

Part 4: A New National Culture

16: From Early to Later Imperial China

Introduction

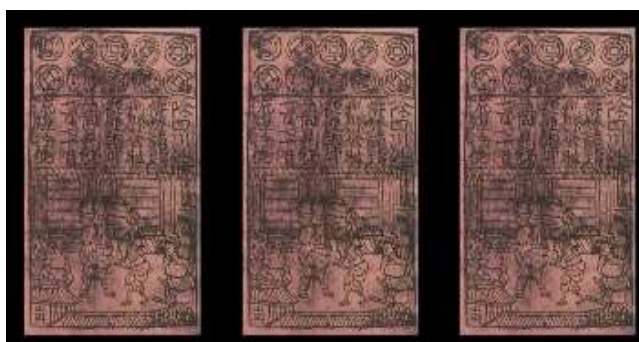
This is one of those great discussions between Profs. Bol & Kirby. Prof. Bol has written extensively about this period of Chinese history, whereas Prof. Kirby's expertise is in modern history.



When does modern China begin? The Song Dynasty, running from the 10th to the 13th centuries, influenced economic, commercial, and political life in China well into the 19th and 20th centuries. The Southern Song was more cosmopolitan than the Tang and its economy rested more on private enterprise. Farmers owned their land and prospered in ways not possible under the Tang. The Song created the foundation for a millennium of civil service exams that ended only in 1905: an exemplar of civil meritocracy - what the Japanese scholar Miyazaki called 'China's examination hell.'⁷⁶

The Song was also a time of division, of foreign invasion.

With the increasingly private economy and a new Confucianism, the Song relocated moral authority from the state to the individual, in contrast with the perception of China as an unbroken lineage of centralized authoritarian regimes.⁷⁷



It was also a time of great invention: gunpowder, the mariner's compass, paper currency. Commercial printing meant knowledge could be spread less expensively than ever. The compass permitted blue water navigation.

⁷⁶ See page 148 for an overview of the Civil Service Exam.

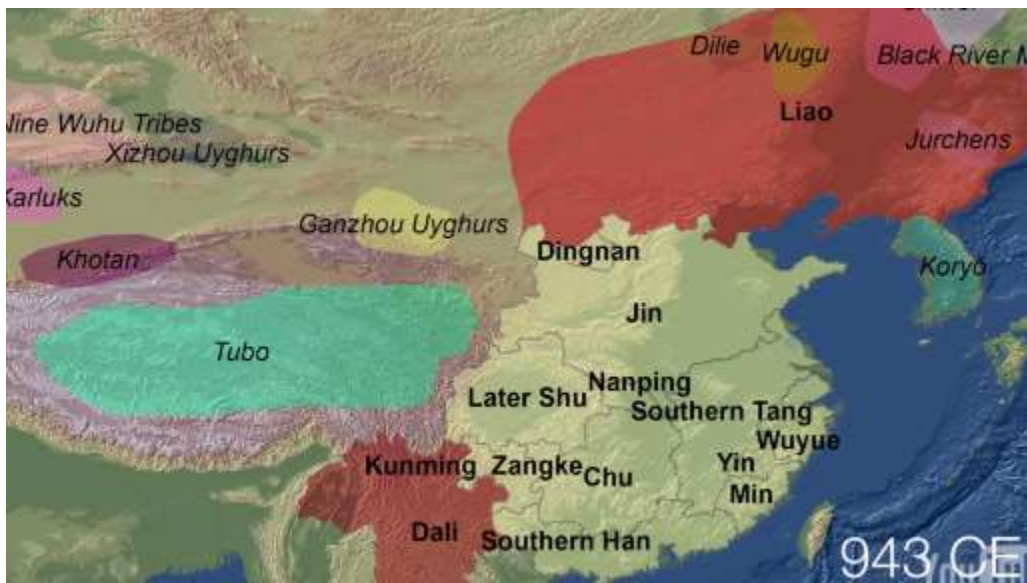
⁷⁷ See page 169 for a look at the State vs. the Individual through Chinese history.

Historical Overview



Tang (618-907)		
Year	Event	
755-763 and beyond	An Lushan Rebellion	The rebellion changed the course of the Tang Dynasty, forcing retreat from the North and from Central Asia and shifting the economic base to the Southeast. The tax system was restructured to recognize private land ownership.
884	Huang Chao rebellion	Political fragmentation within and incursions from without pushed local regimes to recruit and rule separately.
907-960 (53 years)	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms	The short-lived Five Dynasties of the North - Later Liang, Tang, Jin, Han, Zhou - fought to conquer the South and control its resources. They faced the Liao state of the Khitans to the northeast. The Tangut people in the northwest created their own state, the Xixia. Meanwhile, the South organized into a number of regional states, the Ten Kingdoms, which grew with northern immigrants and policies permitting the accumulation of private wealth.
960-1276 (316 years)	Song Dynasty	The Song, founded by a military commander named Zhao Kuangyin, conquered the south but failed to control the foreign states of the north. A new civil elite, the scholar officials (<i>shidafu</i>), tried to create a new order based on ancient ideals.

Periodization and the Tang-Song Transition



The end of the Tang in 907 CE was followed by a period of division called the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, from 907-960 CE. In 960, the Song begins in the north and proceeds over the next 20 years to conquer the remaining states in the south.

How should we divide historic time?

Prof. Bol proposes a distinction between an **Early Imperial Order**, characterized by the Tang, and a **Later Imperial Order** that germinates with the Song and blossoms in the late Ming and the Qing dynasties.

First, let's ask how we divide history into periods. There are times when changes take place in many dimensions: foreign and domestic relations, the economy, culture, and so forth. There are other times when few changes occur.

The rapidly changing times set the stage for the stable times that are the 'periods' in history. In China, the typical period is the dynasty during which one family controls the imperial throne and its territory.

Identifying a Moment in History



China counted time in three weeks of 10 days each, where each day had 12 *hours* where a Chinese *hour* was 2 modern hours. The counting of years did not begin, however, at a single origin across all calendars, like the birth of Christ. It began with the first year of each emperor's reign, so we might define a moment as, say, the fourth year of the Yongle emperor.

On the one hand, two dynasties can exist at the same time, creating conflicting measures. On the other hand, dynastic time helps identify the state of mind at the time, for example, the legal codes and institutions in effect during the 18th year of the Zhongxi Reign.

Dynastic Events vs. Long-Term Trends

telling time in terms of dynasties:	
advantages	disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">conscious of the place/time and its legal codes, contracts, rituals, etc.conscious of major events (i.e. "post 9/11 era")	<ul style="list-style-type: none">obscures long term historical changeled people to think in a dynastic cycle of birth, maturity, and old agethis obscures the fact that:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– dynasties fall for different reasons– dynasties are founded in different contexts

Focusing too much on dynastic time distracts from underlying trends, much as a sea breeze driving a surface chop masks the rolling swells beneath.

What is the Life Cycle of a Dynasty?

Rather than thinking of a dynasty as the origin of the changes in a period, think of it as the product of those changes.

We tend to think of each dynasty as repeating a cycle of birth, maturation, old age and death. In fact, each dynasty begins for different reasons that reflect its own singular circumstances, which may be driven by the underlying trends that cross dynastic periods.

Many of the most important historic changes are driven by these underlying changes rather than by the rulers or by the institutions in power. To identify these underlying changes, we'll need to think about periods in history that span events outside the dynastic cycles.

Progressive Stages of History vs. Relative Unity

Karl Marx identified [stages of history](#), from primitive communism through slavery, feudalism, capitalism, socialism and finally to stateless communism. These stages were defined by the classes controlling the means of production, the control of which rippled through all other institutions: legal, bureaucratic, religions, and so forth, what Marx called the superstructure of a period.

Even though Marxism hasn't survived in the West as a theory of history, its assumption about progressive stages is well accepted in the Christian interpretation of history, that each stage builds and improves upon the previous.

The Chinese writing of history doesn't accept the theory of progressive stages, instead emphasizing periods of unity and disunity.

Technology

Some have used technology as a divisor - bronze age, iron age, industrial age - though technology does not seem sufficiently explanatory of the underlying or cumulative trends in history to be the one characteristic factor. The Song did, however, bring about three great inventions - the compass, printing, and gunpowder - that migrated to the West and helped define Western history.

Invasions

Foreign invasions are also seen as historic markers.

No single overriding principle

750 CE 1050 CE
Tang Song
唐 宋

What kind of changes were there between these two moments in time?

Were there connections between these changes?

How do we account for these changes?

Prof. Bol does not see technology or invasions or any other single dimension as the way to periodize history because none of these provide an overriding principle on which all changes in history pivot.

To change metaphors, we shouldn't be looking through a single lens at all of history. **Instead, we should ask these questions about the period between any two moments in history:**

- What were the most significant changes?
- What connected those changes?
- What were the underlying causes?

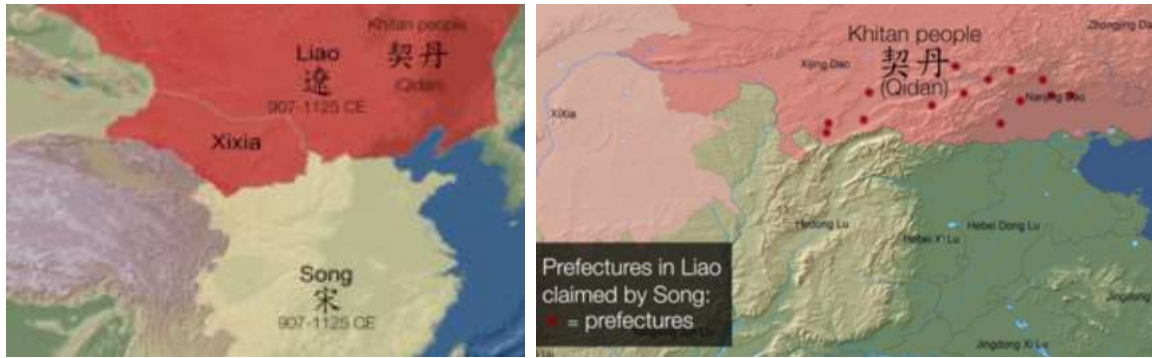
Changed Foreign Relations, Changed China: 750 and 1050

Tang



In 750 CE, the Tang was supreme, controlling territory through the West, past Kashgar and into Sogdia. It had stopped trying to invade Korea, but had successfully extended power to the north and northeast, and the south.

Liao



In 1050, the Song is far smaller than the Tang at its peak.

In the northeast, the Liao Dynasty of the Khitan people, 907-1125, had as much territory as the Song. In the 1120's the Liao was overthrown by other pastoral peoples coming from the northeast. The Khitans had taken control of sixteen prefectures of Chinese-speaking peoples located around modern-day Beijing and the Song wanted those territories. So they fought the Khitans and eventually established a peace treaty requiring the Song to pay indemnities.

Tanguts

In 1038, the Tanguts established the state of Xia in the northwest, known in Chinese as the Xixia. The Song fought them as well and had to sign a peace treaty.

Keeping the Peace with Brother States

The Song had peace treaties which required them to pay reparations every year to the Khitans:

- 200,000 rolls of silk
- 100,000 ounces of silver

After 1038, the Song agreed to pay a lesser amount to the Xixia.

Plus, the Song maintained a standing army on its northern border, employing gunpowder, rockets, and bombs.

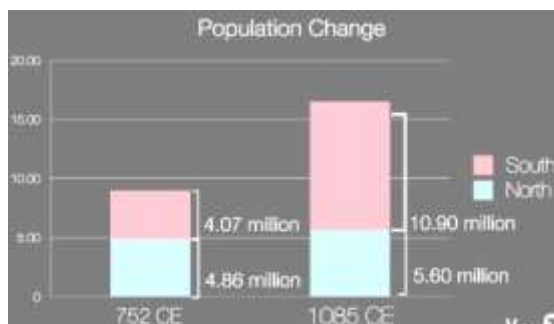
Most important, the Song recognized the Liao emperor as one of the Sons of Heaven, despite having a smaller economy and population. The Liao and the Xia understood how to build states and how to maintain them in the face of an attacking force.

Is China weak? The Song is clearly smaller than the Tang and unable to dominate its neighbors in the manner of the Tang. Though the Song had a larger army than the Tang, with better technology and a stronger economy than either of its neighbors, those neighbors had learned how to build states and had their own strong economies with powerful cavalries to defend their borders.

So what changed from 750 through 1050? As the Tang had faced with Korea, so did the Song face in its northern brothers: a strong organized state that could demand independence and peace from the reigning Chinese dynasty.

Changes at Home: Reconfiguration of Domestic Power and Wealth

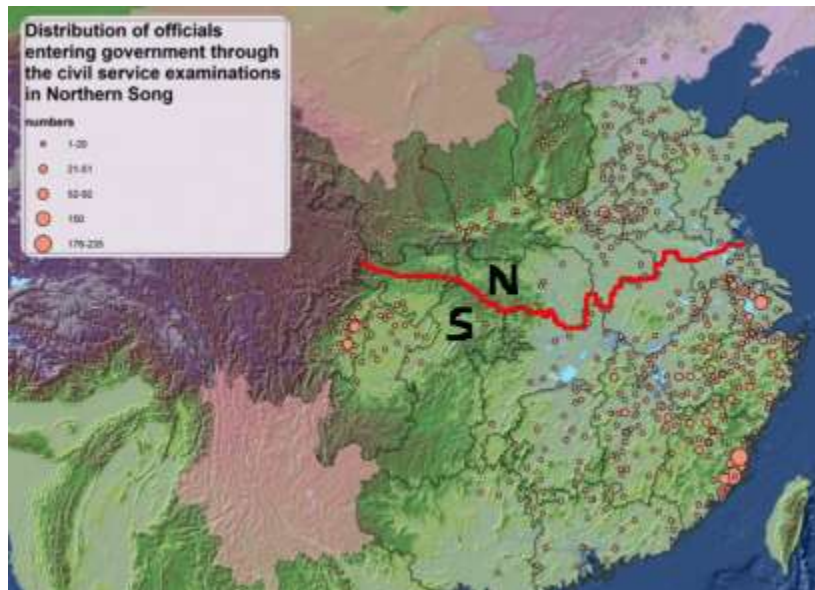
Population, North and South



The tallies above are for households. The head count was more like 50 million at the height of the Tang and 100 million by the 11th century.

In the Tang, the population was greater in the North than in all the rest of China. But by 1085, the South in Sichuan had doubled while the North remained stagnant and had decreased at the northern border. Some areas in Sichuan had grown tenfold.

Centers of Wealth Expanding in the South



In the Tang of 750 CE, Chang'an was the great center and Luoyang to the east the second center, with the heart of the Tang in the corridor between them.

By the 11th century, multiple regional centers in the south, the home of the Ten Kingdoms, had developed and prospered, building armies, drawing trade, attracting culture and demanding representation in the bureaucracy.

