

THE RISE OF THE HAN

The emergence of the Han Dynasty represents the full confluence of two seemingly contradictory trends that had been increasingly paired since the time of Shang Yang: meritocracy and autocracy. The First Emperor, through his conscious exaltation of his throne and his thorough rejection of Zhou feudalism and hereditary privilege, had created the conditions for the institutionalization of these forces.

The founder of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang, was from a peasant family; during the Qin he served as a petty official in a peripheral region of China. He succeeded to the imperial throne only by prevailing in a civil war that lasted for over four years after the surrender of Zi-yong, the last ruler of the Qin.

His principal opponent during that period was a man named Xiang Yu, who represented everything that Liu Bang was not. Xiang Yu was of patrician stock, a scion of the house of Chu, and the model of a Zhou-style warrior: brave, skillful, elegant, and bloodthirsty. Xiang Yu began as the leader of the very forces that brought Liu Bang to power, and was, for a time, acknowledged by all, including Liu, to be the founder of the successor dynasty to the Qin. Yet he was destroyed by the supporters of a subordinate from the peasant class. Liu Bang ascended the throne in 202 B.C.,* less than twenty years after the end of the Warring States period. How confounding it must have been to the elder generation to see a peasant occupying the seat of power!

An overview of the civil wars (209-202)

Chen She's uprising, 209-208. The civil wars that gave rise to the Han began with the revolt of Chen She, which was discussed earlier. Chen was from the region of Chu. His revolt began there, and the most widespread support for the overthrow of the Qin arose in the southeastern portion of the country, where the state of Chu had once been.

Soon after he had raised his forces, Chen She had himself declared the king of Chu. One of Chen's generals, whom he had sent north to "liberate" the region that had formerly belonged to the state of Zhao, closed his successful campaign by proclaiming himself king of Zhao, a title that Chen She grudgingly accepted in order to avoid a split in the rebelling forces. Soon other allies had declared themselves kings in Yan and Qi. It appeared that the downfall of the Qin was not shaping into a new contest for the imperial throne, but into a revival of the feudal states.**

*The Han ruling house dated its accession from 206, the year succeeding the Qin abdication. However, Liu Bang did not actually claim the throne and stage a coronation until 202.

**Recall that the eunuch Zhao Gao was suspected of reviving the title of "king" in Qin with similar expectations.

After marching his forces close to the Qin capital of Xian-yang, Chen She suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the very capable generals of Qin. He retreated eastwards, and within six months he was killed.

The struggle for the Chu throne, 208. After Chen She's death, one of his associates set himself up as king of Chu and proceeded to reorganize the rebel forces. This transfer of the title was opposed by members of the Xiang clan in Chu, one of the strongest remaining patrician families resident in the region, and the family to which Xiang Yu belonged. They raised forces to attack the new rebel king of Chu, and the pretender was killed in battle. The Xiangs were eager for the throne; but fearful that they did not have the necessary signs of legitimacy to hold it, they elected in the end to enthrone the grandson of the last king of Warring States Chu, whom they searched out herding sheep for a local landowner. This man became a puppet ruler, under the control of the Xiangs.

With the Xiangs in power in Chu, the rebellion, which had had not yet overthrown the Qin, but only created a variety of new power centers which were awaiting the arrival of the Qin military response, took on a new direction. The Xiangs were capable leaders, and their goal was to gain control of the entire empire. Among the allies whom they absorbed into their rebellion was Liu Bang, who had raised a small local rebellion near his home city, near the old border between Chu and Qi.

The invasion of Qin, 207. Shortly after the Xiangs gained control in Chu and reunified the rebellion, the leader of the Xiang clan was killed in battle. His nephew, Xiang Yu, soon succeeded in gaining a leading role in the uprising. However, his stature was not yet as great as his late uncle's. With power less unified among the Chu-based leaders, the puppet king of Chu was actually able to exercise some power in adjudicating how the rebel forces should be deployed. A coordinated attack was planned against the various Qin armies and stronghold territories, and much to his dismay, Xiang Yu was assigned to lead a campaign against Qin forces in the north before having leave to invade the Qin homeland. The rebel leaders had made an agreement that whoever first took the city of Xian-yang would lay claim to the throne of Qin, and Xiang Yu wished to obtain that title without delay.

