Handout #3  
**Mourning Relationships in the Ming and Qing Dynasties**

According to Qing law, one had to observe a period of mourning when a relative passed away. The closer and more senior the deceased family member, the longer the period of mourning dictated by law. The longest period of mourning stretched for three years and the shortest lasted three months. During this period, the bereaved had to stay at home, excuse himself from public service, refrain from celebrations of all sorts, and practice abstinence, among other things. The legal terms for the mourning relationships, listed from longest to shortest, are as follows:

1. Three years (*zhancui*) (example: son to parents, grandson to grandparents, and wife to husband, daughter-in-law to parents-in-law)
2. One year (*zicui*) (example: great grandson to great grandparents)
3. Nine months (*dagong*) (example: nephews to uncles or father’s brothers, first cousins, or father’s brothers’ sons.)
4. Six months (*xiaogong*) (example: Mother’s parents, mother’s brothers, brothers’ wives)
5. Three months (*sima*): (example: son-in-law to parents-in-law)

These relationships played a crucial role in the administration of justice under the Qing. Penalties were heavier for crimes committed against senior relatives within the family hierarchy. Age could also play an important role. A younger brother was inferior to his elder brother, for example. Similarly, an elder sister was ranked higher than her younger brother. Generally speaking, penalties were harshest when junior family members committed crimes against their seniors. Crimes committed against those outside of the mourning hierarchy (that is, outside of the extended family) were punished less severely. And crimes committed by senior family members against their inferiors within the family hierarchy were least likely to elicit harsh sentences.
### Mourning Relationships Among Male Relatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation from Ego</th>
<th>Relation to Ego</th>
<th>Degree of Mourning</th>
<th>Relation to Ego</th>
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<th>Relation to Ego</th>
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<td>FFEBS</td>
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<td>FFEBSSS</td>
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### Mourning Relationships of a Wife and Her Husband’s Relatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation from Ego</th>
<th>Relation to Ego</th>
<th>Degree of Mourning</th>
<th>Relation to Ego</th>
<th>Degree of Mourning</th>
<th>Relation to Ego</th>
<th>Degree of Mourning</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>HFF</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HFFWS</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>HF</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HFB/W</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HFFBS/W</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>EGO (W)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>HEBW/W</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>HFBS/W</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key:**

I, II, III, IV indicate generations removed from “ego,” or oneself.

F=father, M=mother, EB=elder brother, YB=younger brother, S=son, H=husband.

“Ego” is the center of this chart.

The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 to the right of each column are to indicate the five degrees of mourning relationships.


Note: Please see the following two pages for examples of how to use this chart in determining mourning relationships.
Mourning Relationships Among Male Relatives

GREAT-GREAT-GRAMNUNCLE
Degree of Mourning: 4

GREAT-GRANDFATHER
Degree of Mourning: 2

GRANDFATHER
Degree of Mourning: 2

FATHER
Degree of Mourning: 1

EGO

Most Intimate

Somewhat Intimate

Least Intimate

GRANDUNCLE’S CHILDREN
Degree of Mourning: 4

UNCLE’S CHILDREN
Degree of Mourning: 3

UNCLE
Degree of Mourning: 2

BROTHER
Degree of Mourning: 2
Mourning Relationships of a Wife and Her Husband’s Relatives

HUSBAND’S GREAT-GRANDFATHER & GREAT-GRANDMOTHER
Degree of Mourning: 5

HUSBAND’S GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER
Degree of Mourning: 3

HUSBAND’S GRANDUNCLE’S SONS & SON’S WIVES
Degree of Mourning: 5

HUSBAND’S BROTHER & SISTER-IN-LAW
Degree of Mourning: 3

HUSBAND’S GRANDUNCLE’S SONS & SON’S WIVES
Degree of Mourning: 5

HUSBAND’S UNCLE & AUNT
Degree of Mourning: 3

HUSBAND’S UNCLE’S SONS & SON’S WIVES
Degree of Mourning: 5

HUSBAND’s FATHER & MOTHER
Degree of Mourning: 1

HUSBAND
Degree of Mourning: 1

EGO

Most Intimate

Somewhat Intimate

Least Intimate