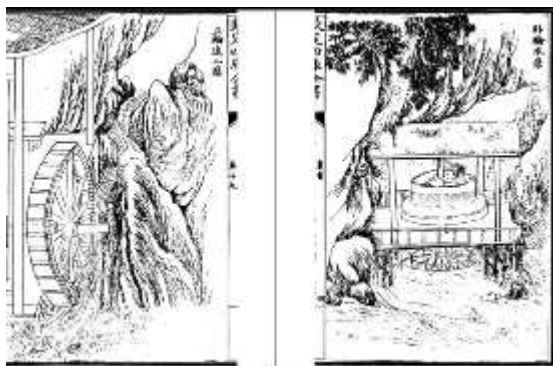
Southern climate advantage

In contrast to the northern weight of the Tang, China in 1070 had the majority of bureaucratic policy controlled by Southerners. The climate favored the south, with warm and wet lands that didn't freeze in the winter. New strains of rice ripened early, allowing for a second crop of either rice or beans and vegetables, sustaining a greater population.

Southern water transit advantage

Transit on the southern waterways was as much as 90% cheaper than land. In contrast, northern boat-building was less advanced and the boats were slower and less capacious, which meant the savings were not as great (only two-thirds the cost of land transit). At the beginning of the 11th century, southern boats traversing the Grand Canal carried 18 tons and made three trips a year. By 1050, due to improvements in the boats and the locks, their cargoes grew to 25 tons and the boats made four to five trips per year.⁷⁸

Southern priorities differed



Water Mill in Nong Shu

⁷⁸ For more information on the building of the Grand Canal, see page 106.

In the north, the borders were defended with expensive armies, requiring taxes that dragged down the economy. Goods to support the borders had to travel overland and uphill, adding to the cost.

In the south, without the burden of defense, people focused on trade and investment. The southern ports of Fujian, Zhejiang, and Ningbo bustled with trade to SE Asia and Japan. Seventy-five percent of Chinese investment in irrigation (aka water conservancy) was in the south.

Differing styles of governance

The Northern style, continued from the Tang, was to tax heavily to pay for defense, distributing the surplus to its own officials. The South was more commercial, benefitting petty capitalists rather than state enterprise and placing families and private interests in featured roles in the bureaucracy.

Commerce and Urbanization

A Tale of Two Cities



Chang'an was planned at the outset as a capital, with streets laid out in a grid, a walled palace to the north, markets to the east and west and walled wards distributed through the city.



Kaifeng, the capital of the Song, had been a commercial city during the Five Dynasties period, located where a canal from the South entered the Yellow River. Even today, it's a city of commerce.



Location: Chang'an was behind the pass in the Wei River Valley outside the North China Plain. Kaifeng was right in the heart of the North China Plain.

Role: Chang'an and Luoyang were the two great cities of the Tang - the greatest cities of the world in their time. Dependent as they were on taxes, their economies were weak and there were times when the city suffered for lack of resources.

Though none were as large as Chang'an, there were many great southern cities: Kaifeng, Suzhou, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, along with Chengdu in the Western Plain of Sichuan.

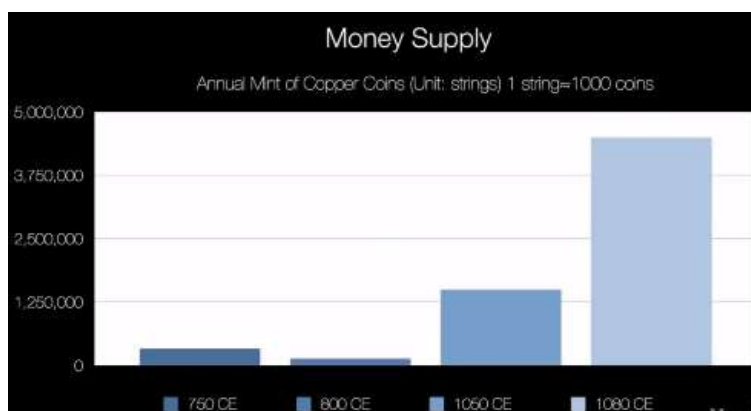
Commerce

The state controlled commerce in the Tang in 750, placing markets in administrative towns where they could be regulated by local government.

By 1050, the Song has learned to encourage and to tax commerce, for the first time in Chinese history deriving half its revenue from non-land sources. Much of this taxable revenue came from non-administrative towns where the government has stationed tax collectors, separating the administrative and economic hierarchies.

The state involved itself in commerce by holding monopolies on salt and iron⁷⁹ and by auctioning off wineries and ferries to private citizens.

Money Supply



The money supply grew from 327,000 strings of cash⁸⁰ in 750 to 1.5 million in 1050 and 4.5 million in the 1080's. Further, the silver in the economy grew from the equivalent of 360,000 strings of cash to 9 million strings of cash from 750 CE to 1080. A 25-fold increase in the money supply. And yet it wasn't enough. The Song is the first dynasty to successfully use paper money as currency.

⁷⁹ Recall the Salt and Iron debates of the Han dynasty, page 77.

⁸⁰ A string of copper cash has nominally 1000 coins.

Taxes

Tang Equitable Field System

The Tang in 750 granted land to every household, along with a tax obligation, under the Equitable Field System⁸¹. The Tang assumed the tax burden would be distributed by the grantee of the land, with the state ensuring each household had enough land to afford the tax.

Song Dual Tax System (Twice a Year Tax)

The Song taxed the property, not the individual, with the tax rate based on the productivity of each parcel of land. Households were assigned one of five grades based on their resources, with the wealthier households expected to pay more. Thus, tax was based on wealth.

Why Taxation Changed

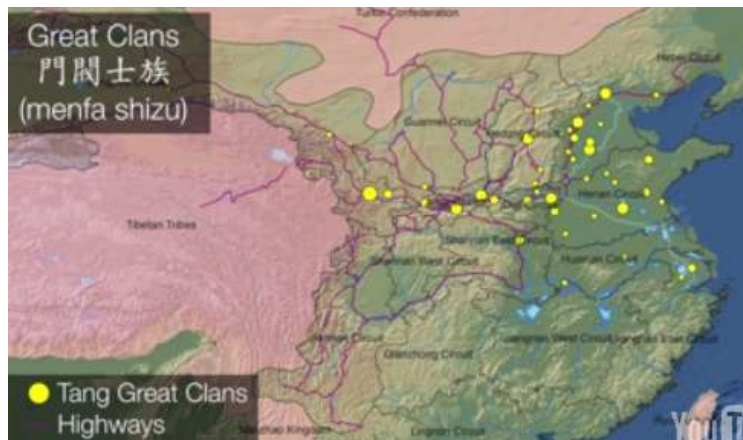
In 750, land was granted and held for life (or close to it) and returned to the pool of available land at the end of the grant. In 1050, land could be sold and the taxes would follow the land.

Tang directed the economy through its administration, whereas the Song separated its administration from the market economy without losing its tax revenue.

⁸¹ See Part 3, the Equitable Field System (Juntianfa), on page 106.

A Shifting Social and Political Elite

Who are the elite?



In 750, the elite were found in Luoyang and Chang'an and the corridor between, among the members of the great aristocratic clans whose history stretched across dynasties. They gained positions of power through family connections and by rising in the meritocracy, and through *yin privilege*⁸², which guaranteed their progeny a place in the bureaucracy.

By 1050 the great clans had disappeared, entirely replaced by a new elite of scholar officials from educated families who had risen through an exam-based meritocracy. Song officials could still use *yin privilege* but the granting of power was clearly transitioning from aristocracy to meritocracy, where recruitment of new officials was primarily through the exams.

Transition from Yin Privilege to Earned Status

In 750, the great clans understood that their role, their family occupation, was to serve the government. As the size of the families outstripped the number of official positions, the Tang created honorary positions so each son of a great clan could be employed.



In 1050, families of officials knew that government positions would not automatically flow to their sons. Even among the *shi* there was no guarantee of a role in the government. The elite would have to find occupation in some other way.

We translate *shi* (pronounced *shur*) as literati: the cultural, social, and political elite.⁸³ What makes a *shi* is not family but learning, especially learning demonstrated on the civil service exam. This is one of the great changes between Tang and Song.

Elite culture has become ideological

To read in 750, you would unroll a scroll as you read it. In 1050, with the advent of printing, you would pick up a book.

Printing, by government and private printers, expanded the pool of people who wrote. The number of poets increased from 2,200 in the Tang to 9,000 in the Song, twice as many per capita.

In 750, prose was elegant and refined, and poetry adhered to demanding styles. By 1050, the most popular writing was either more lyrical or more argumentative. By 1050, they were writing about ideas.

⁸² The practice of granting office to sons and grandsons of high officials. See page 64.

⁸³ Note that *Shi* was also the surname for Buddhist monks, an approximate translation of Shakyamuni (see page 94).

Tang - Song Transition - The An Lushan Rebellion

An Lushan Rebellion
安史之亂
755-763 CE

Bai Juyi
白居易
(772-846 CE)

An Lushan
安祿山
703-757 CE
Sogd
粟特
(Sute)

Song of
Everlasting
Sorrow
長恨歌
(Chang hen ge)

Many of the trends that led to the Song of 1050 began two hundred years earlier when General An Lushan⁸⁴ rebelled. The rebellion became famous from the literature written about it but also because of the depth of the shock to the Tang Dynasty.

In 756, An Lushan led the rebels on a march to Chang'an⁸⁵, forcing the emperor to flee to Sichuan. Popular opinion blamed the Emperor's concubine, Yang Guifei, whose brother was a prime minister, for beguiling the emperor on behalf of An Lushan. Her execution was the subject of a famous poem from Bai Juyi, *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow*, the *Chang Hen Ge*, which became popular in Japan.

The *Chang hen ge* became the inspiration for the great 11th century Japanese novel, *The Tale of Genji*.

⁸⁴ An Lushan was a Sogd from the West and a member of a family that had served in the Tang military for generations. An is a commonly used for Sogdian names. Lushan is likely a sinified version of Roxanne (pronounced luxan).

⁸⁵ There's a good description in totallyHistory.com.

Late Tang - Changes at Home and Abroad

Shrinking Borders and a Shifting Economic Base

The rebellion by the northern border militia took out the border defense, forcing the Tang court to seek alliances with other Northern peoples, who then responded by joining in the pillaging of Chang'an. The north frontier became a war zone with families fleeing and the population shrinking.

With the Tang thus occupied, the Western regions gained their independence. The northeastern provinces on the North China Plain ceased paying taxes to Chang'an, making the Tang court dependent on rice shipments from the Southeast. Since rice paddies require considerable investment, the government could no longer force redistribution of land according to the Equitable Field System (page 105), as that would negate the investment with every generation.

The government supplanted the Equitable Field System with taxes on the land rather than the person, and with the land available for market sale rather than a profitless redistribution. This led to greater inequality and to large private estates held by non-government officials. As a result there were more wealthy families in the Southeast gaining education and wanting a role in government.

To further preserve its dwindling revenue, the government monopolized the coastal salt industry, using private merchants who paid into the government. This, in turn, legitimized private commerce and opened new trade routes, leading to the changes in commerce discussed earlier.

Regional Development

With the northeast out of control and with refugees fleeing south, stability depended on the willingness of military governors to pay tax to the Tang, governors who had their own armies and could feel their power growing in a weakened empire. They refused to pay.

Ancient Style Movement



In the generation after the An Lushan rebellion, people seeking change looked to antiquity for a model of government that served the common welfare, where people earned official positions through their knowledge of the classics.

This was the *Ancient Style Movement*, guided by the writings of Han Yu and Liu Zongyuan.

If antiquity was the 'new' model then why should they be loyal to the early Tang or to the Han, the two great unified empires? But the great clans were still in power and their numbers increased in government after the rebellion, out of concern for losing control during the upheaval. They hoarded the few remaining appointments and intermarried to solidify their claim.

Huang Chao Rebellion



In 880, Huang Chao led a rebellion that started in Shandong and swept south and back north, crossing the Yangtze to sack Luoyang before traversing the corridor to Chang'an and pillaging that as well. When the great clans tried to collaborate with Huang Chao, he massacred them instead.

And suddenly the great clans were gone.

The Tang dynasty continued for a few more years before falling in 907. The south splintered into military states while the north shifted through a series of short-lived dynasties.

There was a need for order in this new world, but the old order of the Han and the Tang would not suffice. By 1050, the people of the Song were looking for the shape of their new society.

Discussion

Going back to Prof. Bol's discussion of periodization, how can we understand the shift between the early imperial order discussed here, and the later imperial order to come, in terms of continuity? How can we understand the shift in terms of great change? How do you characterize this change, and what challenge does your characterization pose to dynastic time telling, if any?

Note that these are my discussion notes - they're not lecture notes.

What were the most significant changes?

- The loss of control of the northern borders precipitated the loss of Chinese hegemony.
- The resulting peace with the north was offered as one of many powers, instead of as a single empire controlling large swaths of territory which could be monetized through taxes and trade.
- Reparations demanded by Liao/Khitan and by the Xixia drained the Chang'an coffers and increased its dependence on the South.
- Defense of these porous northern borders further weakened the northern economies that funded Chang'an and both protected and lent power to the great clans.
- Population and economic strength shifted to the South, along with recognition of Southern trading cities as centers of culture and political influence.
- Private enterprise increased in the South.
- Political influence extended to Southern families outside the aristocracy, with the elimination of the Equitable Field System, the shift in economic power, the further rise of the meritocracy, and the destruction of the great clans.

What connected these changes?

- Loss of power in the north. Throughout Chinese history there seemed to be a trend that protection of the northern and western borders (or the lack thereof) precipitated political change. The need to protect the borders led to the empowerment of General An Lushan. When he abandoned his post, he left the border unprotected, further weakening the north.
- Growth in the south. Power abhors a vacuum. The south grew in population and in influence, sucking power from the north, from the great clans, and forcing political change.
- Destruction of the old guard - the great clans. Any great power shift is destined to shake up the class structure. This moved power from old money to new money.

Underlying Trends

- China as a nation within a region sharing power with other nations - not as the dominant empire. This trend began with the Korean peace and was furthered by the loss of strength along the northern borders brought about by the An Lushan and Huang Chao rebellions. In other words, rebellions and military defeats shrank the aspirations of the dynasties and forced people to look within. When they look within, they find their roots in antiquity.
- Diminishing power of the aristocracy - rise in power of the scholar officials and the system of government that promotes them (the civil service exams).
- A more literate population able to compete in the meritocracy. A more productive economy (double crops) giving people leisure time to gain literacy and advance their status.

All of these underlying trends crossed dynasties.

17: Transforming Society Through Government

Introduction

Great changes in politics sometimes change how we think about the past.



Having once been forced out by Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping returned to power in 1978 following Mao's death. He proceeded to change the course of China. Something else happened in 1978: historians changed the way they looked at two people far in China's past.

Wang Anshi, a political reformer of the 11th century, was considered the best politician of his time. Sima Guang, his leading opponent and a conservative historian, was regarded as being wrong.

In 1978, historians reversed their opinions of these two figures.

This module will discuss those two as well as a third figure, Su Shi, a politician and a poet.