Liu Bang was dispatched to lead an army to secure the southern portions of the Qin region. This he was able to do easily, and his armies moved so rapidly that he soon found himself in contact with the generals of the main Qin forces, who sent envoys to propose to Liu Bang a power sharing arrangement in Qin, whereby Liu would become king of a portion of the "land within the passes." This was tempting bait for a peasant colonel, but his advisors convinced him instead to attempt a surprising military maneuver. While Xiang Yu was preparing for a frontal assault on the Han-ku Pass, Liu Bang led his forces through a far less well known pass that connected Qin to the south. His strategy was a spectacular success, and his armies entered Xian-yang while Xiang Yu was still far distant. It was Liu Bang who accepted the surrender of the Zi-ying.

The sack of Xian-yang, 207. Liu Bang was in a delicate position. According to the agreement among the various leaders of the rebellion, the man who first seized Xian-yang was supposed to

become the new king of Qin. But Liu knew that Xiang Yu was determined to possess this title, and also that Xiang Yu's prestige and power far exceeded his own. While occupying Xian-yang, Liu was careful to exercise only a minimum of power. He spared the life of Zi-ying and neither destroyed property nor attempted to enforce his power. Instead he waited.

Xiang Yu, enraged by what he saw as treachery by Liu Bang, determined to enter Qin and murder his fellow rebel. But when his army, four times the size of Liu Bang's, finally arrived, Liu Bang disarmed him by apologizing for entering Qin first. Liu then withdrew with his forces.

Xiang Yu immediately murdered Zi-ying and then set out to destroy Xian-yang, authorizing massive burning and looting. The palaces and archives of Qin were destroyed, and the First Emperor's grave plundered.

The civil war, 206-202. Initially, Xiang Yu contented himself with a division of the empire and an acknowledgment of the king of Chu as the new emperor of China, known as the "Righteous Emperor." Under the new emperor, the system of patrician estates was to be restored, Xiang Yu taking title to a vast region comprising most of the old states of Qin and Chu. Prominent leaders in the rebellion were presented with thrones in various parts of the empire. Liu Bang was given title over the relatively undesirable territories to the south of Qin, the Han River valley, called Han.* This was viewed by his closest advisors as a calculated insult.

Shortly thereafter, Xiang Yu arranged the assassination of the Righteous Emperor and it became clear that Xiang Yu intended in time to make his way to the imperial throne. Xiang Yu was a much admired man, able and generous to his friends, but his temperament was notoriously turbulent and he was widely feared. Many of the newly enthroned kings nervously began to broaden their own power bases, and within months, the entire empire was in a state of civil war.

The civil war followed a complex course. There were many kings vying for different levels of power and their armies, often composed of recruits from the kings' original homes rather than their new kingdoms, were extremely mobile and unstable. Alliances among kings and generals formed quickly and dissolved just as fast. Over time, the leading challengers to Xiang Yu's power gradually gravitated to the standard of Liu Bang, who, whatever his personal strengths or shortcomings, seems to have started off with a very gifted set of advisors and warriors.

By 203, Xiang Yu and Liu Bang had become the sole contenders for the imperial throne and Xiang Yu even challenged Liu Bang to single combat (an incident narrated below). Several times, the superior strength of Xiang Yu's armies placed Liu Bang in desperate straits, but Xiang Yu failed to finish off Liu Bang and time was on Liu's side. Liu's army had begun as an uncoordinated league of Xiang Yu's enemies, but with each passing month, Liu Bang increased his control over his forces. In the initial weeks of 202, Xiang Yu's forces were finally routed decisively at the battle of Gai-hsia, and Xiang Yu himself died in the field.

*The Han Dynasty took its name from this region, and Liu Bang's title to the throne of Han was viewed as the beginning of the dynasty.

On the day corresponding to February 28, 202 B.C., Liu Bang was crowned ruler of the Han empire, successor to the emperors of the Qin.

Tales of Xiang Yu and Liu Bang

Sima Qian sketches portraits of the two main protagonists of the civil war that combine traditional conventions of hagiography (mythologized biography) with subtly revealing portraits. He makes it very clear that he admires Xiang Yu, and his biography of Xiang Yu is placed in the section of his work reserved for dynastic kings, indicating that he accepts Xiang Yu as a recipient of the Mandate. But Sima Qian was, after all, the chief astrologer-historian of the Han imperial court, and his principal loyalties lay with the Han (though we will later learn of some intimate reasons why those loyalties might have had unusually constrained limits). Nevertheless when we examine his descriptions of Liu Bang, the “sage” founder of this great dynasty, there are aspects that go beyond frankness and border on slander.

