

Northern and Southern Dynasties and the Course of History Since Middle Antiquity

Li Zhī'an

Translated by Kathryn Henderson

Abstract

Two periods in Chinese history can be characterized as constituting a North/South polarization: the period commonly known as the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420AD-589AD), and the Southern Song, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties (1115AD-1368AD). Both of these periods exhibited sharp contrasts between the North and South that can be seen in their respective political and economic institutions. The North/South parity in both of these periods had a great impact on the course of Chinese history. Both before and after the much studied Tang-Song transformation, Chinese history evolved as a conjoining of previously separate North/South institutions. Once the country achieved unification under the Sui Dynasty and early part of the Tang, the trend was to carry on the Northern institutions in the form of political and economic administration. Later in the Tang Dynasty the Northern institutions and practices gave way to the increasing implementation of the Southern institutions across the country. During the Song Dynasty, the Song court initially inherited this "Southernization" trend while the minority kingdoms of Liao, Xia, Jin, and Yuan primarily inherited the Northern practices. After coexisting for a time, the Yuan Dynasty and early Ming saw the eventual dominance of the Southern institutions, while in middle to late Ming the Northern practices reasserted themselves and became the norm. An analysis of these two periods of North/South disparity will demonstrate how these differences came about and how this constant divergence-convergence influenced Chinese history.

* Li Zhī'an, School of History, Nankai University, Tianjin, 300071, China. E-mail: lizhian@nankai.edu.cn.

Keywords

Northern and Southern Dynasties – North South disparity – divergence and convergence of historical trends

In the last decade, quite a lot of Chinese scholars have become increasingly interested in the reforms of the Tang and Song Dynasties. While discussions on this subject have proliferated in Mainland China, American scholars have devoted their attention to the investigation of the “Song-Yuan-Ming Transition.” The thesis put forward in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, a collection of essays edited by Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, is that the Tang-Song period of reforms and the Qing Dynasty’s flourishing era were in fact connected by a transition interval—the so-called ‘Song-Yuan-Ming Transition’—that had previously been overlooked by historians.¹ On the other hand, Xiao Qiqing (蕭啟慶) and Wang Ruilai (王瑞來) have successively written about North/South disparities during the Southern Song and Jin-Yuan period (1115-1368), as well as about the reforms of the Song and Yuan Dynasties.² All of these works have considerably helped to push forward our knowledge of Chinese history from Middle Antiquity onward. However, I came to perceive concepts such as the ‘Tang-Song period of reforms’ or the ‘Song-Yuan-Ming transition’ as having been considerably influenced by regional differences brought about during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. It appears to me that the trends of Chinese history since Middle Antiquity have usually been rather complex, and that we cannot consider them as evolving in one direction only. I herein expose my reflections on the importance of the Northern and Southern Dynasties in shaping the course of history since Middle Antiquity.

1 Smith, Paul and Richard von Glahn. *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003.

2 Xiao Qiqing. “Differences and Similarities in the Northern and Southern Dynasties’ Development in Pre-Modern China—Focus on the Southern Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties’ Economic Society Culture”. *Tsinghua History Lectures: Book 1*. Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2007; Wang Ruilai. “History of the Imperial Examination System’s Abolition: Based on Research on the Yuan Dynasty”. *The End of the Imperial Examination System and the Rise of Study on Imperial Examination*. Wuhan: Huazhong Normal University Press, 2006.

1 The First Northern and Southern Dynasties and the “Southernization” of the Sui and Tang Dynasties

In 1945, Chen Yinke (陳寅恪) published *A Brief Introduction to the Origins of the Systems and Institutions in the Sui and Tang Dynasties* in which he systematically and thoroughly explored the origins of the Sui and Tang’s institutions.³ His contribution consisted not only in revealing how those institutions most probably originated from the Northern Dynasties, but also in clarifying the properties and development of those institutions. Here are some of the illuminating conclusions we can draw from his work: the Sui and Tang Dynasty systems originated primarily from the Northern Dynasties, and although they mainly proceeded and were developed in accordance with the Northern Wei and Northern Qi systems, they have to some extent also been influenced by the Southern Dynasties.

During the last decade of the 20th century, Tang Changru (唐長孺), in his book *Three Essays on the Wei, Jin, Sui and Tang Dynasties*, pointed out that “the economy, politics, military affairs as well as various cultural aspects all significantly progressed during the Tang Dynasty [...]. The most important part of those changes was the legacy of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties, an inheritance process that we can describe for the time being as ‘the southernization’ of dynasties.”⁴ Through his insightful understanding of the Tang’s institutions’ essence and trends of development, Tang Changru thus succeeded in recognizing what other scholars had previously failed to notice. His work also stirred up debate among historians, such as Yan Buke (閻步克), Hu Baoguo (胡寶國), and Chen Shuang (陳爽), on the issue of whether the development of subsequent dynasties had been more influenced by the Northern or Southern Dynasties’ model. According to the proponents of the ‘southernization’ theory, the Southern Dynasties’ legacy lasted for more than three hundred years, from the Northern and Southern Dynasties to the Tang Dynasty. The South’s dominant influence may also be traced back as far as the period anterior to the sinicization reforms issued by Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei (471-499). In contrast, those supporting the ‘northernization’ theory pointed out that “Both the Sui and Tang Dynasties have been established on the foundation laid by the Northern Dynasties,” and that “the Northern societies were far more developed than those in the South. They were able to solve

3 Chen Yinke. *A Brief Introduction to the Origins of the Systems and Institutions in the Sui and Tang Dynasties*. Beijing: Joint Publishing House, 2004, p. 3.

