual expert, and others memorialized to Emperor Guangwu in the following *yizou*:

It would be right for you, the emperor, to enshrine the emperors to whose throne you have succeeded, so that you establish the temples of Emperors Ping (r. 1 B.C.E.–8 C.E.), Ai (r. 7–1), Cheng (33–7), and Yuan to replace the temples dedicated to your blood ancestors. As for your brothers and those less closely related to you, order the local officials to establish shrines for them. It would be suitable to establish Lord Nandun 南頓君 in the temple of Huangkao (which housed the shrine of Emperor Guangwu's real father in Eastern Han, i.e. Lord Nandun); also to order the officials to offer cult to 祭上至 the Noble Jie of Chongling (春陵節侯, Emperor Guangwu's great-great-grandfather).<sup>45</sup>

While there were dissents registered at the time on this tricky matter, the emperor finally approved of Dai She's view, saying: "As the sites of the ancestor temples have yet to be determined, from now on may the court sacrifices to all the ancestors be held together in the temple of Gaozu."<sup>46</sup> Guangwu agreed to let Emperors Cheng, Ai, and Ping, at least for the moment, receive sacrifices in the Temple of Gaozu in Chang'an, and he agreed to let Lord Nandun and Noble Jie of Chongling receive sacrifices in the mausoleum towns and temples annually and seasonally. Since these mausoleum towns and temples were located far away from the administrative headquarters in the commanderies and kingdoms, when it was inconvenient to hold sacrifices there, Guangwu gave his assent to having one or more local officials offer cult on behalf of the commandery Governor and kingdom Chancellor. Additionally, Guangwu reasoned, because the Filial Emperor Xuan had made great contributions to the dynasty, he should be given the ancestral title of Zhongzong 中宗 (Mid-dynastic Ancestor).<sup>47</sup> Plainly, Emperor Guangwu drew upon the positions of Dai She and his allies.

45. *Hou Han shu*, *Zhi* 9.3193.

46. *Hou Han shu*, *Zhi* 9.3193.

47. *Hou Han shu*, *Zhi* 9.3193–94.

4. If the emperor did not agree with any of the court participants' ideas, he had the option of citing his own views after a formal ruling on the matter. In the example of the conference on Liu Chang's crimes (cited above), we saw that the members of the court had all urged the emperor to execute Liu Chang "in accordance with the law," but the emperor, as *paterfamilias*, believed he had the right to not execute his family member; he decided he would merely depose him as king.<sup>48</sup> In this case, Emperor Wen overturned the decision offered by his court for his approval.

Actually, there was probably no significant difference between the emperor's approval of an *yizou* and his approval of a regular memorial in terms of textual format. Just the same, after a set of position papers generated in connection with court conference were memorialized to the emperor and he had announced a formal ruling, that ruling by the emperor was transformed into an imperial edict. However, since the court conference was a mechanism designed to promote effective government, and not merely a tool for the execution of imperial power, an emperor could set a formal conference discussion into motion, without being entirely certain where it might lead.<sup>49</sup> This suggests that, unlike approval for regular memorials, the emperor could exercise his decision-making powers in relatively limited ways when it came to approving or disapproving *yizou*. During both Western and Eastern Han, the emperor rarely vetoed the proposals put forward during court conferences, and the few cases where we see an emperor exercising a veto usually happened after legal cases involving members of the imperial family.<sup>50</sup> As was shown in the four situations above, when the issue directly affected a member of imperial family, the emperor evidently had more freedom to wholly or partially reject a strong consensus position registered during a given court conference via memorialized discussions or *yizou*. Normally, the establishment of the imperial ancestral temple system was deemed to affect politics more than the deposal a king during Han. Therefore, Emperor Guangwu had only to approve Dai's proposal before he could add his own position into the ruling. By contrast, Emperor Wen made his decision independently because he was discussing his own close relative Liu Chang. In most cases, the emperor had the customary right to select among the proposals the court conference submitted; at the same time, custom mandated

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48. *Han shu*, 44.2141.

49. Hans Bielenstein, *The Restoration of the Han Dynasty*, Vol. 4 (The Government) (Stockholm: Elanders Boktryckeri Ab. Kungsbacka, 1979), 59.

50. Qin, *Liling shidai de "Yishi yi zhi"*, 161.

that he could not casually ignore the majority positions expressed, nor could he go well beyond the boundaries set by the participants at the court conference. In brief, the emperor could not exercise absolute free will, doing as he pleased. Rather, his rulings had to be aligned with the content of the court conferences and accord with the multiple forces at work there.

If an emperor or a regent ruling the court in his stead was deeply dissatisfied with the conference findings, or there was too much divergence among the participants' positions to arrive at any clear conclusion after a single set of discussions, the conference could come to a halt before any clear conclusions were reached (寢議), and the debate participants would then be dismissed (罷議). Sometimes a conference would be reconvened (復議), even multiple times.<sup>51</sup> Under such circumstances, a set of position papers memorialized to the throne or *yizou* did not become an edict, needless to say, nor was the *yizou* further circulated. Thus, to reconvene a conference several times points to the seriousness of the issue undergoing debate, and sometimes the multi-stage process began several times, until some consensus was reached.