The characters of Liu Bang and Xiang Yu, so representative of China's past and its future, would be worth examining in some detail under any circumstances. But the selections from the Shi-ji stories of their lives that follow also provide good material for analysis of the biases that underlie Sima Qian's narrative historiography of the Han. The passages that appear here are, as will be true of most of the material selected from the Shi-ji, modified from the translations of Burton Watson.

The marvelous early life of Liu Bang

Liu Bang was a native of the community of Zhong-yang in the city of Feng, the district of Pei. His family name was Liu and his polite name Ji. His father was known as the “Venerable Sire” and his mother as “Dame Liu.”

Before he was born, Dame Liu was one day resting on the bank of a large pond when she dreamed that she encountered a god. At this time the sky grew dark and was filled with thunder and lightning. When Liu Bang's father went to look for her, he saw a scaly dragon over the place where she was lying. After this she became pregnant and gave birth to Liu Bang.

Liu Bang had a prominent nose and a dragonlike face, with beautiful whiskers on his chin and cheeks; on his left thigh he had seventy-two black moles.* He was kind and affectionate with others, liked to help people, and was very understanding. He always had great ideas and paid little attention to the business the rest of his family was engaged in.

When he grew up he presented himself as a candidate for official appointment and was made village head of Si River. He treated all the other officials in the office with familiarity and disdain. He was fond of wine and women and often used to go to Dame Wang's or old lady Wu's and drink on credit. When he got drunk and lay down to sleep, the old women, to their great

*Seventy-two is frequently encountered as a number of vague cosmic significance in ancient Chinese texts.

wonder, would always see something like a dragon over the place where he was sleeping. Also, whenever he would drink and stay at their shops, they would sell several times as much wine as usual. Because of these strange happenings, when the end of the year came around the old women would always destroy Liu Bang's credit slips and clear his account.

Liu Bang was once sent on corvée labor to the capital city of Xian-yang and happened to have an opportunity to see the First Emperor of Qin. When he saw him he sighed and said, "Ah, this is the way a great man should be."

There was a man of Shan-fu, one Master Lü, who was a friend of the magistrate of Pei. In order to avoid the consequences of a feud, he accepted the hospitality of the magistrate and made his home in Pei. When the officials and the wealthy and influential people of Pei heard that the magistrate had a distinguished guest, they all came to pay their respects. Xiao He, being the director of officials, was in charge of gifts and informed those who came to call that anyone bringing a gift of less than one thousand cash would be seated below the main hall.* Liu Bang, who as a village head was in the habit of treating the other officials with contempt, falsely wrote on his calling card: "With respects--ten thousand cash," though in fact he did not have a single piece of cash. When his card was sent in, Master Lü was very surprised and got up and came to the gate to greet him. Master Lü was very good at reading people's faces and when he saw Liu Bang's features he treated him with great honor and respect and led him in to a seat. "Liu Ji," remarked Xiao He, "does a good deal of fine talking, but so far has accomplished very little." But Liu Bang, disdaining the other guests, proceeded to take a seat of honor without further ado.

When the drinking was nearly over, Master Lü glanced at Liu Bang in such a way as to indicate that he should stay a while longer, and so Liu Bang dawdled over his wine. "Since my youth," said Master Lü, "I have been fond of reading faces. I have read many faces, but none with signs like yours. You must take good care of yourself, I beg you. I have a daughter whom I hope you will do me the honor of accepting as your wife."

When the party was over, Dame Lü was very angry with her husband. "You have always idolized this girl and planned to marry her to some person of distinction," she said. "The magistrate of Pei is a friend of yours and has asked for her, but you would not give your consent. How can you be so insane as to give her to Liu Ji?"

"This is not the sort of thing women and children can understand!" replied Master Lü. Eventually he married the girl to Liu Bang, and it was this daughter of Master Lü who became Empress Lü and gave birth to Emperor Hui and Princess Yuan of Lu.

*Xiao He later enjoyed a long career as a valued aide and prime minister to Liu Bang.

