

Formative Assessment: Understanding Purpose in Sources – Tang Dynasty

It is the year A.D. 732.

1. You are a historian commissioned by the imperial court under Emperor Tang Xuanzong.
2. Your main responsibility is to record down (on a daily basis) how Emperor Xuanzong ruled over the country, including how responsible and dedicated he was in attending to the affairs of the imperial court, how he worked with his court officials and how he treated the commoners.
3. However, you also know that Emperor Xuanzong has for the past few months, not been attending court sessions as regularly as before.
 - a. This is because he is more interested in spending time with his favourite concubine, the beautiful Yang Guifei.
 - b. His Prime Minister has also lamented to you that taxes have been left uncollected for several months and there have been reports of bribery cases in the recently concluded imperial examinations.
 - c. Court and government officials are gradually losing respect for the Emperor as a result. In fact, the farmers in Southern China have had their lands taken back by their landlords as the state officials there no longer bother to keep things strictly under control. The free and equal land distribution system to help peasants own their farms has failed terribly under Emperor Xuanzong!
4. Yesterday, you were summoned by Emperor Xuanzong on one of the rare occasions he was in court. He has requested you to show him what you have recorded about him over the last few months. He is concerned as what you have written will go down as the official historical records of the Tang Dynasty.....

[Extra information: Emperor Xuanzong is unlike his great-grandfather, the famous Emperor Tang Taizong. He succumbs to flattery easily and does not like it when his officials provide feedback on his flaws. In fact, the Minister of Finance had just been demoted because he advised Xuanzong against spending too much of his time with Yang Guifei, and neglecting his work in the imperial court.]

5. In groups, you are to create two historical sources based on all the information provided above.
 - a. The first source is a record you intend **to show Emperor Xuanzong**, on what you have written about him over the past few months.
 - b. The second source is an entry from your own diary, listing down **your innermost thoughts** about what Emperor Xuanzong has been like as a ruler for the past few months, and what you predict of the Tang Dynasty in time to come.
 - c. Your two sources should be around 120-150 words in length.