The quotation of a passage ascribed to Emperor Gao<sup>52</sup> (高皇帝所述書) in the *Han shu* biography of Wei Xiang 魏相 (d. 59 B.C.E.) tells us much about the institution of the Han dynasty conferences and the texts produced in connection with them:

Senior Imperial Messenger 大謁者 Liu Zhang 劉章 (d. 177 B.C.E.) received an edict in the Changle 長樂 Palace that said, "Let the various ministers discuss what robes are proper for the Son of Heaven to wear, so that he may induce peace and good governance to the world." Chancellor Xiao He 蕭何 (d. 193 B.C.E.) and Imperial Counselor Zhou Chang

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51. An example of a conference ending without a clear conclusion can be seen in *Hou Han shu* treatise on rites and music (*Liyue zhi* 禮樂志) where Emperor Wen finally ended Jia Yi's 賈誼 (201–169) "discussion," (*yi*) without reaching an obvious conclusion because of Zhou Bo's 周勃 (d. 169 B.C.E.) and Guan Ying's 灌嬰 (d. 176 B.C.E.) opposition. An example of dismissing the participants of a conference can be seen in the *Hou Han shu* biography of Dong Zhuo 董卓 (d. 192 C.E.) where the court was discussing whether or not they should abandon Emperor Shao 少帝 (r. 189 C.E.) and choose King Chenliu 陳留王 (181–234) to replace him as the emperor, because Dong Zhuo was in charge of the reigns at the time, he interrupted the conference by storming out in great anger. An example of reconvening a conference can be seen in the *Han shu* biography of Wei Xuancheng where the removal of the ancestral temples of commanderies and kingdoms was discussed. See, *Han shu*, 22.1030; *Hou Han shu*, 72.2324; *Han shu*, 73.3117–20.

52. No. 8, in the "Tianzi suo fu" 天子所服第八.

周昌 (d. 192 B.C.E.) carefully discussed the matter with General Wang Ling 王陵 (d. 181 B.C.E.), Senior Tutor for the Heir Apparent Shusun Tong 叔孫通, and others, reporting: "In spring, summer, autumn, and winter the robes of the Son of Heaven should be patterned upon the regular movements on heaven and earth and should be in harmony with humanity who dwells between these two ... . Your ministers ask that this be duly followed. The Palace Imperial Messenger 中謁者 Zhao Yao 趙堯 is to determine the proper robes in spring; Li Shun 李舜, in summer; Ni Tang 兒湯, in autumn; and Gong Yu 貢禹, in winter. Each of the four men shall have charge of one season." Senior Imperial Messenger Liu Xiang 劉襄 (d. 179 B.C.E.) and Liu Zhang submitted the memorial to the throne. The emperor's ruling gave his approval to the proposal.<sup>53</sup>

The early Tang commentator Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) quotes annotation by Ru Chun 如淳 (a third-century exegete commenting on the *Han shu*), which says: "Section Eight, rulings on the Clothing of the Son of Heaven, became the eighth edict to be promulgated."<sup>54</sup> This passage shows us that the final proposal of a court conference eventually became an edict, according to the regular conference process outlined above. First Liu Zhang received the order, in an initial edict, to convene a conference. Following this, the officials all expressed their individual debating positions (*yi*); then Chancellor Xiao had summaries of their debating positions compiled together, and this compilation was then transmitted to the Senior Imperial Messenger Liu Xiang and Liu Zhang, so that they might compose a memorial based on the conference proceedings (*yizou*). Finally, the Son of Heaven approved the *yizou*, giving it the status of a final edict (決議詔書).

In addition to the phases of this process when the debating positions are turned into the compilation of *yizou*,<sup>55</sup> the final textual product issued in connection with the court conference took the form of a final edict. When we read a final edict, its text might consist of no more than a few hundred Chinese characters, but it was hardly composed on the spur of the moment nor was it singly authored, insofar as its content was shaped by multiple forces. And, as soon as one becomes aware of this, then the production of several texts from the White Tiger Hall conference is no longer so difficult to understand.

53. *Han shu*, 74.3139–40 (trans. modified from Watson's trans.), as above, 184.

54. *Han shu*, 74.3141.

55. The debating positions could be compiled into personal collections and circulate apart from the administrative documents, like the "Da zhai yi" in the *Cai zhonglang ji*.

### From the *Baihu yizou*, to the *Baihu tongde lun*, to the *Baihu tong*

According to the foregoing discussion, the debating positions that are gathered in a dossier and memorialized to the throne (*yizou*) were produced during a third phase of the court conference proceedings, after a summary of the participants' different stances had been transcribed in response to the initial edict convening the conference. To return to the specifics of the White Tiger Hall conference, we have no indication that the production of a *Baihu yizou* was in any way irregular. Nonetheless, it has noteworthy features, as can be seen in *Hou Han shu* "Annals of Zhangdi."

The "Annals" says:

Thereupon Emperor Zhang commanded the Superintendent of Ceremonial, the Generals, the Counselors, the Academicians, the Gentlemen Consultants, and the Palace Courtiers, together with the Academy disciples and the classicists, to convene a conference in the White Tiger Hall and have them expound upon the similarities and differences among [the pronouncements in] the Five Classics.<sup>56</sup>

According to this edict, the White Tiger Hall conference was not held at regular audience hall where the emperor routinely held court, but somewhere else in the palace,<sup>57</sup> making the conference somewhat similar to judgments "sent down to the ministry for discussion" (*xiayi* 下議), which were often oral debates. Nor did the emperor feel the need to be personally present at through its month-long agenda.<sup>58</sup> During the White Tiger Hall conference, two people, Wei Ying and Chunyu Gong, undertook the editorial work compiling the preliminary summaries of the court conference proceedings, as is very clear from the *Hou Han shu*: "Emperor Zhang ordered Wei Ying, the Leader of the Gentlemen of the

56. *Hou Han shu*, 3.138.