The unusual qualities of the young Xiang Yu

Xiang Ji, whose polite name was Yu, was a native of Xia-Xiang. He was twenty-four when he first took up arms. His father's youngest brother was Xiang Liang. Xiang Liang's father, Xiang Yan, was a general of Chu who was driven to suicide by the Qin general Wang Jian. The Xiang family had been generals of Chu for generations. They possessed a hereditary estate in Xiang and had taken their family name from it.

When Xiang Yu was a boy he studied the art of writing. Failing to master this, he abandoned it and took up swordsmanship. When he failed at this also, his uncle, Xiang Liang, grew angry with him. But Xiang Yu declared, "Writing is good only for keeping records of people's names. Swordsmanship is useful only for attacking a single enemy and is also not worth studying. What I want to learn is the art of attacking ten thousand enemies!" With this, Xiang Liang began to teach his nephew the art of warfare, which pleased Xiang Yu greatly. On the whole, Xiang Yu understood the essentials of the art, but here again he was unwilling to pursue his studies in detail.

Once the first Emperor of Qin came on a visit to Kuai-ji. When he was crossing the Zhe River, Xiang Liang and Xiang Yu went to watch the procession. "This fellow could be deposed and replaced!" Xiang Yu remarked. Xiang Liang clapped his hand over his nephew's mouth. "Don't speak nonsense!" he cautioned, "or we and all our family will be executed!" After this incident, Xiang Liang treated his nephew with peculiar respect.

Liu Bang's defeat at Peng-cheng

In 205, Liu Bang's forces captured Xiang Yu's stronghold of the city of Peng-cheng, near the city of Pei, where he had once himself been magistrate. Liu, savoring this triumph, "seized its treasuries and beautiful women and spent his days in feasting and revelry." Xiang Yu led his army back to Peng-cheng and decisively drove Liu Bang's troops from the city. This is the story of Liu Bang's escape.

Xiang Yu had surrounded Liu Bang with a threefold line of troops when a great wind arose from the northwest, breaking down trees, blowing away roofs, and raising clouds of dust so that the sky grew dark and the day turned to night. As the storm advanced and bore down upon the forces of Chu, they were thrown into great confusion and their lines crumbled. Liu Bang was able to slip away with twenty or thirty horsemen and escape.

Liu Bang hoped to pass through his old home of Pei and gather up his family before proceeding west. But Xiang Yu had in the meantime sent men to pursue him to Pei and seize the members of his family, so that they had all fled into hiding and Liu Bang could not find them. Along the road, however, he happened to encounter his son and daughter. Putting them in his chariot, he hastened on his way.

The horsemen of Chu closed upon them in hot pursuit, and Liu Bang, in desperation, several times pushed his little son and daughter out of the chariot. But each time, Lord Teng, who

was riding with him, got out, picked them up, and put them back in the chariot. This had happened three times when Lord Teng finally said, “No matter how sorely we are pressed in this chase, it will not do to abandon the children!”

What does this anecdote say about the character of Liu Bang, and why would the Han historian Sima Qian wish to include this sort of gossip in his account of the Han founder's romantic rise to power?

Xiang Yu challenges Liu Bang

By 203 the forces of Liu and Xiang seemed to have reached a stalemate. The troops of the two leaders chased each other in circles in the east, until at last they found themselves separated from each other by the River Si, with neither side ready to initiate the next confrontation. Xiang Yu, trained as a warrior, sought to reduce the conflict to single combat between himself and the peasant-born Liu Bang. His challenge to Liu was a test of Liu's nobility of character – his ability to live up to the ideals of the traditional patrician class. Liu managed to respond with the tool of the common man: rhetoric. The list of acts that Liu enumerates below will give you a good indication of why Xiang Yu's patrician style of leadership failed to attract masses of men to support his efforts to squelch a man of Liu Bang's peasant origins.

For a long while Chu and Han held their respective positions and made no decisive move, while their fighting men suffered the hardships of camp life and their old men and boys wore themselves out transporting provisions. Liu Bang and Xiang Yu faced each other across the ravine of Guang-wu and talked back and forth.