The debate that focuses these opinions is on the role of government in society, a debate that's central throughout Chinese history and no less central today.

A Changing China, A Changing World: Song in 1050 CE



Here's a quick summary of some of the changes we saw in the previous section, covering the Tang Dynasty, the An Lushan rebellion, and the Song.

- The Song had made peace as a brother state with the Liao and the XiXia.
- Half the population lived in the South and most of the policy-makers came from there.
- The South had a booming commercial and agrarian economy with cheap water transport.
- Taxes on commerce had grown to exceed taxes on land
- The great clans had disappeared
- Scholar-officials were selected into government primarily for their literary skill

The Civil Service Exam⁸⁶

With the disappearance of the aristocrats, the government decides in the late 10th century to recruit officials through the civil service exam, which tested literary ability. The first test was of the ability to compose poetry.

A literati joke from the late 11th century

The story is about a prefect⁸⁷ who has just arrived at his post. He goes to a major Buddhist temple and is received by the abbot, who is sitting on a chair upon the dais in the temple courtyard. The prefect arrives with his fancy entourage and the abbot rather casually invites him up to chat with no apparent formality.

They're chatting away when some military guy from the local garrison comes in. The abbot hops up from his chair, and bows and scrapes before this military guy. This annoys the prefect, who confronts the abbot when he returns to the dais, asking why he was polite to this low-level officer and rude to *him* the *prefect*!

The abbot replies, rudeness is true politeness, and politeness is rudeness. Very much a Zen answer. So the prefect smacks the abbot in the head. You know, hitting is non-hitting. Non-hitting is hitting. Right?

So what's the point? First, the tension between military and civil power. Civil figures have the cultural prestige but the military has the power. The prefect is making it clear that civil officials have precedence over the military.

Secondly, the monk is being dismissed for talking religious nonsense. The prefect is a Confucian scholar-official while the monk is a Chan (Zen) Buddhist. In the 11th century, the leading voices are Confucians.

⁸⁶ See page 174 for the exam as a force for unity between families and page 237 for a discussion of the exam as part of the novel, *The Scholars*. See page 121 for the introduction of the exam in the Tang dynasty, with its emphasis on poetry.

⁸⁷ Land was divided into provinces, prefectures, and counties. A prefecture contained an area the size of Rhode Island and was administered by a prefect - equivalent to, say, the governor of Rhode Island.

How Can Government Serve the Common Good?



Han Yu, the founder of the Ancient Style Movement, looked to antiquity for ways to communicate one's own ideas. He became in the 11th century an important figure. Ouyang Xiu turned to Han Yu for a model. Liu Zongyuan, a contemporary of Han Yu, was also influential in the 11th century. Wang Anshi and Su Shi were both recommended by Ouyang Xiu.

On the other side of the coin, Sima Guang was deeply suspicious of those who wanted to transform government with literary models drawn from antiquity.

Readings

Han Yu: Essentials of the Moral Way (Yuandao)

The following paragraphs precede the reading and are copied from the course materials:

The first two sections are prologue: Han Yu defines terms and explains the historical trends that have led to the demise of Confucian teachings in his day. The third and fourth sections present the economic argument against Buddhist and Daoist monasticism: monks (the new fifth and sixth classes of society) are nonproductive and exist on the labor of others, thus creating economic and social dislocation.

The fifth section, with its opening quotation from the Great Learning (see chapter 10), is the crux of the text. Confucian spirituality, unlike that of the Buddhists and Daoists, links the private, moral life of the individual with the public welfare of the state.⁸⁸

These are my own thoughts that summarize the reading.

1. Han Yu states that *ren* is to love largely, rightness (*yi*) is to act according to moral imperative, moral way (*dao*) is to incorporate *ren* and *yi* into your daily life, and inner power (*de*) means relying upon oneself for morality and sufficiency. Superior men have *dao* and petty men do not. Either can have *de*.
2. Laozi didn't see *ren* and *de* as fully guiding every men in every moment and through them all of civilization, so it's natural that he would think little of these moral guideposts. Laozi has his own view (like a man looking up from the bottom of a well thinking the sky is small). Han Yu says his view is the common understanding.
3. The Sages taught the people how to rise from desperate savagery. The Daoists insist that the benevolent despotism of the Sages should be discarded in favor of anarchy.
4. Buddhists cleave father from son when they insist that nirvana is a personal quest. Had Buddhism been around in the time of the Sages, it would have been quashed.
5. Government devolves from the moral virtues of the leader. By achieving virtue it is natural that good government will follow. When virtue is lost, government falls.
6. The Classics and the rituals will lead you to the Way.
7. Not the Way of the Buddhists or Daoists, but the Way of the Sages. It ended with Mencius. We must revive it by throwing off the beliefs of the Buddhists and the Daoists and returning to the Classics and the rituals.

Liu Zongyuan: "Essay On Enfeoffment"

Enfeoffment⁸⁹ came from historical necessity and gave feudal lords too much power, which ultimately led to the defeat of the Zhou and later, to rebellion in the Han. The Han survived because it defeated these enfeoffed lords.

The prefectural system (centralized bureaucracy) is far superior because it gives the Emperor the power to appoint wise prefects. When the system fails, it fails because of bad appointments. Since the Emperor is the Son of Heaven, this should never happen, which is why the prefectural system is superior to feudalism⁹⁰. In the Qin, the Emperor didn't delegate his authority properly to his wisely chosen prefects. Apparently, this is an easily solved problem:

If the army is firmly controlled and local officials carefully selected, there will be peaceful rule.

No question about it. What could possibly go wrong with a dictatorship?

Enfeoffment is hereditary rule by feudal lords. The Sages encouraged a meritocracy.

⁸⁸ See page 168 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

⁸⁹ Enfeoffment (n.) the grant in which property is given in exchange for pledging to serve the king. In China relatives or descendants of the ruling family were given land in exchange for protecting the king in times of war.

⁹⁰ This was a quote from Zongyuan. It doesn't have to make sense.

Ouyang Xiu: Essay On Fundamentals (*Benlun*)



To cure China of Buddhism, Ouyang argued for a restoration of Confucian ritual. Keep men busy in the fields and when they're not, keep them busy with ritual. Make what little happiness they have derive entirely from ritual and they won't have time for alternate beliefs.

Let the wise who are schooled in Confucianism lead the ordinary men who would otherwise waste their lives on ridiculous religions. A single frail scholar hewing to his values is a stiffer reed than the stoutest soldier against the winds of Buddhism.

Mencius said that men are basically good and those who abandon their families for Buddhism are going against their nature.

Wang Anshi



He came from Linchuan in the Jiangxi Province, south of the Yangzi River. He had few connections in government, but he passed the highest level exam, the Jinshi. He became famous for his writings in the ancient style of Han Yu and Ouyang Xiu. In this case, the ancient style means turning to antiquity to guide us in the present.

In 1058, he wrote a long memorial to Emperor Renzong, setting out his view of how government can transform society, not by recreating the institutions of antiquity, but by reexamining the intentions of the Sages.

Wang Anshi's Precepts

- Government should be central to everyone's lives, especially those of the elite.
- Education should be the foundation of government.
- Government should ensure employment for the literati.
- Recruit the best for the central government in the capital, give them further training, and send them back to the provinces to teach and make policy.
- The new blood coming in through this process of education should help government evolve.



In 1067, Emperor Shenzong had risen to the throne at the age of 17. He was well-read and anxious to make his mark.

He brought in both Sima Guang and Wang Anshi to be his chief counselors. They insist that a joint advisory is impossible, their points of view are diametrically opposed and that Shenzong should choose one or the other.

The emperor chose Wang Anshi, who warned him that the policies he was about to recommend would draw strong opposition. Would the Emperor stay the course? Shenzong affirmed he would.

Wang Anshi's Policies

The word *fa* can be translated as either law or policy. In the readings, the English words law and policy are interchangeable.

Fiscal Policy. Wang created a Finance *Planning* Commission to create plans which would be implemented by the existing Finance Commission. The latter was staffed by existing senior officials. The former was staffed by Wang's young protégés.

Crop Loans Policy. Farmers traditionally borrowed money in the spring for seed and other planting needs and paid back the loans after the harvest. They borrowed at high rates from money lenders. The new policy would provide government loans, financed by the granary reserves, at low interest rates of 20% (this is low?).

Marketing Controls. Private wholesalers had been transporting goods to the cities, which caused prices to fluctuate. The new policy had the government handle the wholesaling of goods, which it sold to retailers.

Service Exemption. Traditionally the central government would provide 3 or 4 officials to serve at the county level. The richest taxpayers would then provide people to fill the administrative positions: collecting taxes, clerking, scribing, etc. The new policy taxed many families to fund the administrative personnel.

Militia Policy (*baojia*). Households are organized in hierarchies: groups of 10 households, five groups of 10, 10 groups of 50, etc. The richest households would lead each group. These groups would provide males for military training. This cuts government expenses, gets the farmers involved in the militia, and Wang Anshi felt he could use the groups to collect taxes and provide mutual liability and surveillance.

In other words, if a household in a group doesn't pay taxes, the other households have to make up the difference. If someone in your group breaks the law, you have to snitch on them, similar to Shang Yang's advice to the Lord of Qin.⁹¹ Not a popular law!

Impact of the Policies

The government takes the place of the wealthy families: lending money, wholesaling goods, hiring administrators, and organizing the local households. Wang Anshi is taking on the wealthiest and most powerful members of society.

These new policies doubled the centrally appointed bureaucrats from 20,000 to 40,000.

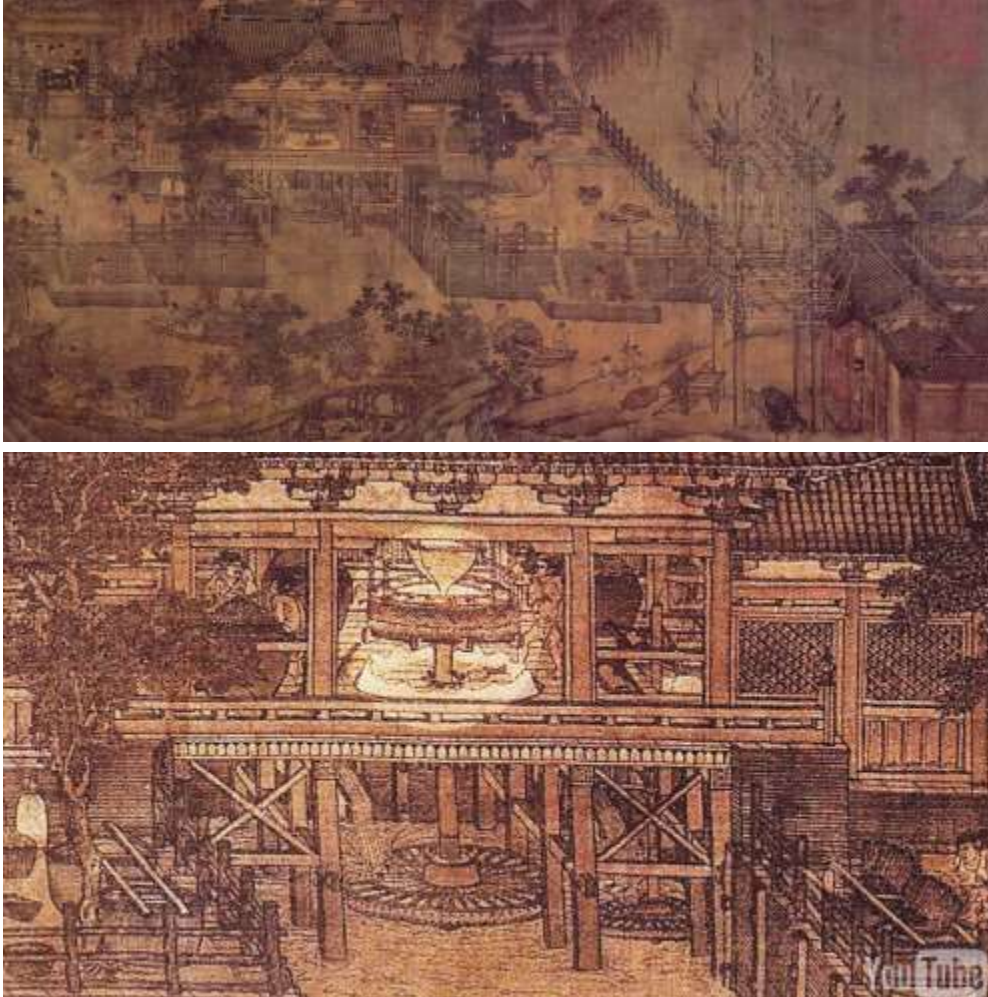
National School System Policy. Wang Anshi instituted schools to teach the classics with commentaries written by Wang and his protégés. To pass the civil service exams, you must first pass through the school system.

What is Wang Anshi Trying to Accomplish?

- Creating a universal, inclusive system that reaches down to the less wealthy households.
- Create an activist government that manages wealth, replacing private institutions.

⁹¹ In the third century BCE, Shang Yang's advised the Lord of Qin to organize households in groups responsible for each other's taxes, see page 55. And to Zhu Yuanzhang's Village System, page 196. Also see Emperor Wu's Expansion of State, page 75.

Waterwheel Painting



What do we see in this painting (top image)?

- An inn on the right with a wooden structure in front.
- A waterwheel in the center left (expanded in the bottom image) that drives a mill on the second floor.
- A pavilion in the upper left with people sitting around a table, like officials, so this is a government mill on the edge of the city.

This is a painting of the government as the driving force in the local economy.

Assessment Question:

In your view who were Wang Anshi's policies intended to benefit: bureaucrats, farmer, merchants, or literati? In two or three sentences, explain why.

My thoughts: Ultimately, Wang's policies would benefit middle-class farmers and small merchants. Infrastructure projects would help farmers and small merchants, crop loans help small farmers, marketing controls help small merchants by stabilizing prices (it hurts the large merchants by competing with them), and service exemptions help the small folk by keeping the wealthy families out of local government.

Reviewing this after the completion of Part 6, I believe a better answer would be that it helps the bureaucrats, as it puts them in the driver's seat, and the literati, as they inherit the bureaucracy. It kills the merchants. It might hurt the farmers ultimately by hurting the economy, but the intent was to help the farmers, as they are second only to the bureaucrats in Wang Anshi's ideal Confucian world.

Sima Guang



Wang Anshi and his supporters were in power for 50 years, even after he died in 1086. But opposition to his policies began within a year of the announcement of his policies.

Sima Guang, the leading opponent, would eventually come into office and try to undo Wang's policies. He was born in the northwest in Xia County, two years before Wang Anshi, to a wealthy family that had served the Song since its founding. Like Wang, he earned a Jinshi degree, but his family had already procured an official position for him⁹² by the time he was 15.

He spent most of his career at Court and when he did go to the provinces, he went to the northern ones. Thus, his entire career was spent in the north. Sima Guang's opposition to Wang Anshi's policies led to him retiring from government and settling in Luoyang, then a haven for the conservative elite. He spent his time constructing a monumental history of China.