4 Tang Changru. *Three Essays on the Wei, Jin, Sui and Tang Dynasties*. Wuhan: Wuhan University Press, 1992, p. 486.

problems that were left unresolved in the South. For these reasons, history proceeded following the course initiated by the Northern Dynasties.”⁵

While these two theories contradict each other, they are also both based on a rational appreciation of historical data. However, it appears difficult to elucidate the complexity of this historical period while only adhering to one of those theories. I therefore advance a new proposition: the ‘Northern and Southern dynastic trends’ concurrently guided the development of history from the Northern and Southern Dynasties to the Tang Dynasty. Moreover, both of those ‘dynastic trends’ find their existence and practicability in their corresponding regions, which is to say that through their parallel development, the North and South also mutually influenced each other.

Since Antiquity, Chinese territory has been similar in size to Europe; similarly, its northern and southern regions were markedly different. Differences in their institutions or in the course of their development emerged from 300 years of constant separation and unification. Events such as the Wu Hu uprising (304-316), which initiated the period of fragmentation leading to the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, considerably widened the gap between the two regions. The ‘southern dynastic trend’ mainly refers to the Eastern Jin, Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen Dynasties, which all inherited their organization structure from the Han, the Wei, and the Eastern Jin dynasties. The “northern dynastic trend” principally refers to the Northern Wei, Northern Qi, Western Wei, and Northern Zhou Dynasties. Yan Buke has claimed that “both the Sui and Tang Dynasties have been established on the foundation laid by the Northern Dynasties.” Accordingly, the institutions implemented during the Sui and the Early Tang basically belonged to the ‘northern trend.’ The Sui and Tang Dynasties later both sought to merge the northern and southern dynastic trends on a national level. Once this integration was achieved after the Mid-Tang period, the whole country embarked on a ‘southernization’ transition. Three arguments support my proposition, and they derive precisely from the three dominant institutions that prevailed from the Northern Dynasties to the Early Tang.

5 Mou Fasong, “On the ‘Northernization’ Tendency of the Tang Dynasty”. *Journal of Chinese Historical Studies* No. 2, 1996; Yan Buke, Hu Baoguo and Chen Shuang, “Discussion on ‘Southernization’”. <http://www.xiangyata.net>. Jun 2nd, 2003; Yan Buke, “The Different Paths and Historical Trends of the Northern and Southern Dynasties”. *Collected Essays on Chinese Classics*. <http://bbs.guoxue.com>. Aug 24th, 2004; Jiang Wutong, “On the question of ‘Southernization’”. *Back and Forth: Miscellany of Chinese History*. <http://www.wangf.net>. Apr 14th, 2006; Jie Hu, “The ‘Theoretical Path’ of the ‘Historical Path Theory’”. <http://www.mzyi.cn>. March 2007.

The Equal-Field System's (均田制) Implementation in the North, and Its Disintegration during the Mid-Tang

The equal-field system was the land system in use from the Northern Wei to the Mid-Tang Dynasties. It first evolved from the land system used by the Northern Wei Dynasty in the modern day Hebei area, according to which land was allocated to a family based on the number of family members. In contrast, the equal-field system introduced by the Northern Wei distributed land in accordance with the number of male adults per household. The land allocated comprised mostly fields used for grain cultivation, which were rendered back to the state after death (*koufentian* 口分田), and mulberry fields, which were indefinitely held by their families (*yonggyetian* 永業田). The aristocrats and bureaucratic landlords, for their part, could receive land according to their rank or the amount of cattle they owned.⁶ Former privately-owned lands were not subject to the equal-field system, and only the unclaimed and undeveloped lands were actually distributed. Situations in which the peasants did not receive the amount of land they were due or did not return land to the government were also quite common. Two important points need to be mentioned. First, during the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, the equal-field system was only implemented in the Northern Dynasties, while the Southern states preserved the system inherited from the Wei and Jin era, which would allow for a handful of citizens to own vast estates. Following the unification by the Sui and Tang Dynasties, the Land-Equalization Decree was promulgated nationwide, including in the southern areas where it had for the most part not yet been implemented. Second, following the reign of Emperor Gaozong of Tang, the equal-field system was gradually undermined. The allocation and return of land was already difficult to manage under Emperor Xuanzong, and the system ultimately fell into disuse during the reign of Emperor Dezong. It was then replaced to some extent by a tenancy system controlled by a small number of landlords. This resulted in the ascension of both the long-established private landowners of the South, and the emerging landholders in the North. Ultimately, this transition towards a tenancy system was based not only on the Southern Dynasties' model of large land holding by powerful magnates; it was also the first step towards the "southernization" of the land system.