57. The White Tiger Hall was constructed at the White Tiger Gate (白虎門) in the North Palace (北宮) in Luoyang. See, *Hou Han shu*, 37.1264–65.

58. The *Hou Han shu* biography of Ying Shao 應劭 includes an obvious example of *xiayi*. In 185, the Hanyang 漢陽 gangsters led by Bian Zhang 邊章 and Han Sui 韓遂 (d. 215 C.E.) rebelled against the court, in alliance with some "barbarians" described as Qianghu 羌胡, ... Captain of the Center, Northern Army (北軍中候) Zou Jing 鄒靖 requested that he be allowed to supply the army with Xianbei 鮮卑 soldiers. This issue was then sent down (i.e., referred to) for discussion to the four offices (四府) of the Supreme Commander (太尉), the Chancellor (司徒), the Minister of Works (司空), and the General-in-chief (大將軍) Han Zhuo 韓卓. Ying Shao violently opposed Han Zhuo's position and no final conclusion was reached. Therefore, the emperor convened his high-ranking officials to discuss it at court, and all the officials were in agreement with Ying Shao's position. See, *Hou Han shu*, 48.1609–10. For more on *xiayi*, see *Lüling shidai de "Yishi yi zhi"*, 149–54.



Palace, All Purposes, to receive the imperial edicts that posed questions, and Chunyu Gong, the Palace Attendant, to memorialize the contents of those discussions [to the emperor]."<sup>59</sup> It can be seen from the same history that "the Emperor personally made his rulings and pronounced the imperial verdicts." This passage further emphasizes the emperor's role in the conference, as he examined and approved each of the memorials, possibly because occasionally, during the Han, it was the emperor's highest-ranking officials who drew up the formal administrative documents on "the emperor's behalf." The White Tiger Hall conference went on for "several months before concluding," and the participants touched upon many complex issues, in their wide-ranging discussions about the policy implications of the differences and similarities among the Five Classics. Plainly, the entire process extended over a long period of time, with various papers circulating, as men of various ranks and kinds and expertise assembled in the palace pavilion and engaged in prolonged discussions, after which summaries of the arguments and their conclusions reached by the participants were prepared, so that those might then be sent to the emperor for his approval. Evidently, the *Baihu yizou* referred to in the sources represents the compilation of the conference views by Chunyu Gong, eventually sent to the emperor for his approval.

So what, then, is the *Baihu tong de lun* 通德論, for that is the second title mentioned in connection with the White Tiger Hall conference in the *Hou Han shu*? Whereas the *Baihu yizou* was compiled by a process detailed in the *Hou Han shu* "Annals of Zhangdi," the biography of Ban Gu mentions a compilation called the *Baihu tongde lun*, even if the passage is too laconic to be very clear. However, I suggest that the key to solving this conundrum is encoded in the genre dubbed *lun* 論.

In the *Han shu* bibliographic treatise, under the *Documents* classic (*Shang shu* 尚書) category, it records *yizou*, in 42 chapters; under the

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59. As a model from the previous dynasty, the Stone Canal Pavilion conference shares the same details with the White Tiger Hall conference. The *Han shu* "Rulin zhuan" says that Liangqiu Lin 梁丘臨 "during the Ganlu reign period was ordered to ask about the classicists of the Stone Canal Pavilion conference," and that "the messengers also included the *Guliang* 穀梁 master, the Gentlemen of the Palace 中郎 Wang Hai 王亥." Yan Shigu's annotation says, "The term 'Messengers' refers to those officers whom the edicts ordered to supervise the discussion at that time." This makes it clear that Emperor Xuan issued edicts to ask his classicists through such messengers. And the "Annals of Xuandi" says, "The Grand Tutor of the Heir Apparent Xiao Wangzhi and others evaluated and memorialized the discussions." Therefore, in the Stone Canal Pavilion conference Xiao Wangzhi was in charge with compiling the various debating positions elicited during the discussions. See, *Han shu*, 88.3600, 88.3618–19, 8.272.

*Annals* classic (*Chun qiu* 春秋) category, it has a second *yizou*, this time in 39 chapters; in the *Analects* (*Lun yu* 論語) category, it lists a third *yizou*, in 18 chapters; and in the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing* 孝經) category, a Five Classics Assorted Discussions (*Wujing zayi* 五經雜議) in 18 chapters. All of these entries have notes identifying them with the *Shiqu lun* ("Concluding Discussions at Stone Canal"). Moreover, under the *Rites* category there are 38 chapters listed for an *yizou* whose annotation merely has the word "*Shiqu*." Qian Dazhao's 錢大昭 (1744–1813) *Han-shu bianyi* 漢書辨疑 argues that the graph *lun* is missing.<sup>60</sup> Qian is right, I believe, and therefore, I propose that the *Shiqu lun* be considered just another name for the *Shiqu yizou*.

May one then conclude that *yizou* and *lun* are always the same thing? Of course not. Textual evidence is required to come to such a conclusion, and too many early texts no longer survive. Happily some additional relevant information exists to help us elucidate the present problem. The *Han shu* bibliographic treatise records 155 chapters for the five *yizou* listed above, but sometime during the Six Dynasties, many were lost, so that only the *Rites* classic *yizou* survived. The *Sui shu* bibliographic treatise records a *Shiqu Li lun*, in 4 scrolls, compiled by Dai Sheng 戴聖,<sup>61</sup> which was later lost. Fortunately, some fragments drawn from this latter text have survived in the *Tongdian* collection, so that we can study them today:

Question: "In the case where one's father has died and mother has remarried, which mourning garments should be worn when one's own mother dies?"