After the emperor died in 1085, the empress dowager, also an opponent of Wang Anshi, summoned Sima Guang to form a new government. Once in power, Sima Guang abolished all of Wang's policies. Though he died a year later, Sima Guang's policies lived on. In 1093, the Empress Dowager was no longer the regent and the new emperor restored Wang Anshi's

policies.

Sima Guang was long suspicious of ideologues who romanticized antiquity and forced changes without sufficient understanding, as he saw it, of reality. So what was Sima Guang's notion of reality? History. He noted that for the prior 1400 years there were only 500 years of unity. Based on his own research and writings, he inferred a set of rules.

He believed that unity and disunity were not cyclical and that a Mandate of Heaven did not delegate the right to unify the empire. He believed the divisive forces were military conquest and usurpation. But there were rules that could ensure the longevity of a dynasty. He used a house as a metaphor.

- The common people were the foundation.
- The army formed the walls.
- The laws were pillars
- The officials were beams

And the emperor owned the house. The house would stand forever if each component fulfilled its role.

This was very different from Wang Anshi's view of the world as a dynamic system where common people could study to become officials and be grouped to form a militia, and where policy-making was delegated to well-chosen local officials schooled in Confucianism.

⁹² Not sure if this was *yin privilege* or they simply purchased the official position at the going rate.

Discussion Forum (YvaWong and Dougma)

This section is a departure from my more-or-less slavish reporting of the lectures and is instead a more-or-less slavish reporting of a discussion that I found so fascinating that I didn't want it to languish forgotten in some dusty forum.

These posts were wonderfully written and extraordinarily helpful to this beginning student of Chinese history. I found YvaWong's posts a terrific help in detailing and explaining the historical trends that I was struggling to understand.

Thank you, YvaWong and DougMa. I have left your posts mostly unedited.

YvaWong

First, as for the continuity. I am afraid I have to write a little bit long. I think, in a very long historical period, China had to struggle to find an effective system to administrate a big territory and population with scant transportation and communication conditions. Just as Professor Bol said, the Chinese view of history emphasizes union and disunion, rather than see it as a progressive path. There is a very popular quote from the famous novel 'Three Kingdoms' (三国演义) - 'The rule of the world is that a union will follow a long period of disunion, and then a disunion will follow a long period of union' (天下大势，分久必合，合久必分). Now almost all Chinese, even uneducated, knows this quote. Although I do not think it a scientific opinion, I do believe there is somewhat truth in it.

If we look back to Zhou Dynasty, its territory is quite big, around 1500km from west to east, and around 800km from north to south. Providing the transporting condition at that time, it is difficult for the central government to deliver its orders to every part of the country in time in order to administrate it effectively. So Zhou adopted a government system somewhat like federalism (I am surely not using this word as its exact meaning, sorry that I could not find a proper word) - sovereignty is divided between a central governing authority, the monarch of Zhou (the Son of Heaven, 周天子) and constituent political units (the vassal states). The monarch administrates the vassals, and the vassals administrate the people in their own territories. There is no direct administrative contact between the monarch and the people in vassals and vassals administrate their people quite independently. This system runs for more than 400 years before meeting gradually increasing challenge.

In spite of big territory and widely distributed population, the natural resources in China are distributed not evenly. Some crucial resources are naturally distributed very unevenly and are concentrated in relatively small areas. For example, in Zhou, the drainage basin in middle course of Yellow river is the main crop area, salt mainly come from east coast, iron ore mainly from two mines in current Shandong and Hebei province, and copper from current Hubei province. When one vassals tries to control the precious resources in his own territory to get economic or political advantage, the other vassals more and more tend to grasp the resources they do not have by war. The nominal central government - the monarch of Zhou has not power to stop the wars, and China is in chaos for around 400 years. During this period, many great political or military leaders try to solve these problems within this system, for example, Duke of Qi, Huan-gong (齐桓公) used his supreme military power to force these vassals into peace treaties for nine times (齐桓公九合诸侯), but after his death, war starts again.

Obviously problems cannot be solved within this system, so Qin, after united China into an empire, starts a totally new system - centralization. The central government directly administrates people through appointing officials basic political units - Li (about 100 household), and these officials must obey orders from central government. Although Qin invested huge to improve roads and water transportation, its territory is still too big for the central government to raise in-time and proper feedback to every sub-unit. So when hundreds of soldiers raised a riot, chaos spread rapidly statewide, Qin was thrown down within one year.

After seeing the failure of Qin's centralization system, the winner, Xiang Yu (项羽) wanted to go back to Zhou's federalism system, with himself as the highest monarch. It proved a quick failure too, vassals came into war again and chaos continued for 4 years.

The new winner, Han Dynasty, after seeing the failure of two extreme opposite systems, tried something in between. It kept much power in central government, such as a strong standing army, appointing officials to basic political unit (still Li), tax collecting, etc., but still leave considerable power to local great clans, as keeping their own small armed force, recommending local officials (central government usually accept such recommendation), keeping big fiefs with tax exemption, etc. In spite of continuous small rebellions by strong great clans, this system proved itself quite effective and supported Han Dynasty for more than 400 years, with only a 4-year-interruption by statewide rebellion.

This way in between was followed from Han to Tang for more than 1100 years, during which period the balance of power kept swing between central government and local great clans, until Huang Chao Rebellion in which, as Professor Bol said, most great clans were massacred. This may be the reason why, after Han, the state of disunion

and war lasted for near 400 years with only a short union and peaceful time in West Jin for 50 years, while after Tang, the similar state only lasted for only 72 years before China re-united by Song Dynasty. Without the great clans after Huang Chao rebellion, the local small regimes lacked organized economic support and experienced elites for government administration.

So after Song got its throne and quickly united all small kingdoms in the south, it was the first dynasty without the threat from local great clans. This permitted it to administrate the country more effectively - to get more tax because of the disappearance of fiefs with tax exemptions, to recruit more officials through fair examination system, and to plan road and river transportation without considering the separation of fiefs. All of this contributed to a richer and efficient state.

However, some problems also rose due to the disappearance of great clans. (to be continued)

Dougma

Thanks. Your ideas about the problems caused by the sheer size of the territory and the uneven distribution of resources are interesting and important. Though China fragmented frequently there seems always to have been a centralising cultural force around which people sought to reconstitute the unity of the territory which they perceived as their homeland. If we compare it to Europe (is the word you mean in your second paragraph 'feudalism' rather than 'federalism'?) there were large political groupings and empires, for example the Holy Roman Empire, or later the Hapsburgs, but linguistic and cultural nationalism has always tended to work against such major units. In China this hasn't seemed to have worked in the same way. It is interesting for example to speculate why the Cantonese who have distinctive cultural traditions and a language far removed from standard spoken Chinese, never seemed to have sought independence.

You say that Song didn't face a threat from Great Clans because they had been wiped out, but surely local families would have been attempting to consolidate regional power. It would be interesting to know more about how Song averted this possibility.

YvaWong's Reply to Dougma

Dear Dougma, Thank you for your enlightening comments. I fully agree with you that local families would have been attempting to consolidate regional power in Song. It was a real challenge for Song to avert this possibility. How did they response?

First, just as Professor Bol said, the recruiting system by the government changed. In Tang, the recruiting system is largely family connected. There were totally 375 prime ministers in Tang, among whom, 150 got government service position through protection privilege, 140 through examination (most after An Lushan rebellion), 85 had no records in history. In Song, totally 137 prime ministers, 103 through examination, 22 had no records, only 12 of them entered government without examination. Even in these 12, some of them were at the beginning of Song and had great contribution to the establishment of Song, so did not depend on protection privilege. Song did not cancel protection privilege, but it was carried out by providing monetary bonus, not by offering government positions.

Secondly, Professor Bol also mentioned it, the exam system in Song is more fair. In Tang, the name of the exam participants were open, high rank officials and celebrities could recommend certain participants, so in most times, a participant from great clans or high official family was more likely to pass the exam. Sometimes, the passer, score and rank has been decided even before the exam is run. So we can find, even in the prime ministers who passed the exam, many of them are from great clans or high official families. But in Song, the exam is blind, and the handwriting is strictly restrained to regular script, so that the graders can not distinguish the name by handwriting. And the graders are chosen carefully, for an exam, the graders should have different political opinions, literature standards, birthplaces, and family connection, they will cross-check the exam papers, so that the exam result will not show partiality for any certain person or persons. The result of this improved exam system blocked the route for Lord So&So's idiot nephew (just as Professor Owen said in Part 3) to get government position. In fact, the prime ministers in Song had little family connection with each other, while in Tang, such connection is quite usual.

Thirdly, except for the beginning tens of years, in most time of Song, members from royal families were blocked from political or military activities and government service. This policy was new in Chinese history. Before Song, family members and relatives of Emperor and Empress always had such privileges, and they always took such advantage to form powerful great clans, and often threaten the crown finally. We can see, in Tang, many PM were from Emperor's or Empress' clans, and some princes became prime ministers or regents before they got throne. It is impossible in Song. Even Crown prince could not take part in political activities before he become emperor. And royal family members were strongly not encouraged (although not forbidden) to take exam. Only one PM were from emperor's clan, and kept that position for only one year. This explained why many emperors and royal family members in Song were excellent artists - they did need something to kill time.

Fourthly, the highest military commanders are all civilian officers from central government, the generals with good military experiences were kept in lower rank and must obey civilian officers, and the civilian officers must obey central government. No discretion was permitted. Military and logistic were managed separately, and the garrisons of these generals were changed very often, so that no general could develop his power in a place.

These policies were carried out so well, and were so effective, that no significant internal rebellion happened in Song. But the disadvantages of the policies are also obvious.

1) The territory became much smaller. Even with improved road and river transportation system in Song, it is still impossible for the central government to feedback quickly enough to emergency happening in too far territory. One of the reason for Song's continuous military failures to Liao is Song's commanders had to wait for orders from central government for any action, but the fastest message delivery from capital Kaifeng to the north border took 2 days and a round trip took 4 days. 4 days in war field is enough for everything. Such a commanding system may be still OK for passive defense, but surely not good for active attack. So, it is not strange the territory expansion in Han and Tang is not seen again in Song. But it seems that Song prefer losing military efficiency to losing internal stability. And we cannot just simply say this is right or wrong.

2) Except for the two emperors in the beginning of Song, Song Tai-zu and Song Tai-zong, and the one who established South Song, Song Gao-zong, all of the other emperors in Song did not have any political experience when they are crowned. This left large power space to civilian bureaucrats. In a period which democratic election did not exist, what the ambitious bureaucrats tried to do was to get authorization from inexperienced emperor to apply their policies by developing private relationship with emperor. This caused indulgence to emperor's unreasonable desire, a wide range of corruption, and capricious policies, which were blamed for the failure of North Song.

3) Literati became less independent in career and personality. In Tang, when a literati is not accepted by central government, it is not difficult for him to find a job in local authorities. Tang permitted local officers and military leader to keep their private advisers and clerical staff, who were recruited by the officers or leaders themselves, not through central recruiting system. And local officials and great clans also liked to provide jobs, protections, or financial aids to excellent literati, in order to strengthen their power, And the literati from great clans had enough economic support from their family, losing a position in government is not a disaster for them. All of these provided diversified options for literati in Tang. So we can see many officers with much integrity and independence in Tang. They did not hesitate to point out the mistakes and problems in government policies, even if these policies were from or supported by emperors. When we read poems in Tang, we can also feel such integrity, independence and optimism. But in Song, all of these has gone. To be recruited by government almost became the sole honorable future for a literati (of course, he can also be a businessman, a private teacher, etc., but all of these were regarded as inferior at that time). To be rejected by government did not only mean losing a respected social position, but also mean losing source of income for living. So in Song, we can see more obedience, ingratiation, shirker, selfishness, betray and lies in officials, and more sorrow, helplessness, pressure, and fear in poems.

My own question to YvaWong

YvaWong, that's a great summary of a long period, in terms of what threatens any central authority.

May I ask: What about the balance between battling and conquering foreign invaders versus peace with foreign nations allowing the demilitarization of the borders?

Will a central government in the future realize that it can better defeat internal rebellion, which has been far more devastating than invasion, by agreeing to peace with its neighbors, accepting less territory, and not having to exert control over the armies stationed at the border? (all I know of Chinese history is what we've covered so far, so I don't know if that happens).

Yes, that happened with the Song, but will this now be a trend going forward?

YvaWong's Reply to Me

Dear DavePomerantz, thank you for your comments and your sensible question. I do believe that, in most time, ancient China was in a security dilemma and to keep balance between offense and defense has been a prior policy target for every dynasty, they have tried various alternatives, but none of them proved to be an once-for-all solution.

The early stage of Han dynasty saw a policy of appeasement. In about 70 years, Han sent more than 10 princess to tribal leaders as their concubines (most of them to Huns - the strongest opponent of Han in north). Han presented silk, wine and grain to Huns every year as tribute, and opened border trade with Huns. But, just as Dougma wrote above, the nomadic pastoral communities did not have sufficient resources to establish productive economies, Han always had far more of what the nomads wanted than could sensibly be traded. So nomads invaded Han's northern border for plunder in almost every Autumn after harvest.

The ongoing conflicts pushed Han turning to an offensive strategy. In more than 40 years, Han initiated tens of scaled battles against Huns, and most of them ended with Han's victory. But a question rose - what to do after these victories? To conquer the vast but desolate Gobi is neither cost-effective nor practical provided logistic condition at that time. And huge consumption of wars made it an unsustainable policy. In fact, after continuous wars in 40 year, Han was at the edge of bankruptcy and starvation became so serious that we could find historic record of cannibals.

So, in the circle of offensive and appeasement, we saw a new policy was gradually developed - to turn nomads into Chinese. or we may say, to internalize them, Han immigrated nomads into Chinese border, and left reservations for them. Most reservations are fertile pasture and farmland along northern border, nomads kept their tribal organization and tradition, Han sent officials to supervise them and to teach them farming. When northern tribes invaded, these reservations became fronts and buffer zones, these settled nomads become Han's soldiers.

This policy saw its positive effect from early East Han (东汉) to early West Jin (西晋), during which around 300 years, northern tribes did not have significant threat to China. No one at that time expected this 300 years will be followed by another nearly 300 years of chaos, wars and massacre.

The stable life contributed the population increase of nomads in reservation and beyond northern border. When the resources there were not enough to support the population, they turned southwards for more. This was just the time when China has been weekend by a long term civil wars, nomads swept across the north part of China, and forced Chinese retreat to south of Yangzi River. A wide range of massacre happened. Population of Chinese decreased from 40 million to 12 million.

So it is understandable that, when Tang came into power, they tried an opposite policy - to drain the pressure of nomads outwards. Tang employed nomads in its army for territory expansion, so guided them to develop and look for resources to middle and north-east Asia. Although we are lack of historic data about how much percentage of Tang army is nomads, we do know many important military leaders are from nomads, and most of them can not read and write in Chinese languages and some of them can not speak Chinese fluently, so we can assume most of their soldiers should be from the same ethnic groups, otherwise the language would be a critical obstacle for commanding. In fact, when An Lu-shan rebelled, his army had 180,000 soldiers and most of them are nomads.

