The eleven slips—some complete, some fragmentary—placed by the compilers of Bamboo Slips (2001) and (2006) in their reconstructed “Statutes on Levies” were all found in archaeological group F, in a roughly clockwise formation. Although the editors located this section nearly at the end of the text, a more reasonable placement would be in the first quarter of the original scroll, since many of the slips were found in the first three spiral slip-strata. Very few of the slips were found in proximity to one another, however, so it is evident that the compilers placed these items within the “Statutes on Levies” based more on their understanding of what is known historically about the contents of the Han statute collection of that name and less on the archaeological context.

According to Zheng Xuan’s commentary on the Rituals of the Zhou (Zhou li 周禮) text, “When the government drafts [men] and gathers together materials, this is referred to as xīng 興 ‘to levy.’ Today (i.e., during Han times), what we call jūnxīng 軍興 ‘military levies’ is just this.” So, theoretically, the “Statutes on Levies” should contain only statutes related to military levies of men and materials, while the “Statutes on Government Service” should include only those statutes concerning levies of men and materials for the labor service and other government affairs.

According to Liu Shao, one of the scholars charged by Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty with revising the Han statutes (ca. 234 CE), the Han “Statutes on Levies” contained items concerning ‘forwarding legal cases to higher

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authority’ (shàng yù 上狱), ‘levying government labor service without authorization’ (shàn xìnɡ yáo yì 擅興徭役), ‘being deficient in government service’ (fá yáo 乏徭), ‘delaying [government service]’ (jī liú 稽留), and ‘fire and smoke signal beacons’ (fēnɡ suì 烽燧). Liu mentions these examples mainly to prove his point that the Han statutes were unsystematic and incorrectly categorized, since none of these items belong in a statute collection that properly dealt exclusively with levies (xīnɡ 興) of troops and supplies for military situations.

The Wei dynasty created a number of new statute titles and moved the items they deemed inappropriately placed to those locations. The remaining statutes regarding military levies were combined with regulations concerning arrogation of authority to form the “Statutes on Levies and Arrogation of Authority” (Xingshan lü 興擅律). The word shàn 擅 (to act without authority) was removed by the Jin dynasty (265–420 CE), which went back to the original Han title of “Statutes on Levies,” but was reinserted by the Northern Qi (550–577 CE). The Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) flipped the first two words to form the “Statutes on Unauthorized Levies” (Shàn xìnɡ lü 擅興律), a name maintained in the Tang statutes. The commentary on the Tang Code remarks that “even though the name for this section had words added to or subtracted from it and has been altered through the years, nevertheless what it deals with has not changed. The great concern is the army and the establishment of laws that emphasize defense.” The complete, surviving Tang “Statutes on Unauthorized Levies” includes not only the descendant statutes from the Han laws on matters such as evading or delaying a military levy and operating signal beacons but detailed articles addressing unauthorized dispatch of troops, such as not using the proper two-sided tallies, unauthorized issuance of military supplies, and improper selection or substitution of conscripts, as well as laws governing basic military discipline, such as articles forbidding passing information to the enemy or deserting the battlefield. The Tang statutes give us a tantalizing hint at what a more complete version of the ancestral Han “Statutes on Levies” might look like.

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2 See Jin shu, 30.923–25.
3 See ibid., 30.924.
5 For the credible suggestion that the language inscribed on tiger tallies from the Qin and Han periods reproduces an item from the Qin and Han “Statutes on Levies,” see Hulsewé 1955, 35.