Xiang Yu challenged Liu Bang to meet him in single combat, but Liu Bang berated Xiang Yu, saying, “When you and I bowed together before the command of King Huai of Chu, we agreed that whoever should enter the Pass first and conquer the land within should become its king. But you went back on this agreement, making me king of Shu and Han instead. This was your first crime. Feigning orders from King Huai, you murdered his lordship Song Yi, the commander of the army, and elevated yourself to his position. This was your second crime. After you had gone to rescue Zhao, it was proper that you should have returned and made your report to King Huai, but instead you wantonly seized the troops of the other leaders and entered the Pass. This was your third crime. King Huai had promised that whoever entered the Pass would commit no violence or theft. Yet you burned the palaces of Qin, desecrated the grave of the First Emperor, and appropriated the wealth and goods of Qin for your private use. This was your fourth crime. You inflicted violent death upon Zi-ying, the king of Qin, who had already surrendered. This was your fifth crime. At Xin-an you butchered two hundred thousand of the sons of Qin whom you had tricked into surrender and made their general, Zhang Han, a king. This was your sixth crime. You enfeoffed all your generals as kings in the best lands and transferred or exiled the former kings, setting their subjects to strife and rebellion. This was your seventh crime. You drove the Righteous Emperor from Peng-cheng and set up your own capital there, seized the territory of the king of Han and made yourself ruler of the combined areas of Liang and Chu, appropriating all for yourself. This was your eighth crime. You sent a man in secret to assassinate the Righteous Emperor at Jiang-nan. This was your ninth crime. As a subject you have assassinated your sovereign; you

have murdered those who had already surrendered, administered your rule unjustly, and broken faith with the agreement that you made. You are guilty of such heinous treason as the world cannot forgive. This is your tenth crime. I and my soldiers of righteousness have joined with the other nobles to punish tyranny and rebellion. I have plenty of criminals and ex-convicts that I can send to attack and kill you. Why should I go to the trouble of engaging in combat with you myself?"

Xiang Yu was enraged and, with a crossbow that he had concealed, shot and hit Liu Bang. Liu Bang was wounded in the breast, but he seized his foot and cried, "The scoundrel has hit me in the toe!"

The death of Xiang Yu

Xiang Yu's army had built a walled camp at Gai-xia, but his soldiers were few and his supplies exhausted. The Han army, joined by the forces of the other leaders, surrounded them with several lines of troops. In the night Xiang Yu heard the Han armies all about him singing the songs of Chu. "How many men of Chu they have with them!" Then he rose in the night and drank within the curtains of his tent. With him were the beautiful lady Yu, who enjoyed his favor and followed wherever he went, and his famous steed Dapple, which he always rode. Xiang Yu, filled with passionate sorrow, began to sing sadly, composing this song:

My strength once raised the hills,
My might shadowed the world;
But the times were against me,
And Dapple runs no more.
When Dapple runs no more,
What then can I do?
Ah, Yu, my Yu,
What will fate bring to you?

He sang the song several times through, and Lady Yu joined her voice with his. Tears streamed down his face, while all those about him wept and were unable to lift their eyes from the ground. Then he mounted his horse and, with some eight hundred brave horsemen under his banner, rode into the night, burst through the encirclement to the south, and galloped away.

Next morning, when Liu Bang became aware of what had happened, he ordered his cavalry general Guan Ying to lead a force of five thousand horsemen in pursuit. Xiang Yu crossed the Huai River, though by now he had only a hundred or so horsemen still with him. Reaching Yin-ling, he lost his way, and stopped to ask an old farmer for directions. But the farmer deceived him, saying, "Go left!" and when he rode to the left he stumbled into a great swamp, so that the Han troops were able to pursue and overtake him.

Xiang Yu once more led his men east until they reached Dong-cheng. By this time he had only twenty-eight horsemen, while the Han cavalry pursuing him numbered several thousand.

Xiang Yu, realizing that he could not escape, addressed his horsemen, saying, "It has been eight years since I first led my army forth. In that time I have fought over seventy battles. Every enemy I faced was destroyed, everyone I attacked submitted. Never once did I suffer defeat, until at last I became dictator of the world. But now suddenly I am driven to this desperate position! It is because Heaven would destroy me, not because I have committed any fault in battle. I have resolved to die today. But before I die, I beg to fight bravely and win for you three victories. For your sake I shall break through the enemy's encirclements, cut down their leaders, and sever their banners, that you may know it is Heaven which has destroyed me and no fault of mine in arms!" Then he divided his horsemen into four bands and faced them in four directions.