We can find, in Tang history, most civilian officials (most of them are Han Chinese) were opposed to territory expansion, because its costs were more than its profits. But Tang emperors, from a family with half nomad lineage, understood very well the danger of nomads turning inwards (southwards). So it is not strange that most emperors supported expansion, and generals got promotion when they won, but got big bonus when they lost. Obviously when they won, they can get resources from the new lands but when they lost, the emperors needed to placate them to prevent them from coveting resources southward.

However, the more territories were got, the more nomads were included by Tang, the more hunger for resources rose, so further expansion was needed. This formed a self-strengthening circle. Following continuous victories, the front was farther and farther from agriculture area, the costs for keeping the new territories and logistic were going up. It finally reached a critical point at which such expansion could not go further. At that point, it is inevitable for this strong, well-trained nomad army to turn inwards. In fact, An Lu-shan Rebellion happened after An Lu-shan lost three big battles, and his expansion outwards were completely halted. Although the emperors provided huge bonus to him, that was far less enough to appease his 180000 soldiers.

After the failures of the above two opposite policies, and after its own unsuccessful military efforts against Liao, Song abandoned the ambition to keep a diversified country. It retreated to traditional agricultural area where is also traditional Han Chinese settlements, and recognized equal diplomatic relations with Liao. It was the first time in China history that China addressed a regime established by northern nomads as a 'brother dynasty'. Song even aided Liao with gains when Liao met serious drought. The improved technology and economy in Liao also permitted Liao to trade with Song in a much larger scale than before. This is a rare period of complete peace between Chinese and northern nomads, which lasted more than 100 years, when the civilization of Song reached its peak.

But by retreating from northern grassland, Song lost one of the crucial strategic resources in cold weapon era - horses. This puts Song at the mercy of northern regimes in the terms of military. When Jin's and Yuan's cavalry invaded Song, Song's infantry was at a big disadvantage. This might stimulate the invention of firearms. But due to the lack of natural Saltpeter, one of the three raw materials of gunpowder, firearms never played a big role in wars in ancient China. In 1279, Mongolian cavalry reached the southernmost border of Song. At the first time of Chinese history, China was conquered by nomads completely.

When Ming restored China after 97 years, it seems having no innovation in foreign policy any more. Its policy is a chowder of polices from previous dynasties, without stable strategy. Appeasement and offensive in turn, some immigration here, some territory expansion there, border trading now and then. There is conjecture that the main purpose of the famous 7 expeditionary voyages of Zheng He from 1405 to 1433 was to look for a route to attack Mongolian from flank or back. It was not found.

As Dougma wrote, Qing finally removed the threat of Mongolian, but with a dishonorable way. Through massacre and restriction of marriage and population, Qing decreased the population of Mongolian from around 10 million to less than 1 million in 250 years. Even now, many Chinese people do not regard Qing as a Chinese dynasty, but as a colonial period as Yuan. This is not because its royal families are nomads. The royal family of Tang has a lineage of Turks, and the first three emperors of Tang are all semi-blood Turks, but Chinese people still list them in the best emperors of China and regard Tang as the best Chinese dynasty. In Chinese tradition, culture, ethics and civilization play far more important roles in identifying Chinese than ethnicity. The savage policy of Qing is so conflicting with Chinese tradition, concept and beliefs in politics, government and state, that Qing were thought as barbarian even after they controlled China for more than 200 years.

My Reply to YvaWong

Dear YvaWong & Dougma, I can't thank you enough for your detailed and extraordinarily instructive comments. This is one of the best discussion threads I've seen and adds immeasurably to the course. With your permission, I'd like to copy your comments into my course notes.

When Prof. Bol talks about periodization and historic trends that cross dynastic boundaries, I have to believe that your analyses of the northern border wars is exactly what he has in mind. I didn't understand why the Chinese emperors wouldn't always choose peace with the nomadic tribes and the answer is, if I read you correctly and to vastly oversimplify, that you can't make peace with an armed and starving neighbor when you are rich, well-fed, and demilitarized. You can have a watchful peace, but then you must equip your border provinces with the strongest armies in your empire and thus create an environment ripe for rebellion. Or you can conquer the vast desert and pay the price in logistics and taxes for an overextended and heavily armed empire that will ultimately be drained of resources or defeated.

YvaWong, I especially appreciate your comments about the Ming, that China embraces its history in terms of the moral fiber of the dynasties and not their bloodlines.

Great stuff. Thank you again.

18: The Neo-Confucianism Movement

道學
(Daoxue)
The Learning
of the Way
Neo-Confucianism

their work
would be
interpreted
and revised
by:
Zhu Xi
朱熹
(1130-1200 CE)

- rejected Wang Anshi's new laws
- questioned Sima Guang's statist model
- rejected Su Shi's literary relativism

Introduction - Context and Claims

The last module dealt with Wang Angshi looking to antiquity and the classics for guidance on governmental reform and at Sima Guang who took a conservative view of limited government.

The Neo-Confucians

Cheng Yi
程頤
(1033-1107 CE)
Cheng Hao
程顥
(1032-1085 CE)
Zhou Dunyi
周敦頤
(1017-1073 CE)
Zhang Zai
張載
(1020-1077 CE)

their work
would be
interpreted
and revised
by:
Zhu Xi
朱熹
(1130-1200 CE)

Cheng Yi was a contemporary of Su Shi, and though not influential in that period would gain repute as a great philosophical thinker. His work and the work of his brother, his teacher, and his cousin would be packaged by Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) and the movement would be called **Daoxue, the learning of the way**, which Prof. Bol refers to as Neo-Confucianism.

Daoxue made a claim to be the correct and universal interpretation of the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. They tell the literati that they must hold themselves responsible for:

- government
- culture
- ethics and morality!

Fan Zhongyan
范仲淹
(989-1052 CE)

先天下之憂而憂，
後天下之樂而樂。
以天下為己任。

The importance of Neo-Confucianism:

- Reinterprets Confucianism
- Becomes part of the examination system
- Becomes a philosophy that every literate person will know from the 13th to the 20th centuries.

Today's Chinese philosophers pay particular attention to Neo-Confucianism.

The statement of Neo-Confucianism:

- Anti-Buddhist
- The world is real, not illusion
- Share with Buddhism a concern for the internal processes of the mind and for enlightenment.
- **Epistemological optimism:** ordinary men can become sages, even if they don't pass the civil service examinations and serve in government. See page 40.

Neo-Confucianism was a serious business. Fan Zhongyan stated that literati should be *the last to enjoy the world's pleasures and the first to worry about the world's worries*.

Core Neo-Confucian Ideas



Since the Classic texts don't contain an explicit manual for institutional design, many philosophers, such as Wang Angshi, wrote commentaries inferring institutional design. These commentaries lacked a description of individual moral behavior.

Neo-Confucians found morality in the natural order of things, the *tiandi wanwu*: heaven and earth and the ten thousand things. We as human beings are as much a part of the natural world as the sun and the moon and the planets.

Uniquely, humans can translate this natural order into social life. That's what the Sages did.

The Classics were created by people who realized their own internal nature as part of an integrated universe.

Li – Pattern, Principle, Coherence



Li is variously translated as pattern, principle, or coherence.

Qi is the fundamental constituent of everything in the world, and is always in flux. Air is rarefied qi, where stones are dense qi. All things have structure, process, and function.

- Everything has a structure
- Everything has a process of change (a tree changing from summer through fall, and winter).

Lastly, *everything has a function*. But the nature of this proposition can be disputed. Is the egg the embryo of a chicken or part of an omelet?

So what gives something its structure, process, and function?

Cheng Yi answers that *li*, the coherence of a thing is its integration of structure, process, and function.

Human nature is the coherence of the self, of the body, of the mind.

The Way is the coherence of the universe.

To learn is to learn the coherence of things.

Filial Piety. Here we have an essential concept in Confucianism. So where does it come from? The parent-child relationship has a structure, it has a process of how it develops over time, and it has a function, of holding the family and society together. This is filial piety.

Discussion

Why was it important that the Neo-Confucians based their interpretations of the classics on principles evident in nature?

My answer: Because the Classics were written by people who interpreted their existence and the moral fabric of their society as originating and evolving within the natural world. Consider that the Classics are deductions from the axiomatic nature of the world. To understand these deductions, you must first understand the axioms.

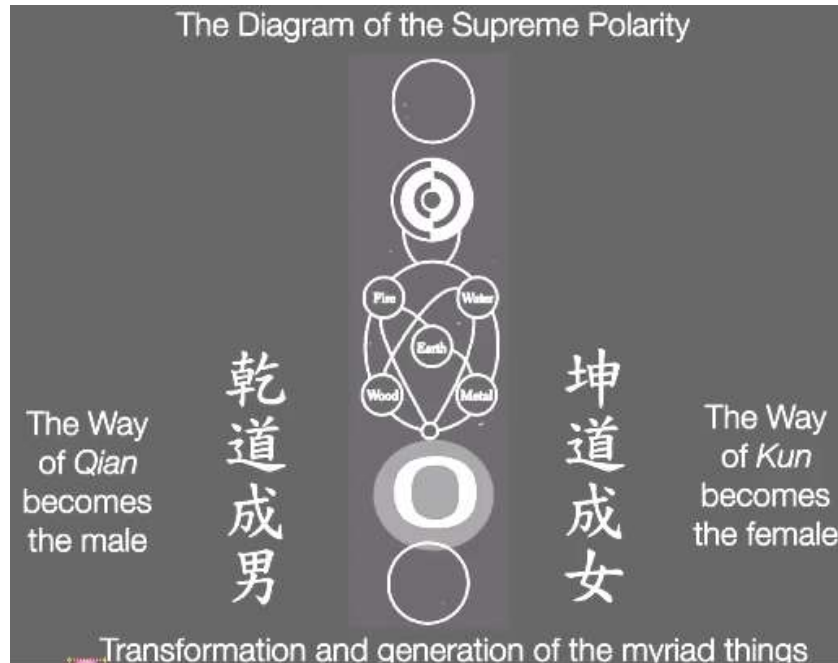
Implications

A moral world derives from individuals who understand first their own coherence within the natural rather than looking to others to define that coherence.

An acorn contains all the *li* of an oak tree. Our human nature is an acorn that has to grow into an awareness of our function in the world at every point in our own maturation. The [hermeneutic circle](#)⁹³ is a good thing for reading the classics. We already have our *li* within us to help us understand it.

⁹³ See footnote 60 on page 94.

Zhou Dunyi



Zhou Dunyi⁹⁴ lived in the 11th century and taught the Cheng brothers Yi and Hao. Neo-Confucians wanted to connect the natural world and human morality.

The Great Ultimate. Something beyond which we cannot go. This is what generates yin/yang, which generates the five phases. The Great Ultimate is the Ultimate of Non-Being which gives rise to yin/yang and thus to wuxing.

The five phases leads to Qian (Heaven) and Kun (earth) which creates the myriad (ten thousand) things.

Man is the pinnacle of these material forces and is most intelligent. Man alone distinguishes good and evil through his interaction with nature.

The best man of all is the sage. The way of the sage is through these four moral qualities:

- principle of the Mean
- correctness
- humanity
- righteousness

Zhou Dunyi traces this back to the Book of Change (*Yijing* – see page 67).

Chapter 20 of the Tong Shu

Comprehending the Book of Change - How to be a Sage

One can become a sage through learning!

The essential way is to [concentrate on] one thing. By [concentrating on] one thing is meant having no desire. Having no desire, one is vacuous (xu, being absolutely pure and peaceful) while tranquil, and straightforward while in action. Being vacuous while tranquil, one becomes intelligent and hence penetrating. Being straightforward while active, one becomes impartial and hence all-embracing. Being intelligent, penetrating, impartial, and all-embracing, one is almost a sage.

My thought: emptying oneself of desire to reach the highest spiritual summit sounds a lot like Buddhism.

⁹⁴ From [Wikipedia](#): His father died when he was fourteen and he was taken in by his uncle Zheng Xiang. He received his first posting in government through his uncle. Although very active in his civil service career, he never did achieve a high position or get the "Presented Scholar" degree (*jinshi*)....

He fused Confucian ethics and concepts from the Book of Changes (I Ching) with Daoist naturalism. He developed a metaphysics based on the idea that "the many are ultimately one and the one is ultimate." This was the first 11th-century Chinese text to argue for the inseparability of metaphysics or cosmology and ethics, as well as the first major Chinese text to explore the concept of the taijitu or "yin-yang symbol".

From the reading:

He was co-opting Daoist terminology to show that the Confucian worldview was actually more inclusive than the Daoist: it could accept a primordial chaos while still affirming the reality of the differentiated, phenomenal world.

Zhang Zai's Western Inscription

From the reading:

Heaven is my father and Earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as I finds an intimate place in their midst.

Therefore that which fills the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. **All people are my brothers and sisters and all things are my companions.**

The great ruler is the eldest son of my parents, and the great ministers are his stewards. Respect the aged -> this is the way to treat them as elders should be treated. The sage identifies his character with that of Heaven and Earth, and the worthy is the most outstanding man. Even those who have no brothers or children, wives or husbands, are all my brothers who are in distress and have no one to turn to.

...

In life I follow and serve [Heaven and Earth]. In death I will be at peace.

My interpretation: The same kind of relationships hold for all things: the ancestral bindings are what tie heaven and earth and all mankind, these relationships give government its authority and give me place in the realm of the empire as well as heaven and earth. If I understand and obey these relationships, I will be at peace.

Cheng Hao, Letter to Zhang Zai on Settling One's Nature

From the reading:

By settling the nature we mean that one's nature is settled whether it is in a state of activity or in a state of tranquility. One does not lean forward or backward to accommodate external things, nor does one make any distinction between the internal and external. To regard things outside the self as external, and force oneself to conform to them, is to regard one's nature as divided into the internal and external. Furthermore, if one's nature is conceived to be following external things, then, while it is outside what is it that is within the self?

My interpretation: Cheng Hao is looking for a state of calm, but he cannot because of external things. The Buddhist position would be to cut oneself from the external world. Somehow, one must interact with the external world and yet retain the calmness of the gentleman. The answer is to ensure one's emotional response follows that of nature (the myriad things). Heaven and Earth have no biases - one must be like that and so to respond spontaneously (whatever *that* means, I'm still struggling with the concept of responding spontaneously) to the external world.

The question the Cheng brothers and their teacher are pondering is how the external world should influence the world of the heart and mind. Can one keep a settled mind while the world is in chaos? Do we react to external events (conform to them) and thus divide one's nature? If we are patterned after Heaven and Earth, then the internal and external both constitute the nature, but the mind must not have its own emotional response to external influences if it is to be constant.

The Book of Change states: "Firm correctness brings good fortune and prevents all occasions for repentance. If he is hesitant in his movements, only his friends will follow his purpose."