Senior Tutor Xiao said: "Wear that which is suitable for one year's mourning, unless the male is his father's heir. Wei Xuancheng thought it nonsensical to kick out the mother when the father dies, and rulers do not make rites for such nonsensical situations. In the case where the son downgrades his own mother by wearing mourning garments for one year, rulers do not mandate any formal garments."

A ruling by Emperor Xuan says: "Women are to blame if their marriages end, if they fail to feed their parents-in-law, sacrifice to the [husbands'] ancestors, or raise the children properly. Therefore, sages do not stipulate the mourning garments for such situations, and in this way make it clear that it is nonsense for the son to kick out the mother. Therefore, Wei Xuancheng's position is right."<sup>62</sup>

60. Chen Guoqing 陳國慶, *Hanshu Yiwenzhi zhushi huibian* 漢書藝文志注釋彙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 51.

61. *Sui shu*, 32.923.

62. Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), 89.2455.

Readers often have construed the sentence about wearing one-year mourning garments unless the male is his father's heir as the "personal view" of Senior Tutor Xiao. By that construal, the passage "Wei Xuancheng thought" begins another section where the two sides are discussing the difficulties of this question. However, comparative evidence from Han court conference proceedings suggests that the whole passage constitutes a single section and represents a portion of a memorialized set of debating positions or *yizou*. By the usual process of compiling an *yizou*, Xiao Wangzhi would first have assembled the proposals of the various officials who represented the majority position, to which he appended the dissenting view of Wei Xuancheng, and finally Emperor Xuan's reply to the debate is appended. So the whole foregoing passage in all likelihood reflects a procedure whose conclusion was disseminated after a conference. (The so-called *lun* may derive its meaning from the criminal trials which the Han called *lunzui* 論罪, "judging the crime," in which case the title indicates the conclusions reached after due consideration at the conference.)

We find, too, that besides the *Shiqu lun* more examples exist where reports of court conference are called *lun*, during the Han and Six Dynasties periods. Two in particular prove interesting: Huan Kuan 桓寬 in late Western Han compiled the *Yantie lun* 鹽鐵論 in 60 chapters to "continue the discussions on salt and iron, to expand the items in the agenda, and to push the debate to its limits" as well as "to investigate the reasons of order and disorder, in order to form a model for his own thought."<sup>63</sup> (As readers before me have noted, the *Yantie lun* is not a precise transcript of the conference proceedings, but a summation produced after the debates had concluded, possibly many years after.) The formation of Wang Su's 王肅 (195–256) "Final Judgments on the Sage" ("Sheng zheng lun" 聖證論) is described in the *Jiu Tang shu* as follows. After Wang Su attacked Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200),

The defender of Master Zheng during that time, Gentlemen of the Palace Ma Zhao 馬昭, wrote to the emperor to claim that Wang Su was wrong. The emperor instructed Master Wang's followers to respond orally. Also, the emperor commanded Academician Zhang Rong 張融 to host the discussion that would ascertain for both Wang's and Zheng's followers to state their considered judgements on the Classics 案經論詰. Zhang immediately called both sides to attend a conference where he pushed their positions, so that the right and wrong for every item in the agenda could be distinguished. All the details are in Wang's "Sheng zheng lun."<sup>64</sup>

63. *Han shu*, 66.2903: 漢桓寬... 著《鹽鐵論》六十篇。

64. Liu Xu 劉煦, *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975), 102.3180.

The textual production processes known from the *Yantie lun* and “Sheng zheng lun” cases need not be exactly identical with that which led to the *Shiqu lun*. What matters is that the texts of these two corpuses still originated in a court conference and still preserve the genre form of the *yizou*, and in the end there would have been final judgments recorded.<sup>65</sup> As these three examples—the *Shiqu lun*, *Yantie lun*, and “Sheng zheng lun”—are all titled *lun*, it’s entirely possible that the text of the approved *yizou* can also be called a *lun*.

The White Tiger Hall conference was convened more than a century after the Stone Canal Pavilion conference of 51 B.C.E., so we would expect the form of the *Baihu tongde lun* text to be modelled, at least loosely, on the *Shiqu Li lun*. If that was the case, the *yizou* reporting on the conference debating positions would have eventually been sent for approval to the emperor, so that he could produce a final edict whose text was then edited by the court archivists. At both the Stone Canal Pavilion and White Tiger Hall conferences, the *yizou* were memorialized to the emperor. By my account, the *yizou* represent as a single stage in the lengthy process of textual production, a phase before the final ruling took the form of an edict. Along with the conclusion of a conference, the entirety of the *yizou* would become the basis on which was composed final edicts which the emperor issued; at some point the emperor or the high-ranking members of his court would specifically order someone to compile the latest version of these into several volumes (*ce* 冊) to give them a relatively stable physical form, allowing them to be preserved for future reference. In this sense, *yizou* and the final form they took in edicts represent two stages in a text compilation process, with their content similar in some respects but changed in others. The *Han shu* bibliographic treatise, the “*Yiwen zhi*,” records some *yizou* compilations, but in this case the *yizou*, judging from the extant fragments, probably represent the final dossiers composed of imperial rulings relating to a particular conference. This has been understood by people such as Fan Ye, Liu Xie 劉勰 (465?–532?), Liu Zhao 劉昭, Wei Zheng 魏徵 (580–643) and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574–648), all scholars who lived after Ban Gu. Only Du You (735–812) seems to have been unaware of this convention

