

## Governing the Empire

The following quotation from Sima Qian's *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記[记]) summarizes a debate that occurred in 221 BCE, just after Ying Zheng defeated the Warring States and became the First Emperor of China (Qin Shihuangdi). Although our game takes place nearly twenty years earlier, "The Debate on Governing the Empire" was inspired by this historical discussion of how to govern the empire now that it had been unified.

The chancellor Wang Wan and others stated the opinion that, since the feudal rulers had just recently been defeated and the regions of Yan, Qi, and Jing were situated far from the capital, unless kings were set up in such regions it would be impossible to control them. They therefore requested that sons of the ruler be set up, if the emperor would be so kind as to give his approval.

The First Emperor referred the proposal to the ministers for deliberation. The ministers all indicated their approval. But the commandant of justice Li Si voiced this opinion: "Kings Wen and Wu of the Zhou dynasty enfeoffed a great many of their sons, younger brothers, and other members of their own surname. Later, however, these men became increasingly estranged and even fell on one another like sworn enemies, and when the feudal rulers attacked each other in this manner, the Zhou Son of Heaven was helpless to restrain them. Now, thanks to the spiritual might of the sovereign, all the area within the seas has been united under a single ruler and made into provinces and districts. If the sons of the ruler and the ministers who have won merit are rewarded with generous gifts from the public taxes, that will be quite sufficient. They can be easily controlled, and the world will be without dissension. This is the correct method for insuring peace. To establish feudal rulers would not be expedient." (Sima, 44 [*Shiji* 6])