Cheng Yi: On Cheng Hao

From the reading: Cheng Hao's eulogy as written by his younger brother.

In "Tracing the Origin of the Way" Han Yu had contended that the institutions of the sages had survived but the values that had guided their use of institutions had not been transmitted. Cheng Yi adopted this distinction in his grave declaration for Cheng Hao, replacing Han's Way of the Sages with "the learning of the sages," but set aside the view that the values that truly mattered (This Way of Ours) had to do with government. Cheng writes:

When the Duke of Zhou died, the Way of the sages was no longer practiced. When Mencius died the learning of the sages was no longer transmitted. When the Way was no longer practiced there was no good government for a hundred generations. When the learning was no longer transmitted there were no true Confucians for a thousand years. When there was no good government, literati were still able to illuminate the way of good government by learning indirectly from others and transmitting it to later times. But when there were no true Confucians everyone was lost and did not know where to go. Human desire went free and heaven's principle was destroyed. The gentleman⁹⁵ was born 1400 years later. He apprehended the learning that has not been transmitted in the surviving Classics; his will was to use This Way of Ours to enlighten this people of ours. (trans. Peter Bol)

These two brothers along with their teacher Zhou Dunyi and their cousin Zhang Zhai, who all lived in Luoyang, set the foundation for the Neo-Confucians that survived to the early 20th century.

The eulogy says that:

- After the Duke of Zhou died, people stopped practicing *what?* The rituals? The ancient institutions of government?
- When Mencius died, the learning of the sages (something that true Confucians do) was no longer passed on. People were lost until Cheng Hao came along.

Thus is there a distinction between the government institutions and individual Confucian learning, which is not dependent upon government. He claims that his brother is the first person in 1400 years to truly understand Confucian learning and that none of the philosophies or writings of the past 1400 years matters.

See page 167 for more on the State vs. the Individual.

[#travelNote: Cheng Yi's hometown is in a beautiful part of Song County, Henan. See [Tianchi](#) and Biayun mountains.]

⁹⁵ Cheng Hao

Cheng Yi on Principle 理(li)

From the reading:

Master Cheng said: For the ancients learning was easy. In their eighth year they entered the minor school and in their fifteenth the greater school. There were decorations to nurture their sight, sounds to nurture their hearing, majestic ceremonies to nurture their four limbs, song and dance to nurture their circulation.... Today these are all lost, there is only moral principles to nurture the mind. Must we not make an effort?

When the sages and worthies spoke it was because they had to. It must have been that these sayings were necessary for the principles to be clear, without these sayings the principles for the world under heaven would be incomplete. It is like the tools for cultivation, ceramics, and metallurgy: were one not constructed the way for mankind would be inadequate. Though the sages wished to stop speaking could they? But while what was contained [in what they said] fully expressed the principle for the world under heaven, it was still very concise. **Later men, when they first held a writing scroll, thought literary composition was the priority, and what they wrote in their lifetimes was far more than the sages.** Yet having [their compositions] remedies nothing; being without them would not mean a lack of anything. They are useless, excess speech. They are not merely excess, since they do not get the essentials; they depart from the true and lose the correct. That they instead harm way is inevitable.

Question: Does the mind have good and bad?

Answer: In heaven it is decree, in things it is principle, in man it is the nature, and the ruler in the body is mind. In fact these are one. **The mind is originally good; in the process of thinking there is good and not good.** If it has found expression then we may call it the emotional responses, we cannot call it mind. As with water, we call it water, but when it flows and branches, some going west and some east, we call it streams.

Men fear that they will become entangled by affairs and that their cogitation will be hindered, simply because they have not apprehended the essentials [of affairs]. The essentials lie in clarifying the good. **Clarifying the good lies in fully realizing the principles of things. When you have fully realized the principle of a thing, then, gradually, it will be possible to fully reach all things under heaven; they are a single principle.**

"All things under heaven can be illuminated with principle. [As Mencius said:] 'If there is a thing there must be a norm.' For one thing there must be one principle."

"One phrase covers it all: **the myriad principles revert to a single principle**". "[One who,] being great, transforms himself [is called a sage]" simply means **principle and self become one**. For those who are not yet transformed it is like using a measuring stick to measure things. When you use it you still cannot avoid being off. For those who are transformed, the self is the measuring stick; the measuring stick is the self. Yanzi [Confucius' foremost disciple] was exactly at this point, if he had transformed then he would have been Confucius."

Arriving at things and fully realizing the principle: **It is not so that one must fully realize [the principles of] all things under heaven. Just fully realize one principle, the rest can be [realized by] extending by categorical similarity.** For example, what is that by which one is filially pious. If you can't fully realize [the principle] for one thing then fully realize it with another...just as there are a multitude of roads that all lead to the capital, just find one road that leads in and it will do. The reason that one is able to fully realize [principle] is that all things are one principle, so that every single thing and affair, however minor, each has this principle.

"For every thing there is a principle, you must fully realize its principle. **There are many methods for fully realizing principle. One may read books and elucidate moral principles. One may discuss past and present figures and distinguish right and wrong. One may respond to affairs and things and arrange them as they should be.** All are fully realizing principle."

Question: "In realizing [the principle in] things, is it necessary to realize it thing by thing, or do you just realize one thing and then the myriad principles are known."

Answer: How can you then inclusively comprehend? **Even Yan Hui would not have dared say that if you only arrived at one thing you would comprehend the multitudinous principles. You must arrive at one item today and another tomorrow, once cumulative practice is much then, as if released, there will be a point where all is coherently connected.**

Question: Are we only to fully realize a single thing and, seeing this one thing, then see the many principles.

Answer: You must seek everywhere. Even Yan Hui was only able to know ten on hearing one. If later you catch on to principle, then even a million can be comprehended [as one].

Cheng, Yi, trans. Peter Bol. *On Principle (li)*. (unpublished translation, original work published in the 12th cent.).

Commentary from the lecture, with my notes:

For the ancients learning was easy. The ancients were being formed by their culture. We don't have that marvelous ancient culture to aid our learning in these days. We only have moral principles.

When the sages and worthies spoke it was because they had to... Later men, when they first held a writing scroll, thought literary composition was the priority, and what they wrote in their lifetimes was far more than the sages. The outpourings of the literati since Mencius was simply a waste of ink.

Question: Does the mind have good and bad?... The mind is originally good; in the process of thinking there is good and not good.

Question: What is the concept of a single principle for myriad things? What does that mean? How does one attain that single principle?

This question is the gist of the latter passages. To me, this leads to the fundamental question of inductive versus deductive reasoning. Can you induce from a small set of events the underlying axioms, the basic nature of all events? Can you extend an understanding of ten things to an understanding of a thousand?

Prof. Bol said there are two ways to look at it:

- There's a web of interconnection that ties all things together
- This is a description of how the mind works in seeing how the parts fit into a whole. The quality of fitting together is *coherence*, the nature of principle itself. In solving a math problem or understanding of poem, there's a moment of understanding, an epiphany that is the moment of seeing the coherence or *li*.

Zhu Xi's Views Of The Mind, The Individual, Politics And The Way



The mind has two types of consciousness:

- one's physical body, sensory impressions, self-oriented.
- moral principles in the mind, a unity of principles (*heavenly principle*).

The heavenly principle must be comprehended if we are to overcome the constant pressure to satisfy the desires of the physical body.

Preface of the Doctrine of the Mean⁹⁶

The reading:

Why was the Mean written? [Confucius' grandson] Master Zisi⁹⁷ wrote it because he was worried lest the transmission of the learning of the Way (Daoxue) be lost. The transmission of the Tradition of the Way (Daotong) should have had its beginning when the divine sages of antiquity continued the work of Heaven and established the ultimate standard. As for this appearing in the Classics – there is [the phrase]

*Hold fast the mean.
which is what Yao gave to Shun. And*

*The human mind is precarious.
The moral mind is subtle.
Have refined discrimination and singleness.
Thus to hold fast the mean.*

which is what Shun gave to Yu. Yao's one utterance is complete and all--inclusive, but Shun added three more in order to show that Yao's words can only be fulfilled in this way.

As I have maintained, the mind as the pure intelligence and consciousness is one and only one. But that I think there is a difference between the human mind (renxin) and the moral mind (daoxin) is because the human mind comes into being from the personal particularity of physical form and qi and the moral mind has its source in the correctness of the nature and destiny [endowed in all humans], and it is on this account that as consciousnesses they are different.⁹⁸ Consequently, the human mind is in a precarious position (liable to evil) and is not secure, while the moral mind is subtle and not easily seen. However, all humans have this physical form and therefore even the most intelligent necessarily possesses the human mind. And they all have this nature and therefore even the most ignorant necessarily possess the moral mind. The two minds are mixed in the space of a square inch [in the heart]. If we do not know how to manage them, what is precarious will become even more precarious and what is subtle will become even more subtle, and the impartiality of Heaven's Principle cannot in the end overcome the selfishness of human desires. Refined discrimination means to discriminate between the two so that they do not get mixed up, and singleness means to hold to the correctness of the original mind and not depart from it. If one devotes himself to this task without the slightest interruption, making sure that the moral mind is always the master of one's person and the human mind will obey it every time, then what is precarious will become secure and what is subtle will become manifest and in tranquility and in action, in speech and in deed, one will be free of the error of going too far or not far enough.

Yao, Shun, and Yu were great sages of the world, and to hand down the empire was a great event of the world. If when the great sages of the world undertook the great task of the world, their repeated admonitions consisted of only so many words, then how could there be a principle of the world that improved on them?

⁹⁶ From [Wikipedia](#): The phrase Doctrine of the Mean (*zhōng yōng*) first occurs in 6.29 of the Analects: *The Master said, The virtue embodied in the doctrine of the Mean is of the highest order. But it has been rare among the people.*

Note that there are lot of different translations of 6.29, but it was James Legge who first translated *zhongyong* as Doctrine of the Mean.

⁹⁷ From [Wikipedia](#): Zisi was the son of Boyu and the only grandson of Confucius. He is traditionally accredited with transmitting Confucian teaching to Mencius and writing the [Doctrine of the Mean](#).

⁹⁸ In his rather strange and frequently discredited thesis, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, Julian Jaynes writes that "Chinese literature jumps into subjectivity in the teaching of Confucius with little before it." Jaynes, if I remember correctly, believed that the corpus collossum functioned differently in ancient minds causing the ancients to hear voices, as if one half of the brain spoke to the other. They interpreted those voices as the word of god. While I personally don't find Jaynes' thesis compelling, it is interesting that Zisi writes about a human mind and a moral mind as separate entities living within the same space.

From this point on one sage passed it on to another. King Tang (r. 1751–?–1739 B.C.?), King Wen (r. 1171–?–1122 B.C.), and King Wu (r. 1121–?–1116 B.C.) as sovereigns, and Gao Yao, Yi Yin, Fu Yue, the Duke of Zhou (d. 1094) and Duke Shao (d. 1056 B.C.) as ministers all thanks to this continued the transmission of the tradition of Way. As to our Master (Confucius), although he did not gain the official position he deserved, in the way he continued the past sages and enlightened future generations, his accomplishment was superior to that of Yao and Shun. However, few understood him in his time. Only what was handed down by Yan Hui and Zeng Can apprehended the main line. But when it went to the Confucius' grandson Zisi, he was already at a distance from the sage past and heterodoxical doctrines had arisen.

Zisi feared that the further away from Confucius, the more the true account would be lost. So he found a basis in the ideas that had been passed down since Yao and Shun, verified them with what he had heard from his father and teacher, deducing one from the other, and wrote this book to instruct those who learn in future generations. He feared for it deeply so he spoke about it pointedly; he thought about it far reachingly so he explained it in detail. When he said [in the opening lines], "What Heaven endow" and "Following our nature," he was talking about the moral mind. When he said, "Choose the good and hold fast to it," he was talking about refined discernment and singleness [of mind]. And when he said, "The superior man hits the mean at all times," he was talking about holding fast the mean. He lived in an age more than a thousand years later, but what he said did not differ from the original in any way but tallied with them perfectly. He made selections from various works of past sages. In bringing out the main principles and revealing the subtle points, no other work is as clear and as thorough as his.

After this it was further transmitted and reached Mencius. He was able to elaborate on and clarify this book and to continue the tradition of past sages, but with his death, its transmission was lost. Consequently, our Way was consigned merely to words and writings. Heterodoxical doctrines arose with increasing novelty and strength to the point that when people like the Buddhists and Daoists emerged, the more their doctrines seemed to conform to principle, the more they violated its authentic form.

Fortunately, this book had not been lost. When the Masters Cheng, the two brothers, appeared they had something to look into in order to continue the thread that had not been transmitted for a thousand years, and had something to rely on in order to reproach the wrong that seemed to be right of the two schools. The contribution of Zisi was great, but were it not for the Cheng brothers, it would be impossible to understand his mind from his words. Unfortunately the Cheng brothers' explanations were lost. What Shi [Dun] compiled came just from the sayings recorded by pupils. Thus, although the fundamental ideas were clear, the subtle words were not well explained.

As to the explanations their pupils did themselves, although they were detailed and comprehensive and offered many new interpretations, in some cases they violated their teachers' tenets and fell into the fallacies of Daoism and Buddhism. I read them at an early age and was skeptical. After some years of repeated pondering, one day I seemed suddenly to be able to understand its essential points. Thereupon I put the various interpretations together and arrived at a common ground. Thereupon I finished the *Mean in Chapters and Verses* in one chapter as the final version to offer to later scholars for their appraisal. Later, with one or two like-minded friends, I edited Shi Dun's compilation, deleting the overlapping and confused material, and entitled it *Abbreviated Collection*. I further wrote down my discussions and my arguments for accepting or rejecting various interpretations to constitute my *Questions and Answers on the Mean* as an appendix. As a result, how the fundamental ideas of the *Mean* in their outline and details formed a coordinated system are expressed briefly or fully as the case calls for, and are presented in their major and minor aspects; in addition, the agreements and disagreements of the several interpretations, and their merits and demerits can now be clarified and elucidated and their meanings may now be fully understood. Although I dare not foolishly make any proposals about [who has shared in] the Tradition of the Way, perhaps the beginning scholar may find something in this work. If so, it can be a help to those who want to travel far and scale the heights. (trans. Bol)

Zhu, Xi. *Preface to the Doctrine of the Mean by Chapters and Verses*. Irene Bloom and Peter Bol, eds. *The Sources of Neo-Confucian Tradition*. (forthcoming).

Learning of the Way (daoxue). Zhu Xi's Commentary was his contribution to the continued transmission of the Learning of the Way. Even after the Cheng brothers have died, Zhu Xi is concerned that their interpretation of Confucius is being mangled.

Tradition of the Way (daotong). Began when the Sages continued the work of Heaven - nature's work taken over by humans.

To hold fast the mean. This is the fundamental meaning of Confucianism. To balance the human and moral minds so the needs of the being avoid the tendency toward evil and so the subtle wisdom of nature is manifest.

The two minds are mixed in the 'square inch of the heart' to balance desire and wisdom. We must allow Heaven's Principle to overcome desire.