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65. In the “Sheng zheng lun,” Zhang Rong wrote a decision on the emperor’s behalf. And Huan Kuan compiled and edited the *Yantie lun*, which does not contain any sign of approval by the emperor. How did Huan Kuan realize his goal of establishing a model for his own thought? Xu Hanchang 徐漢昌 thinks that the biggest possibility is that Huan Kuan had already directly inserted his own ideas into the conversation, so there is no editor’s position which separately stated his own views. And those short descriptive passages clearly contain the biting criticism of the court officials which is more aligned with the talented worthies 賢良 and literary scholars 文學. Huan Kuan’s “judgment” can be seen in this. See the related discussion in Xu Hanchang, *Yantie lun yanjiu* 鹽鐵論研究 (Taipei: Wenshizhe, 1983), *pian* 1, *zhang* 1, *jie* 2, 5–9.

and it was he, judging from the extant sources, who absurdly changed the title *Shiqu Li lun* to *Shiqu Li yi* in his *Tongdian*.

Looking back at Ban Gu's biography, we find that it says, "The Son of Heaven convened the classicists to expound and discuss the Five Classics, and put in writing the *Baihu tongde lun*, and he ordered Ban Gu to compile it." This passage suggests that the texts of the final rulings on each question that came up for debate had already been drawn up before the conference ended and all that was left to do was to edit them into a compilation. If I am right, the statement in the *Siku quanshu zongmu* saying that "the White Tiger Hall conference *yizou* were [later] named the *Baihu tongde lun*" is probably correct, since the *Baihu yizou* was the title given to the collection of memorials during one or more production phases that culminated in the *Baihu tongde lun*, the details of which can be gleaned from the "Annals of Zhangdi." This complex process was probably so well known to people of the time that Fan Ye only recorded some details relating to the post-conference period, after the Emperor had duly approved the final rulings based on the *yizou*.

The *Hou Han shu* "Rulin Zhuan" reports this: "Later, the Emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*." From this passage, we can see that the *Baihu tong* was a text composed some time after the conference, and its timing alone clearly distinguishes it from both the *Baihu yizou* and the *Baihu tongde lun*, by my reconstruction. Only the *Baihu tong* (in fragments) has been transmitted to present times, with the result that we can see its catechistic format. Awaiting explanation is how the archivists converted the text of the *Baihu tongde lun* into the text of the *Baihu tong* (see Table 1).

Table 1. A Comparison of the Three Texts for the White Tiger Hall Conference

Text Title	<i>Baihu yizou</i>	<i>Baihu tongde lun</i>	<i>Baihu tong</i>
Format	Edict asks: ... .. Formulation: ... ... (Dissent 1: ... ..) ... .. (Dissent N: ... ..)	Edict asks: ... .. Formulation: ... .. (Dissent 1: ... ..) ... .. (Dissent N: ... ..) ... .. Emperor's Ruling: ... ..	Question: ... .. Answer: ... .. ( <i>yishuo/huoyue</i> : ... ..)
Type	<i>Yizou</i>	Final Rulings	Final Transcriptions
Editor	Chunyu Gong	Ban Gu	Archivists
Organization Method	Chronological	Classical citations	Thematic
Physical Form	Indeterminate	Determinate	Determinate

As for the organization of the *Baihu tong*, each chapter revolves around a theme, and there are smaller sections within each chapter that take a question-and-answer format. It is not hard to see that this textual format results from the work of condensing the *Baihu tongde lun*, that is the collection of the final rulings of the conference. The “questions” in the *Baihu tong* without a doubt correspond to the questions discussed in the final ruling in edict form, and the answers’ portion probably most often reflects the imperial response (though it may but need not reflect the imperial personal opinions, which will be further argued below) to the question, thus preserving the conference conclusion even if much of the argument supporting that conclusion was cut. Sometimes, after the questions and answers, there is appended a phrase “another saying” (*yishuo*) or “someone says” (*huoyue*). Presumably, these represent important objections to the approved positions at the conference, as recorded in the *Baihu yizou*. What is interesting to consider is this: why were these necessary to include in the final report? Judging from the histories, they were retained for future reference, as sometimes they were referred to in later court proceedings.

As we have seen, the *Baihu yizou* contained the memorialized statements in circulation, which could be added to or subtracted from, or otherwise revised, as the court conference proceeded. The positions gathered by Chunyu Gong (either orally or in writing) may have been continuously memorialized and continually revised, so all we can say at this remove is that these *yizou* were in all likelihood organized chronologically (i.e. by the date of submission of the memorial to the throne). Only after the conference ended and the *yizou* were finally given a final form, on the basis of which final imperial rulings were produced in the form of edicts disseminated beyond the closed circle of the court conference participants, would these rulings become law and therefore be subject to later critique by members of the court and by experts outside.

