Abstract

Liu Bang was the first emperor of the Western Han dynasty. Though Liu Bang was initially of a peasant origin, due to his intelligence and brilliant war strategies, he was able to defeat his arch rival, Xiang Yu. Liu Bang did not project the image of an ideal emperor. He behaved more like a ruffian instead. However as he was not tied down by the strict boundaries of traditional Confucian thoughts, he was generous in rewarding his subordinates and receptive to people’s ideas and advices.

There were many reasons why Liu Bang won the war. Nevertheless, the focus of this thesis is the analysis of the aspects of Liu Bang’s character which determined his success. A person’s character definitely will influence him in his course of life. Liu Bang knew his limitations and was able to act accordingly to situations cautiously and wisely.

The Han dynasty inherited many aspects of the Qin dynasty’s political, economic and social systems. But Liu Bang did not follow the political model created by the Qin dynasty blindly. He combined the best aspects of the Zhou and Qin dynasties and created a ruling system which befitted the social and political context of the time when the Han dynasty was newly-established.

Liu Bang was notorious for his elimination of the non-Liu vassal rulers under his rule. He did not trust them even when they were the ones who were once his closest allies. His ultimate aim was to build an empire exclusively belong to the Liu family. Thus he appointed people from his
clan to be the vassal rulers while he removed the non-Liu rulers one by one.

In all, Liu Bang was one who knows how to make best use of his resources and men. In comparison to Xiang Yu who was a narrow-minded person, at least, Liu Bang knew how to get talents under him. Liu Bang’s peasant background allowed him to be an emperor who could understand the needs of his people more than anyone else.