The human mind is precarious.

The moral mind is subtle.

Have refined discrimination and singleness.

Thus to hold fast the mean.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Ming historians demonstrated that these four lines originated in books much later than antiquity.

The Individual and Politics



Analects §14.24 Learning To Please Oneself

If knowing what is right depends on me, then I cannot rely on law and government for moral leadership. Think, therefore, of people who say they're Confucians or Neo-Confucians and join government as scholar officials to tell people how they should act. Are they true Confucians? Government is important, but individuals must themselves learn how to behave. See page 34.

People who understand Confucius and moral consciousness and the Way of the ancients have a moral standing that allows them to pronounce upon the Way. This is Daotong and it's given not to rulers, but to scholars. Not that a ruler couldn't have this moral authority, but Zhu Xi doesn't think any ruler since the Zhou Dynasty has had true understanding of morality.

Confucius, Mencius, Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao, Zhou Dunyi, Zhu Xi had that understanding. They can continue the Daotong, the Learning of the Way.

This is a revolutionary notion, that Daotong is more important than the continuity of government. That the authority of how government should act and what it should do should reside with people who have true understanding of the Way.

An Aside: The State vs. The Individual

David N. Keightley said that virtue accrued to the individual in ancient Western civilizations, but that in ancient China, virtue accrued to the individual through his service to the state. See page 30.

But there's a long tradition of Chinese philosophy, especially Confucian philosophy, asserting the primacy of the individual.

Yang Zhu, a Warring States philosopher, believed people should do good for themselves alone. *If I could save the world by pulling a hair out of my head, I would not do it..* See page 42. Mencius replied to the Yangists by saying that government is not going away. The market of negotiation between individuals needs a government to limit excess.

The Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huang, buried himself with hundreds of terracotta soldiers built of identical bodies, but unique faces and hair. A friend of Professor Bol said that he most admired America's *lack* of individuality -- that the Chinese were *too* individualistic. See page 60.

In third century literature, a burgeoning concept arose that the individual could be more important than the state or even the family. See page 82.

Even the civil service exam, when it was first instituted in the Tang dynasty, tested poetry as a way of unveiling the talent of the individual. See page 120.

Han Yu, the founder of the Ancient Style Movement, asserted that Confucian spirituality, unlike that of the Buddhists and Daoists, links the private, moral life of the individual with the public welfare of the state. See page 147.

Among the Neo-Confucians, Cheng Yi claimed a distinction between the government institutions and individual Confucian learning, which is not dependent upon government. See page 161.

Neo-Confucianism as a Social Movement



Besides its position as a philosophy, Neo-Confucianism was also an identity. Because of Zhu Xi, Neo-Confucianism becomes a social movement within the literati of the 12th century. It provided a social context for promoting Neo-Confucianism as a means of doing good for others.

In the Northern Song during the 11th century, schools were run by the state. In the Southern Song of the 12th century private academies began to appear. The Neo-Confucians adopted these private academies to promote their philosophy through *jiangxue*, discoursing on learning.

They built shrines to the early Neo-Confucians, worshipping them and offering sacrifices. They created community covenants, making agreements to monitor one another as *people of a common will*, to promote a better society. These covenants crossed family boundaries.

They built charitable granaries¹⁰⁰ so local families don't have to borrow from the government to seed their farms in the spring.

In effect, they're offering a Confucian alternative to the religious institutions, particularly the Buddhist temples.

They have a new shared philosophical vocabulary, the collected texts of the Neo-Confucian masters.

Above all, they define the goal of learning as sagehood.

Redefining the Classics

The Neo-Confucians redefine the significance of the classics¹⁰¹. Traditionally, *the classics* meant the five classic texts of antiquity. Neo-Confucians create a set of text known as the Four Books:

- The Great Learning
- The Doctrine of the Mean
- Mencius
- Analects

They are distinguished because they talk about the actions and morality of the individual rather than the state.

¹⁰⁰ This is a private extension of the concept of an Ever Normal Granary, which first appeared in the Han. See page 246.

¹⁰¹ The Classic Texts were originally defined by Dong Zhongshu, who was considered the great Confucian of the Western Han. See page 66.

Transformation Of Neo-Confucianism In The Ming: Wang Yangming¹⁰²

Reading: The Colloquy At The Tianquan Bridge

Two points of view:

- Moral cultivation.
- Intuitive spontaneity. Like Chan Buddhism, this is a belief that the inner mind transcends good and evil and natural spontaneity is characteristic of a sage.

I've copied selections from the reading:

In the original substance of the mind there is no distinction of good and evil, When the intentions become active, however, such a distinction exists. The function of innate knowing is to know good and evil. The investigation [rectification] of things is to do good and remove evil.

Here I deal with two types of people. The man of sharp intelligence apprehends straight from the source. The original substance of the human mind is in fact crystal-clear without any impediment and is the equilibrium before the feelings are aroused. The man of sharp intelligence has already accomplished his task as soon as he apprehends the original substance, penetrating the self, other people, and things internal and things external all at the same time. On the other hand, there are inevitably those whose minds are dominated by habits so that the original substance of the mind is obstructed. I therefore teach them definitely and sincerely to do good and remove evil in their intention and thoughts. When they become expert at the task and the impurities of the mind are completely eliminated, the original substance of the mind will become wholly clear. I adopt Ruzhong's view in dealing with the man of sharp intelligence, and that of Dehong for the second type.

For the intelligent person...

For Wang this is a unity one starts with and expands upon, in contrast to Zhu Xi, who in his note on the investigation of things in the Great Learning, speaks of the gradual penetration of principles until finally one achieves a breakthrough to integral comprehension and coalescence.

Wang placed a prime value on the feeling of love for, or oneness with, all creation and on the natural integrity of the mind, as opposed to a mind divided against itself by the counterposing of the human mind to the mind of the Way (i.e., the nature)

People fail to realize that the highest good is in their minds and seek it outside.

Now the original substance of the mind is human nature. Human nature being universally good, the original substance of the mind is correct.

The extension of knowledge is not what later scholars understand as enriching and widening knowledge. It is simply extending one's innate knowing to the utmost. This innate knowing is what Mencius meant when he said, "The sense of right and wrong is common to all human beings."

Whenever a thought or a wish arises, my mind's faculty of innate knowing itself is always conscious of it. ...although an inferior person may have done all manner of evil, when he sees a superior man he will surely try to disguise this fact, concealing what is evil and displaying what is good in himself. This shows that innate knowing does not permit any self-deception. Now the only way to distinguish good and evil in order to make the intention sincere is to extend to the utmost this innate knowing faculty.

Wang identified the original pure mind with the "utmost good" of the Great Learning, regarding it not as a perfection beyond one, to be reached or achieved, but as an inherent perfection within, to be uncovered, released, and extended to others.

Later generations fail to realize that the utmost good is inherent in their own minds, but exercise their selfish ideas and cunning and grope for it outside their minds, believing that every event and every object has its own peculiar and definite principle.

In the above, Wang incorporates into his doctrine of the mind the language of the Cheng-Zhu method of the mind -- the method of refined discrimination and oneness and holding fast to the Mean -- and focuses it on the unity of principle rather than on the diversity of principles in events and things. Wang places a prime emphasis on the substantial unity of innate knowing, rather than on the different steps in the Great Learning's method of self-cultivation.

¹⁰² There's a superb write-up of Wang's ideas in the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). Also, see page 207 for a comparison of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming and the rise of Wang Yangming's philosophies in the Late Ming.

Lecture Notes

the investigation
of things
格物
(gewu)

Zhu Xi, in his commentaries on the Four Books, focuses on the Great Learning which he takes as a great fathoming, interpreting it to be an absorption into the consciousness of *li*, the principal coherence. This fathoming being *gewu*, the investigation of things. It spans all investigation from the individual attainment of knowledge to the bringing of peace to the world.

In *gewu*, there is no single epiphany but rather a series of quiet sittings that result in a cumulative learning.

By the 13th century, after Zhu Xi's death, the government began to accept the authority of his followers, and in 1315, 40 years after the Mongols conquered the Song, the examinations were restored. The first part of the exam tested the Four Books with Zhu Xi's commentaries, cementing Zhu Xi's ideas as a substantial element of the education of the literati from that point forward.

Wang Yangming
王陽明
(1472-1529 CE)

In the late 15th and early 16th centuries of the Ming Dynasty, some Neo-Confucians wanted to re-emphasize the individual experience of grasping coherence, *li*, to reach moral conclusions. This was Wang Yangming's movement.

His notion was to rectify one's internal thoughts in order to learn how to respond to external events, to find one's innate ability to recognize good, by keeping one's selfish desires at bay.

He asserted that you can't know what's right and not act, it's simply not possible. And you can't act without knowing, that is, you can't know what's moral until you're doing it. This is the unity of knowledge and action.

Good and Evil are Not Real

The later Wang Yangming school included people who concluded from his Four Axioms that good and evil are not real, but are relative judgments.

Neo-Confucianism is sometimes considered an orthodoxy, and since it was part of the examination system, a state orthodoxy. In fact, the exam included quotes from Wang Yangming that contradicted the writings of Zhu Xi. Thus, the practice of Neo-Confucianism allowed for considerable disagreement.

Wang Yangming's Four Axioms

Wang Yangming stopped at the Tianquan Bridge to talk with his two leading disciples, Wang Ji and Qian Dehong, and gave four statements, which were interpreted quite differently by them.

The Four Axioms

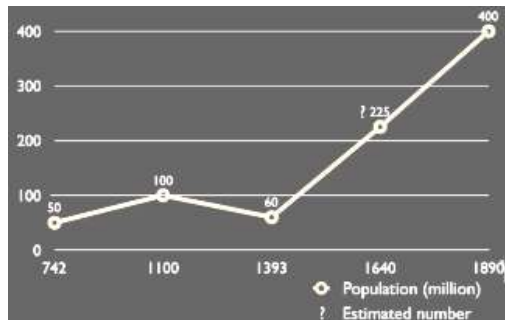
1. **Having no good and no evil is mind-in-itself.** Alternatively, *in the original substance of the mind there is no distinction between good and evil.* When freed of selfish desire, the mind knows innately what is good.
2. **Having good and having evil is the activity of the will.** Alternatively, *when the will becomes active, however, such a distinction exists.* It is only when you make a choice that the possibility for good and evil emerges. It's not inherent in the mind-in-itself.
3. **Innate knowing is knowing the good and evil [in the activity of the will.]** Alternatively, *the faculty of innate knowledge is to know good and remove evil.* Innately knowing the good, or *liangzhi*, is the notion that there's no distinction between *li* and mind. In other words: *what other people mean is hard to know, but whether my own actions are good or evil are always known to me.*
4. **Performing good and getting rid of evil is the rectification of actions.** Alternatively, *the investigation of things is to do good and remove evil.* The investigation of things is what the Cheng brothers mean by fully realizing the principles, all of which is focused on the self. Omphaloskepsis. ☺

Wang Ji reads the first axiom and says *there's no good and evil, it's an irrelevant concept.* Dehong disagrees, saying there has to be a gradual movement of the mind toward its innate selfless state.

19: Exams and Elites: China's Unity

On The Unity Of Later Imperial China

Since the 1270's, the Yuan dynasty, China remained a single political entity, despite rebellion and invasion and conquest.



After the survey of 1393, when the population was down to 65 million, it exploded straight through the 19th century to 400 million, quintupling since 1393. Despite the rise in population, the size of the civil administration did not rise above 40,000. Compare this to the 120,000 bureaucrats employed by the Han (page 64).

After Wang Anshi's new policies in the 11th century, the political elite turned against activist government choosing a minimal bureaucracy instead. How do we account for the small size of the bureaucracy maintaining a single entity without splintering into several states?

Discussion

My Thoughts. After reading several posts, I'm agreeing with these concepts:

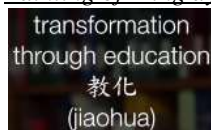
- A culture that values elders and leaders - the Confucian philosophy - enable strong central government.
- The government has learned from past mistakes. Learning from history is a large part of Chinese culture. From the Qin onward, Chinese government has adapted to the needs of a unified bureaucracy.
- Chinese government has always put a strong emphasis on a unified ethnic China, sometimes inclusive of other ethnic groups, but always wanting to unify China proper.

Intellectual-Institutional Perspective

Discussion with Professor Michael Szonyi



Painting of Ming dynasty candidates waiting to read their exam scores.



Looking forward from the Tang-Song transition, Chinese leaders discovered that the exam system attracted tens of thousands of people to compete and established the kinds of learning that were most valuable. It therefore created a system of shared values, of *jiaohua*, *transformation through education*. Even though most people failed, the candidates learned a shared national culture.

One factor that encouraged candidates was the fairness of the test. It was blind - your name was removed from the exam and the exam was recopied by clerks, hiding your calligraphy.

The exam began at the local level, proceeded to the province and then the capital.

By the middle of the 13th century, in southern Song with a population of 60 million, there were almost a half-million involved in the examination system, roughly 1% of the population. These were the elite.

Chances of passing the exam were only 1 in 3,300. Yet the system controlled the values learned by the 3,299 who failed.

This changed our thinking of China from a feudal society led by clans to a civilization state where education rather than wealth and heredity was the path to power.

Social Mobility

Discussion with Professor Michael Szonyi



1148 Examination Roster

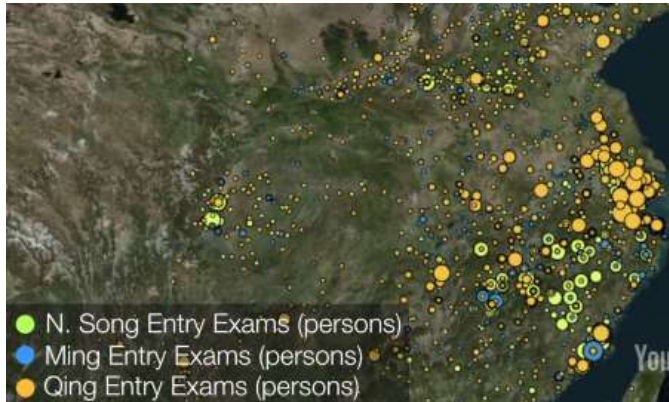
New Men

We have two lists from the Southern Song, from 1148 and 1256, showing how many people in a particular patrilineage have passed the exam. It appears that 40% of those who passed were the first men in the patriline to pass.¹⁰³

Reverence for the Exam

In China today, the *gaokao*, or national college entrance exam, takes two days during which the students are not to be disturbed and all traffic is stopped near the schools. The streets fall silent. The offices where graders are marking the exams are protected by guards. Fairness is a national issue.

If we look at the subjects taught in Chinese higher education today, we see the same influence on culture that the exam had centuries ago.



Distribution of Successful Exam Candidates

The distribution of successful candidates is not evenly distributed either by region or by population. Prof. Bol isn't sure why - it seems to be anomalous.

Alternative Explanation

Concerns about exams as driving force for unity

See page 146 for the initial discussion on the exam.