By way of comparison, we know that the *Shiqu lun* was organized according to the Classics and Zhang Rong hosted the discussion on the “Sheng zheng lun” by sequentially referring to individual passages in each of the classics which were topics of discussions. From this, it can be seen that the conclusions of conferences on the Classics were often initially organized by the texts of the Classics. This undertaking was relatively easy and did not necessarily require a great number of people to undertake it. In all likelihood, then, in the case of the White Tiger Hall reports and summaries, Ban Gu was able to complete his task of summarizing the main points within a short period of time. At the same time, turning the *Baihu tongde lun* into the *Baihu tong* would not only have required the reworking of the small question-and-answer

sections, but also a complete reorganization of the order of the whole text so that the arrangement would not reflect the Classics *per se*, but the various issues raised in connection with the Classics. The so-called “arrangement by the Classics” more often than not focused on the citation text, rather than considering the issue within the larger context of classical learning. The conversion of the *Baihu tong* to catechistic format arranged by questions and answers on a theme allowed for the import of the discussions to be more readily accessed by court officials trying to apply the court conclusions to their administrative work. Here, the arrangement of the thematic chapters of the text is even more nuanced and its intellectual content more systematic than the arrangement by the Classics.

In any case, during the conversion process that eventually created the *Baihu tong* compilation, a great deal of historical information was apparently stripped away, such as when the discussion was held, who was involved, what their titles were, and how they participated in the conference. What remained in the text is just the content that the throne, which commissioned the *Baihu tong* production, wished to have conveyed. There were many voices at the White Tiger Hall conference and their debates were varied, wide-ranging, and complex,<sup>66</sup> but after much of the background information about the discussions was stripped away, what remains in the *Baihu tong* is the question-and-answer sections conveying the ideals that the Eastern Han court wished to promote among its subjects. After the editorial process that the Baihu memorials went through, the finished product that we see today in the *Baihu tong* was a polished piece of political theory.

Because of the widespread assumption that Ban Gu compiled the *Baihu tong*, many believe that the “archivist” mentioned in the *Hou Han shu* “Rulin zhuan” refers to Ban Gu, perhaps as head archivist. However, this commonplace assumption is probably inaccurate. Let us examine the evidence at hand. In his own final chapter of the *Han shu* (Postface, *Xuzhuan* 叙傳), Ban Gu himself says: “In the Yongping 永平 reign period, I was appointed the Gentleman in charge of collating the palace writings.”<sup>67</sup> Then, the *Hou Han shu* biography of Ban Gu claims that, after Emperor Zhang took the throne and before the White Tiger Hall

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66. According to the *Hou Han shu*, at least twelve classists participated the White Tiger Hall conference, they were Wei Ying, Lou Wang 樓望, Li Yu 李育, Chunyu Gong, Huan Yu 桓郁, Yang Zhong, Liu Xian 劉羨, Lu Gong 魯恭, Jia Kui 賈逵, Ban Gu, Ding Hong 丁鴻, and Cheng Feng 成封. Generally these court conferences convened around 50–100 people, so this list may simply represent the most famous participants.

67. *Han shu*, 100A.4225.

conference, Ban Gu had already been promoted to Xuanwu Major (玄武司馬).<sup>68</sup> The biography of Yang Zhong 楊終 (d. 100 C.E.) also says:

As it happens, Yang Zhong was then put in prison for something, Academician Zhao Bo 趙博, Gentlemen Collating Texts 校書郎 Ban Gu and Jia Kui and others sent their presentations to the Emperor requesting Yang's release, because Yang Zhong understood the *Annals* 春秋 classic and was deeply learned in the study of the Classics. Yang Zhong also sent in his statement to argue for his freedom and was released on the same day. Finally, he participated in the White Tiger Hall conference.<sup>69</sup>

This shows that the White Tiger Hall conference happened after Ban Gu had been promoted to the Xuanwu Major, and while he still held the position of Gentlemen Collating Texts. The *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, *juan* 233, quotes the *Song shu* 宋書 "Treatise on the Bureaucracy" ("Baiguan zhi" 百官志) as saying,

In the past, Emperor Wu of Han had them make fair copies of the stored palace writings 建藏書之冊, and he appointed people to the palace scribal offices 置寫書之官; hence, all the writings under heaven were kept in the Tianlu 天祿, Shiqu 石渠, Yange 延閣, Guangnei 廣內 and Inner Palace bureaus (Mifu 秘府), which were called "confidential documents" 秘書. Down to the time of Emperors Cheng and Ai, the court ordered Liu Xiang 劉向 (77?–6) and his son to take charge of the editorial work. After that, maps and writings were stored in the Eastern Pavilion where there were Gentlemen Collating Texts, as well as Gentlemen-Writers 著作郎. Additionally, great scholars and senior officers often took charge of editing work of the palace writings, following the model of Liu Xiang and his son, Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 C.E.).<sup>70</sup>

The Gentleman Collating Texts is a specific kind of archivist responsible for the work of compiling and editing court documents. This explains why Ban Gu received the order to compile the *Baihu tongde lun*. However, many people were hired to be the Gentlemen Collating Texts, not just Ban Gu, and we know, without a doubt, that more than just Ban Gu participated in the White Tiger Hall conference. In addition to Jia Kui and Yang Zhong, there was also a distinguished official named Ding Hong, who, because of his oratory displayed during the White Tiger Hall conference, received praise from the Emperor

68. *Hou Han shu*, 40B.1373.

69. *Hou Han shu*, 48.1599.

70. Li Fang 李昉, et. al., *Taiping yulan* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1960), 233.1106. Michael Nyland, *Yang Xiong and the Pleasures of Reading and Classical Learning in Han China* (New Haven: The American Oriental Society, 2011), discusses these events.



several times, and eventually became a Gentleman Collating Texts afterwards.<sup>71</sup> The saying “later, the Emperor instructed his archivists to compose the *Baihu tongyi*” probably points to a time not long after the conference ended when Emperor Zhang ordered several of his archival experts, including the Gentlemen Collating Texts, who had participated in the conference to complete the work of compiling the conference records, the *Baihu tongde lun*, into the intellectual work known as the *Baihu tong*.

