



The Book of Lord Shang: Apologetics of State Power in Early China (Translations from the Asian Classics)

By Yang Shang

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Compiled in China in the fourth–third centuries B.C.E., *The Book of Lord Shang* argues for a new powerful government to penetrate society and turn every man into a diligent tiller and valiant soldier. Creating a "rich state and a strong army" will be the first step toward unification of "All-under-Heaven." These ideas served the state of Qin that eventually created the first imperial polity on Chinese soil. In this new translation, *The Book of Lord Shang*'s intellectual boldness and surprisingly modern-looking ideas shine through, underscoring the text's vibrant contribution to global political thought.

The Book of Lord Shang is attributed to the political theorist Shang Yang and his followers. It epitomizes the ideology of China's so-called Legalist School of thought. In the ninety years since the work's previous translation, major breakthroughs in studies of the book's dating and context have recast our understanding of its messages. This edition applies these advances to a whole new reading of the text's content and function in the sociopolitical life of its times and subsequent centuries. This fully annotated translation is ideal for newcomers to the book while also guiding early Chinese scholars and comparatists in placing the work within a timeline of influence. It highlights the text's practical success and its impact on the political thought and political practice in traditional and modern China.

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Editorial Review

Review

No one in the world is more qualified than Yuri Pines to present this new translation of the infamous *The Book of Lord Shang*, which has both fascinated and repelled readers throughout Chinese history.

Accompanied by a superbly informed study of Lord Shang's place in his political context and the reliability of the text attributed to him, this is sure to be the standard translation for decades to come. (Paul R. Goldin, author of *Confucianism*)

A magisterial study and translation, this new edition of *The Book of Lord Shang* provides, finally, full access to one of the foundational texts of ancient Chinese political thought. Pines, the leading Western authority in the field, sets the standard of excellence for exploring the intellectual origins of the Chinese imperial state?and even the relevance of Lord Shang's ideas to China's political debates today. (Martin Kern, author of *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation*)

This thorough study and complete translation of *The Book of Lord Shang* is a major achievement. It will open many avenues for research into early political thought, a long neglected core topic of early Chinese philosophy. (Carine Defoort, coeditor, *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*)

The Book of Lord Shang is one of the most important texts of political theory in the classical Chinese tradition. Pines does an outstanding job of translating the work in its entirety. He also provides an invaluable introduction to the text, the historical context within which it was written, and the nature of the political theory found therein. A wonderful work that will help this text achieve the prominence that it deserves. (Michael Puett, coauthor of *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life*)

Pines has rescued an important political and philosophical text from unjustified neglect. His fascinating introduction locates the work within its historical context and intellectual tradition most admirably. Lord Shang's policy recommendations are as bold and uncompromising?even shocking?to readers today as they were to its original audience. A lucid and highly recommended translation. (Robin D. S. Yates, translator of *Five Lost Classics: Tao, Huang-lao, and Yin-yang in Han China*)

About the Author

Shang Yang (d. 338 B.C.E.) was a Chinese statesman and reformer active during the Warring States Period. *The Book of Lord Shang*, attributed to him and his followers, is credited as a founding text of the so-called Legalist School of thought in early China.

Yuri Pines is Michael W. Lipson professor of Asian studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His books include *The Everlasting Empire: Traditional Chinese Political Culture and Its Enduring Legacy* (2012) and *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era* (2009).

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