When the Han army had surrounded them several layers deep, Xiang Yu said to his horsemen, "I will get one of those generals for you!" He ordered his men to gallop in all four directions down the hill on which they were standing, with instructions to meet again on the east side of the hill and divide into three groups. He himself gave a great shout and galloped down the hill. The Han troops scattered before him and he succeeded in cutting down one of their generals. At this time Yang Xi was leader of the cavalry pursuing Xiang Yu, but Xiang Yu roared and glared so fiercely at him that all his men and horses fled in terror some distance to the rear.

Xiang Yu rejoined his men, who had formed into three groups. The Han army, uncertain which group Xiang Yu was with, likewise divided into three groups and again surrounded them. Xiang Yu once more galloped forth and cut down a Han colonel, killing some fifty to a hundred men. When he had gathered his horsemen together a second time, he found that he had lost only two of them. "Did I tell you the truth?" he asked. His men all bowed and replied, "You have done all you said."

Xiang Yu, who by this time had reached Wu-jiang, was considering whether to cross over to the east side of the Yangtze. The village head of Wu-jiang, who was waiting with a boat on the bank of the river, said to him, "Although the area east of the Yellow River is small, it is some thousand miles in breadth and has a population of thirty or forty thousand. It would still be worth ruling. I beg you to make haste and cross over. I am the only one who has a boat, so that when the Han army arrives they will have no way to get across!"

Xiang Yu laughed and replied, "It is Heaven that is destroying me. What good would it do me to cross the river? Once, with eight thousand sons from the land east of the river, I crossed over and marched west, but today not a single man of them returns. Although their fathers and brothers east of the river should take pity on me and make me their king, how could I bear to face them again? Though they said nothing of it, could I help but feel shame in my heart?" Then he added, "I can see that you are a worthy man. For five years I have ridden this horse, and I have never seen his equal. Again and again he has borne me hundreds of miles in a single day. Since I cannot bear to kill him, I give him to you."

Xiang Yu then ordered all his men to dismount and proceed on foot, and with their short swords to close in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Xiang Yu alone killed several hundred of the Han men, until he had suffered a dozen wounds. Looking about him, he spied the Han cavalry marshal Lü Ma-tong. “We are old friends, are we not?” he asked. Lü Ma-tong eyed him carefully and then, pointing him out to Wang Yi, said, “This is Xiang Yu!”

“I have heard that Han has offered a reward of a thousand catties of gold and a fief of ten thousand households for my head,” said Xiang Yu. “I will do you the favor!” And with this he cut his own throat and died.

Liu Bang’s assessment of the reasons for his victory

In the fifth month, 202, the armies were disbanded and the soldiers returned to their homes. Liu Bang gave a great banquet for the nobles in the Southern Palace of Luo-yang. “My lords and generals,” he addressed his guests, “I ask you all to speak your minds quite frankly without daring to hide anything from me. Why is it that I won possession of the world while Xiang Yu lost?”

Gao Qi and Wang Ling replied, “Your majesty is arrogant and insulting to others while Xiang Yu was kind and loving. But when you send someone to attack a city or to seize a region, you award him the spoils of victory, sharing your gains with the whole world. Xiang Yu was jealous of worth and ability, hating those who had achieved merit and suspecting anyone who displayed his wisdom. No matter what victories were achieved in battle, he gave his men no reward. No matter what lands he won, he never shared the spoils with them. That is why he lost possession of the world.”

Liu Bang said, “You have understood the first reason, but you do not know the second. When it comes to sitting within the tents of command and devising strategy that will assure victory a thousand miles away, I am no match for my advisor Zhang Liang. In ordering the state and caring for the people, in supplying rations to the troops and seeing to it that their lines of supply are not cut, I cannot compare to Xiao He. In leading an army of a million men, achieving success in battle and victory with every attack, I cannot come up to Han Xin. These three are all men of extraordinary ability. It is because I was able to make use of them that I gained possession of the world!”

KEY NAMES

Liu Bang

Xiang Yu

STUDY QUESTION

The material in this section is all drawn from the Shi-ji by Sima Qian, the official historiographer of the Han court. By carefully examining the various anecdotes that Sima Qian chose to recount about Liu Bang and Xiang Yu, determine where you think the historian's prejudices lay, and what qualities he admired or deplored in each man.



Liu Bang



Xiang Yu