Because Emperor Zhang particularly favored Ban Gu,<sup>72</sup> and because he finished the *Baihu tongde lun* ahead of schedule, it would hardly be surprising if Ban Gu was a member of these archivists and copyists. However, the extant materials do not suffice to allow moderns to determine whether Ban Gu played a significant role in this work. All we can say at this remove is this: when we compare the two *Hou Han shu* passages about the activities of Chunyu Gong and Ban Gu, we see that the *Hou Han shu* “Rulin zhuan” passages which specifies that the “archivists” composed the *Baihu tong* is clearly different, which suggests that the formation process of the *Baihu tong* was not an effort of a single person. It is still worth pointing out that the *Baihu tong* preserves the final rulings of the White Tiger Hall conference. Therefore, no whether it was compiled individually or collectively, the fact that its content originated from discussions would not change.

By my analysis, the *Hou Han shu* recorded different phases in the production process of several texts generated on the basis of the White Tiger Hall conference, and the chronological sequence of the production phases should be clear. These chapters corroborate each other, and once the entire lengthy production of the several Baihu texts is clarified, the collective nature of the *Baihu tong* during its textual formation process can be made certain and we can realize that the view ascribing all the phases of textual production to Ban Gu is not likely to be accurate. With the same evidence in mind, we can also, with a fair degree of certainty, assign *Baihu tong* to the last phase of textual production produced by the conference, at which point all previous textual productions relating to the conference were superseded and

71. *Hou Han shu*, 37.1264, 48.1597, 48.1598.

72. See the biography of Ban Gu (*Hou Han shu*, 40b.1374): “During the time when Su Zong, who liked literature of an elegant style, held the throne, Ban Gu was particularly favored. Often Ban entered the palace to read manuscripts, sometimes even from sunrise to sunset. Every time the Emperor went out on tour, Ban Gu accompanied him, and on the spot he would offer praise-poems in the *fu* 賦 and *song* 頌 forms. Once, when the court held an important conference, the Emperor let Ban question his senior ministers, and argue with them in the imperial presence. The Emperor rewarded generously, giving him his patronage.”

could be discarded. That an earlier phase of textual production, the *Baihu tongde lun*, was not transmitted and quoted in later times, so far as we know, is understandable, since the *Baihu tong*, in some sense, would have superseded earlier versions.

### Did Emperor Zhang Really Approve of his Rulings for the White Tiger Hall Conference?

Above, we have reviewed the formation process leading to the production of several texts produced in connection with the White Tiger Hall conference. This is crucial for scholars to understand, if they wish to analyze the contents of this book and situate those within the context of the White Tiger Hall conference discussions. Besides, considering Emperor Zhang's position on the White Tiger Hall conference in addition to other historical records would be useful for better understanding this event and its text.

Because the *Hou Han shu* account says that that Emperor Zhang *chengzhi linjue* 稱制臨決 (“proclaimed the rulings, having attended in person”) during the White Tiger Hall conference, past research uniformly holds that Emperor Zhang dominated this discussion and then established a unified ideology for the court.<sup>73</sup> Obviously enough, these assumptions go well beyond what the four-character phrase *chengzhi linjue* says. Moreover, such assumptions ignore the implications of the standard histories regarding the court controversies and debates over the best readings (plural) of the Classics and masterworks. Parts of the *Baihu tong* show a strong inclination to restrict the powers of the emperor,<sup>74</sup> so it is hard to imagine that the conference conclusions faithfully reflect the imperial will;<sup>75</sup> besides, the *Hou Han shu* shows us Emperor Zhang's dissatisfaction with at least some of the conference proceedings.

73. Examples have been given in the introduction of this article.

74. Zhang Guangbao 張廣保 points out that in the *Baihu tong*, the power of the emperor is restricted in three ways: virtue, heaven, and institutions. The *Baihu tong* opens by claiming that the Son of Heaven is a name of honor revealing that it intends to restrict the authority of the Son of Heaven at the very start. See Zhang Guangbao, “Baihu tongyi zhiduhua jingxue de zhuti sixiang” 白虎通義制度化經學的主體思想, in *Zhongguo jingxue sixiangshi* 中國經學思想史 Vol. 2, ed. Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 2003), 387–402.

75. In discussing the succession of the Son of Heaven, the first chapter title, *Jue* 爵, in today's *Baihu tong*, requires the new ruler to strictly obey the three-year mourning rite, ceding all powers to the prime minister (*Zhongzai* 冢宰), who is to be the man in charge of policy making 攝政. Were this really to be put into practice, the dynasty might collapse. Therefore, it is hard to imagine that any emperor, who is not an infant or an idiot, would accept this practice.

In 85, six years after the Conference was held, Emperor Zhang commissioned Academician Cao Bao (曹褒 d. 102 C.E.) to make a set of new rites for his court, showing that he was not exactly thrilled with the results of the White Tiger Hall conference. Superintendent of Ceremonial Chao Kan (巢堪) opposed this plan, and he argued, significantly, that Cao Bao, a single person, could not determine the dynastic rites on his own, implying that this could only be done through court conferences. When Ban Gu suggested holding another conference to have classicists discuss the rites again, Emperor Zhang refused to consider that option: "We could convene the ritual masters and call it a 'court debate,' but that would just raise more doubts and divergent readings without coming to any firm conclusions. Previously, when Yao (堯) wanted the *Dazhang* (大章) composed, all he needed was a single person, Kui (夔) to do it!"<sup>76</sup> From this we may deduce the following: the White Tiger Hall conference findings displeased Emperor Zhang, so he decided to choose Cao Bao to devise new rites more in line with his own beliefs.