In the first segment, Prof. Szonyi argues (from my own discussion post) the implausibility that the actions of a very, very few (those who set the curriculum) then leveraged the actions of a small minority (those who took the exams) who were then capable of locking the vast majority into a stable empire free of successful rebellion for hundreds of years. That even without evidence to the contrary (the lack of evidence being neither proof nor disproof) it seems unlikely to be a strong enough stabilizing force.

¹⁰³ Although the numbers of **new men** are as high as 40%, it may be a disproportionate number of those have uncles or cousins who passed the exam. It may be that social mobility is not as high as that 40% figure would imply. In other words, the effort to pass the exam is so great that being in a family with the wealth to properly educate a student was important in passing. That comparative advantage may have been stronger than simple statistics would indicate.

In fact, the vast majority of successful candidates were from a few very large extended families.

Local Elites

General assumptions about human society:

- How we behave is shaped by our perceived interests which are shaped by society.
- Any society is going to be stratified. People at the top will oppose social mobility.

People at the top had resources that kept them there:

- Money
- Culture (education)
- Political connections to the state
- Military
- Land

In most of China including the hinterlands where most of the people lived, land was the key resource.

A common theme in the arts featured farmers or merchants rising from poverty to gain wealth and trade their wealth for education for their kids, so they could pass the exams and join the elite. This was the destination.

My Discussion Post

Socialization and acculturation begin at an early age, from the way a language is constructed, to how family members relate to one another, to the subtle rewards and punishments granted by parents to children, to education, to livelihood, and finally to the laws and other forms of justice that are in fact a thin layer above the rich moral depth of a society.

We become inculcated in our cultures to the point that we cannot distinguish our own thoughts from those of our parents, friends, elders, and leaders. Their thoughts have come from their own societal positions, and so on, in a deeply intertwined web. A lifetime in this web of shared values and emotions leads us to a sense of ease in our own culture and unease in different cultures.

To understand another culture is to find the point of separation between ourselves and society. To understand many cultures is to find the shared humanity that is in all of us and is independent of culture.

Marriage Alliances

Local elites use their resources to build social power by marrying into other local families. Another theme in the arts is the young scholar without influence who falls in love with an elite daughter, and the marriage is opposed by the father.

A taboo in traditional Chinese society prevents marriage to a person of the same surname, and where there are only a few surnames in villages, it forces young people to leave the village. Today, the taboo is ignored which changes the nature of marriages.

Lineage



A lineage is a social group whose members share a common ancestor or have married someone who shared a common ancestor. Patrilineal kinship was a structuring principle through Chinese history.

Going back to our quest for an alternative explanation for unity when governed by a small elite, is the emergence of patrilineal kinship as an institution. Some of their practices included:

- building large ancestral halls
- carefully compiled and printed genealogies
- portraits - large graphic representations of family - which were concealed during the cultural revolution.
- ritual (including sacrifice). Before the Song, at a gravesite. After the Song, in the ancestral hall.
- schools

Where do the institutions come from? A creative re-reading of Neo-Confucian scholars. Building ancestral halls and compiling genealogies tells society that you are a good Confucian. And they prove to be an effective way to handle tax obligations.

Limitations of the Lineage: Temple

How do you build relationships between difference communities with different lineages? The temple is where people of different lineages worship together, with the temple serving as a form of local government. Disputes are resolved, projects are organized.

One way that local elites exercise power is by mediating disputes within the community, and mediating the relationship with the next level of government.

Resolving the Contradiction

Shared National Culture

Both mechanisms, the exams and the lineage, move China toward a shared national culture, which is instrumental in holding the country together as a single entity. The shared national culture includes:

- The Four Books of the Neo Confucians
- The stories of Emperor Guan and the Guandi temples

The political unity may be a byproduct of the local elites gaining power by establishing themselves as the kind of people who read the Four Books and are thus adherents to the orthodoxy.

Close Reading

The Third Preface

Lue Rui, a new metropolitan graduate and trainee of the Directorate of Astronomy asked Zheng Heling, a fellow graduate, to write a biography. Right away this shows the shared camaraderie of fellow graduates. One can only imagine the bond between two young men: carefully schooled members of a tiny minority of the half-million scholars, those who passed the exam. One in thirty-six hundred scholars! Zheng cannot refuse.

Zheng appends a postscript to the Lu Genealogy.

The Fourth Preface

A family may reach tens of thousands and the genealogy tells them who are their clan members. This genealogy traces back at least 15 generations (15x20=300 years, roughly). Unfortunately the records before that were lost in a fire in 1487. It was reconstructed painstakingly into six volumes and took 11 years to complete.

The preface points out that some family historians fake their genealogical records in order to compete for power and prestige.

The Sixth Preface

A genealogy is important to deepen ties within the family and warn where ancestors strayed from the values of the family culture. It is group cohesion, in psych-speak¹⁰⁴. The reference to Sima Qian reminds me of an earlier question: what keeps an emperor's unlimited power in check? One answer: the historian's record of an emperor's indiscretion, preserved for all time. In other words, the fear of immortal shame.¹⁰⁵

The family genealogy uses its importance as the family historical record, the carrot and stick to enforce values.

The Lu lineage originated from Gaosun Xi, the descendant of the Duke Tai of Qi and the son of Duke Wen (lived between the 9th and 8th centuries BC). He was enfeoffed in Lu, therefore he took Lu as his surname.

That's some legacy!

They then immersed themselves in the Classics and histories and there were many famous and worthy figures in each generation. Outstanding ones, who spoke frankly about politics and involved themselves in worldly affairs, became eminent at court. Worthy ones, who maintained their purity and integrity, exerted themselves at home in the countryside.

Influence through public service. Influence through local ties. The two sides to the argument.

Their seriousness and consonance (Suyong) leads to harmony

There's that phrase: seriousness and consonance.

¹⁰⁴ From [Wikipedia](#): When discussing social groups, a group is said to be in a state of cohesion when its members possess bonds linking them to one another and to the group as a whole. Although cohesion is a multi-faceted process, it can be broken down into four main components: social relations, task relations, perceived unity, and emotions. Members of strongly cohesive groups are more inclined to participate readily and to stay with the group.

¹⁰⁵ See page 67: Sima Qian's sacred duty to use history as a force to constrain the power of the emperor.

*My home is in Yuchen, but I have gotten to know Lu Honggui, known by the style-name Chubai. When I served in the Ministry of Rites I had the same position as Chubai. **Our friendship is greater because we passed the civil service examination in the same year** and there is a long-standing friendship between our two families.*

The civil service exam promotes ties between families across China, perhaps in the manner that the temple brings together different families in the same locale. Thus the two methods of bonding the Chinese and creating unity.

Old Preface XII

*The genealogy of the Lu family began in the jiazi year in the Zhiyuan reign period of the Yuan Dynasty (1264). Since then **it has been recompiled every thirty years or so. What was doubtful was left out and what was certain was transmitted.***

*...
The difficulty of genealogical studies has long been lamented. The vulgar either attach themselves to the prestigious and forget their true origin or intentionally omit some branches of the lineage and deny their kinship. Neither phenomenon is even worth mentioning. If even later men criticized [the influential models of genealogy by] Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072) and Su Xun (1009-1066) as great Confucian scholars it is easy to imagine the other difficulties of genealogical studies. The genealogy of the Lu comes close enough that it will likely be spared the criticism of gentlemen.*

The New Preface

This preface was ordered by the Committee for the Recompilation of the Genealogy of the Lu Residential Compound, a National Level Unit for the Preservation of Cultural Relics. In other words, the preservation of genealogies is ordered by the government at the highest levels, intertwining government, culture, and local families.

The family tradition of learning was thus long established and men of talent came forth in droves.

In Eastern Han there was the great Confucian scholar Lu Zhi, who gained a great reputation. Cao Cao once said in admiration: "Secretary Lu is the hope of the world, the bulwark of the state" and warned his troops not to trespass on his village, such was his respect for Lu Zhi.

Above we can see the reverence for learning and how it reverberates through politics.

Spirit of Integrity

After a battle with the Yuan in which hundreds of clan members were killed, the Lu family refused to serve the Yuan dynasty.

In the ancestral hall a descendant wrote the couplet: "Their bodies reverted to purity: they could serve the Song government but withdrew in the Yuan. They bring glory to their descendants: though they have vanished their virtue is not forgotten." From this we can see how greatly the Lu descendants honored the two words, "Spirit [of] Integrity (氣節)."

Unity

Here's the reverence for passing the exams, showing how family and government and examinations and culture bond to create unity.

Beginning with Lu Rui's (盧睿, 13th gen., 1390-1462) success in passing the metropolitan examination in the xinchou year of the Yongle reign period (1421), [the Lus] produced [in total] eight metropolitan graduates, twenty nine provincial graduates, and one hundred and fifty odd officials in the Ming and Qing. How they flourished!

*...
Today government policy works and people are in harmony.*

The Arts

*Even though the **Seriousness and Consonance Hall** has a reputation comparable to the Imperial Palace, it lacks of writings and paintings so that visitors have no means to know its accumulated history. Now that the problem has been solved celebration and congratulations are in order.*

The Biography of Master Pine Studio - Lu Daoqing

This is the biography of an unusually well-read and moral man, preserved to show future generations a model of how to behave. Lu Daoqing combined all the virtues of a Neo-Confucian scholar: filial piety, public service, humaneness, great literacy.

The Biography of Lady Jia

Her allegiance was to the family and the lineage. She is held up as a model of how women should behave in Chinese society.

She was able to learn by heart all the classics, histories, and the affairs of the past and present that her father and brothers studied and recited. When she became old, she was able to educate sons and daughters-in-law by drawing on [the knowledge she had acquired]. As to childhood learning and woman's work, she was able to do these without having been [formally] taught.

When she administered the lineage matters, she was diligent and hard-working; she completed the unfulfilled tasks of the generation. By taking from the better-off to support the worse-off, [she made sure that] the lineage never suffered insufficiencies.

Here's an example of Confucian values - of leading others through one's own ritual and *ren*.

Even when drinking [a cup of water] or eating [a spoonful of rice], she did not act improperly. In his early years, grandfather went out and drank with his friends, and brought back home some leftover food. Grandmother said: "those who are wholesome do not accept the food thrown at them impolitely (嗟來之食)." Grandfather was so ashamed that he finally quit drinking.

Here, she shows the acceptance of the low value the Chinese culture of the 15th century places on a woman, that it's not seemly for her portrait to be drawn:

When her sons asked to draw her portrait for later generations to look up to her, grandmother said in anxiety: "Unfortunately I was born a woman. I regret I have not left the world earlier; I would have erased my worldly traces more quickly. Why would I want to pass down my ugly face to posterity? Even if a wife is old, it is hardly legitimate to have a painter to embellish her façade."

Discussion

The two arguments are intertwined. The exams and the reverence for study are referenced in all the prefaces to the Lu genealogies. Even Lady Jia, a woman who had no prospect for advancing through examinations, was heralded for her own study and for pushing other family members to study.

The Seriousness and Consonance Hall and the memorials throughout the Lu compound are a physical reminder that the goal of every young man is to someday have a memorial arch of his own, to be a part of this 3000-year legacy dating back to the Duke of Wen. How to achieve that legacy? Through study, through passing the exams and serving the public good. The lineage encourages public service as a moral value.

At the same time, we see the cross-pollination of graduates of the exams. It's an old-boy system at the very highest level, where two graduates of the Metropolitan Exam, members of a small and elite fraternity, are bound beyond their family ties. They write prefaces to each other's genealogies. This powerful fraternity will act to resolve inter-family conflict and bind China as one.

You can think of it as binding across space through the exam and binding across time through lineage.

Literati and the Spread of Neo-Confucianism



In 1241, the court removed Wang Anshi from the Confucian temple at the capital and replaced him with Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi, as the Neo-Confucian leaders.

When Neo-Confucianism spread in the 12th century, it was not through the exam system, but through private education. Zhu Xi had at least 500 of his own students, most of whom were not officials.

In a world where most literati were failed aspirants to officialdom, Neo-Confucianism gave them a new aspiration, to cultivate their moral potential. They put it into practice in their own families and communities, joining up with those who shared those moral values, building unity, family by family, village by village, throughout China.

The court recognized Zhu Xi and Cheng Yi so they could appeal to opinion leaders among the local elites who had influence throughout China. In 1315, 40 years after the conquest of the South, when the examinations were restored by the Mongols, the first part of the new exam included the Four Books with Zhu Xi's commentaries. From that point forward, 1315 to 1905, nearly six hundred years, all Chinese students participating in the exams, that is, all of the literati, studied Zhu Xi's moral philosophy.

Final Discussion Topic

Throughout Chinese history, politics and the purpose of government are constant matters of debate. How did views of the role of government change in the transition from early to late imperial China? What was the relationship between the government and the elite? Consider both the function of political institutions and the ideas about the role of government in Chinese intellectual history.

My response follows:

It seems to me that the relationship between the central government and local elites gained nuance over time. The methods of taxing adapted to the needs of a merchant commerce and higher agrarian investment. The methods of building the military and negotiating peace adapted to the strengths of the neighboring states and the dangers of delegating power to provincial generals. The methods of schooling adapted to a changing intellectual culture that yearned for the moral values of antiquity, combining the exemplars of the Sages with the ideology of modern scholars. The method of appointing bureaucrats adapted from pure heredity to *yin privilege* to class-blind exams that tested those same broadly accepted moral teachings.

In antiquity, kings anointed themselves with Heaven's Mandate with the elite comprised of members of the royal family and their close advisors, and in the provinces, the feudal lords. The kings taxed the common people to build armies and civil projects and to properly practice the rituals and to administer justice.

Later, in the times of the early emperors, the elite were those close to the emperor - concubines and the inner court, and the outer court of bureaucrats who ran the capital and were appointed to run the provinces. The role of government was similar: taxes for military expansion, border protection, judicial administration, and corvee labor for civil projects. Further, the goal of government was increasingly to obtain unity for all of ethnic China.

Later still, the elite included the great clans of the aristocracy in conjunction with those who passed the civil service exam and migrated upward through the bureaucracy on the basis of their education and their administrative skill. In the era of the Cosmopolitan Tang, the role of government expanded to developing a merchant class through the protection of an expanded trade route and by bringing order to the world around it. The government also began playing a role in supporting the religions: Confucians, Buddhists, and Daoists, with the emperor the face of all three.

Throughout the early imperial age, central control was achieved through delegation to the provinces, where the local elites had a large hand in both administering the edicts of the central government and supporting local commerce.

Wang Anshi envisioned an expanded role for the central government to include centrally administered loans to farmers, wholesaling of goods, taxing of small families to administer local government, and nationally administered schools to funnel classically trained students into the central bureaucracy. These changes bypassed the network of wealthy elites that for hundreds of years had formed the local base of social and financial power for much of China.

Sima Guang, having descended from the wealthy elites, took umbrage to Wang Anshi's policies and successfully dismantled them, returning to a less activist and smaller central government, with power delegated to the local elites.

China was learning how to administer a stable, efficient, and fair government.