Clearly, the emperor, who was classically trained himself, disputed some of the conference findings, but in the end, as was not uncommon with such court conferences, the officials' ideas prevailed over those of the emperor and he was persuaded (or forced?) to have them written into the conference record. A citation of the earlier *Shiqu Li lun* in *Tongdian*, *juan* 77, records a discussion that took place, asking why the musical accompaniment is mentioned during the rite of district archery (鄉射), but it is not mentioned during the rite of imperial archery (大射) in the *Rites* classic; in reply, we are told, Wenren Tonghan (聞人通漢), Dai Sheng, and Wei Xuancheng championed their own readings. This citation does not include a passage about a ruling (*zhijue*); it only states that the officials finally agreed with the arguments of the ritual master Wei Xuancheng.<sup>77</sup> Although this one case is not necessarily a precise counterpart to the *Baihu tong*, it still suggests that the support by a majority of participants was critical to determine what would be approved and written into the final account of the court conference proceedings.<sup>78</sup> This means that even if the emperor could weigh in on the court discussions (*chengzhi linjue*), he found it hard to ignore the consensus and simply mandate that the conference participants agree with him.

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76. *Hou Han shu*, 35.1202–03.

77. *Tongdian*, 77.2105.

78. Qin Tao's research has also confirmed this. See, Qin, *Liling shidai de "Yishi yi zhi"*, 162.

Tjan Tjoe Som points out in his translation of the *Baihu* fragments that, to all appearances, the White Tiger Hall conference had achieved nothing, since it failed to unify disputes regarding classical learning that Tjan ascribed to the opposing schools of Modern Script (今文) and the Archaic Script (古文). To Tjan's way of thinking, Emperor Zhangdi was powerless against the band of his own Modern Script Academicians.<sup>79</sup> Tjan's view does not reflect the Eastern Han view of things, it seems. I would emend Tjan's assessment to say that the White Tiger Hall conference could not possibly have reached unified conclusions about the policy implications of the Five Classics, given how important those policy implications were to every action performed and contemplated by Emperor Zhang and all his officials. In this regard, the *Baihu tong* cannot be considered a synthesis of the court's findings, establishing a single court ideology. Rather, it is best to see the text we have now as evidence for vigorous debates among the conference participants, who included the Emperor himself and a range of other officials. Thus we should read the extant *Baihu tong* as the work of the assembled experts, rather than the expressed will of a single person, no matter how eminent the status of that person.

As we can see, the White Tiger Hall conference was a significant event not only in politics but also in the study of the Classics in the Eastern Han, even if the emperor was not satisfied with all of the findings to which he gave nominal approval. Because it represents one attempt to provide greater political legitimacy for the Han ruling house through the cultural capital invested in classical learning, it is a valuable object for further investigation. Sadly, at present the *Baihu tong* is the only major piece of writing available to us. The textual formation process of this book was gradual, and the solutions I have derived for the problems posed in the text may strike uninformed readers as abstract or unduly simplistic. Nevertheless, underlying the current text are the realities of the early Eastern courts' policymaking by a diverse group of political actors. Ergo, my attempt to uncover the facts about the court conference via the *Baihu tong*, reversing the imagined process of textual formation, to glean information about the probable historical basis for the disputes recorded in the text. While we are still quite far from being able to demonstrate the full complexity of the textual formation processes, the foregoing account lays the groundwork for an improved understanding of an influential Eastern Han text, as well as the complex sociopolitical realities that underlay the seemingly bland final report that we hold in our hands today.

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79. See Tjan, *Po Hu T'ung: The Comprehensive Discussions*, Vol. 1, 164.

## 走近白虎觀會議：基於《白虎通》生成過程的考察

石城

## 提要

東漢建初四年（79）所舉行的白虎觀會議在當時和稍後的政治、經學領域都是一次重要事件。會議之後，根據會議結論所編撰的《白虎通》是當前探尋白虎觀會議細節的主要資源。而弄清《白虎通》文本的生成過程，則對於學者們利用其中的記錄以發掘白虎觀會議的具體信息有著直接的幫助。本文將《白虎通》文本的生成過程置於漢代會議文書的生成和流轉之下進行考察，兼以文本形態的比對，認為《白虎議奏》是會議參與者的議文經過淳于恭彙集奏上，等待章帝批答的文本總集合。而《白虎通德論》很可能是所有議奏經過章帝批答，在會後由班固纂集而成。其後，章帝又命史臣將《白虎通德論》壓縮編輯成《白虎通》。一旦清楚了這一過程，就可以明白《白虎通》並非一人之著述，其中凝聚著會議參與者集體的 effort。證據顯示，儘管章帝可以在會上“稱制臨決，”但他既不能忽略大臣們的共識，也難以強行令大臣們附議他的觀點。緣此，《白虎通》的內容不能被視為當時朝廷的共識，特別是不能被認為建立起了一個統一的意識形態。相反，它是一個會議各方力量博弈的產物。要通過《白虎通》真正接近白虎觀會議的細節，惟有與其文本生成的過程反向而行，將抽象的問答還原為具體的歷史場景，從文本的縫隙之中發掘歷史的信息。

**Keywords:** White Tiger Hall, Court Conference, Han dynasty, Text, *Baihu tong*  
白虎觀, 會議, 漢代, 文本, 《白虎通》