6 "Records of Agriculture and Commerce". *Book of Wei*. vol. 110; "Records of Agriculture and Commerce". *Book of Sui*. vol. 24; "Records of Agriculture and Commerce I". *Old Book of Tang*. vol. 48.

*The Implementation of the Grain-Labor-Cloth Tax System
(租庸調製) in the North and Its Collapse during
the Mid-Tang Period*

When the Northern Wei established the equal-land system, they correspondingly stipulated that each peasant family receiving land had to deliver one *pi* (匹) of silk and two *dan* (石) of grain to the government (the equivalent of about 4.3 decafeet and twenty pecks). This annual contribution was known either as the household tax (*hudiao* 戶調) or the land tax (*zudiao* 租調). The Sui and Tang later implemented the grain-labor-cloth tax system, allowing male adults to pay a fixed amount of cloth in exchange for reducing the 20 days of forced labor they had to serve every year. In contrast, the Song, Qi, Liang and Chen Dynasties in the South all perpetuated the use of the Eastern Jin's tax system by which a family had to pay land taxes according to the number of male adults in the family, regardless of their wealth or the amount of land they owned. As for the amount of taxes paid in cloth by each household, the Song and Qi levied uniformly every household, while the Liang and Chen still collected according to the number of adults.⁷ On the surface, the Northern Dynasties' and the Southern Dynasties' tax systems may appear similar, since they generally all tended to levy taxes based on adult members. The grain-labor-cloth tax system was also implemented on a national level by the Sui and Tang Dynasties. It thus appeared to be adaptable on a large-scale. However, the South and the North's backgrounds were different: the equal-land system of the Northern Dynasties allowed for a large number of peasants to own lands, whereas the Southern Dynasties were relying for the most part on a tenancy system dominated by a handful of landowners. The fact that southern regimes would collect taxes from individual adults, rather than households, suggests that they sought to curb the protection of tenant peasants by influential clan and dynasties.

The collapse of the equal-land system during the reign of Tang Emperor Dezong signified that the government could not levy the grain-labor-cloth tax anymore. This led the government to combine the land and household taxes through the two-tax system (*liangshuifa* 兩稅法), under which households were levied based on their wealth. The introduction of the two-tax system enabled the government to adjust itself to the transformation in the area of landholding that was already occurring nationwide; it was also the result of integrating the Northern and Southern tax systems. Chen Yinke mentions that "even though the new financial system of the Tang Dynasty first appeared to

7 "Records of Agriculture and Commerce". *Book of Wei*. vol. 110; "Records of Agriculture and Commerce". *Book of Sui*. vol. 24; "Records of Agriculture and Commerce I". *Old Book of Tang*. vol. 48.

have been an original invention conceived by only a few individuals of the imperial court, it had in reality its origins in the Southern Dynasties' old system." Since the Southern Dynasties already allowed for the household tax to be paid proportionally with money or cloth, Chen Yinke considers the stipulation allowing southern households to substitute cloth for the payment of land taxes during the Kaiyuan era (713-741) of Emperor Xuanzong to be an indication of "the 'southernization' of the Tang system. In other words, it was the conversion of the Tang Dynasty to the southern dynastic model."⁸ Although the two-tax system did not exactly replicate the Southern Dynasties' system, it was still in essence a reflection of the old system's principles, which ultimately superseded the Northern Dynasties' grain-labor-cloth tax system. The two-tax system can thus be considered the continuation of the Southern dynasties' financial and tax system after the mid-Tang period, or in other words, the 'southernization' of the Tang system.

The Fubing System (府兵制) Implemented in the North and Its Collapse during the Mid-Tang Period

The *fubing* system, also known as the militia garrison system, was first established by the Western Wei and the Northern Zhou Dynasties. Based on the tribal system, it selected recruits among the young relatives of Xianbei and Han government officials, or from the powerful clans of the Guanlong region (關隴). The Sui and Tang Dynasties perpetuated the original *fubing* system of the Western Wei and Northern Zhou. They trained soldiers to be mobilized during wartime, but had them work among peasants otherwise. Some peasants were also selected from the equal-land system to form the cavalry (also known as the soaring hawk garrison *yingyangfu* 鷹揚府) or the assault-resisting garrisons (*zhechongfu* 折衝府). The *fubing* system went in fact hand in hand with the equal-field system. It also goes without saying that under the Eastern Wei and Northern Zhou, the *fubing* system was mainly implemented in the North. The Sui and Tang Dynasties, for their part, possessed more than 600 garrisons, principally located in the Guanzhong (關中), Henan (河南), and Hedong (河東) regions, all in the North. They had however only a small number of garrisons in the South.⁹ Consequently, the *fubing* system, like the equal-field system and the grain-labor-cloth tax system, was mainly implemented in the North of China.

8 Chen Yinke. *A Brief Introduction to the Origins of the Systems and Institutions of the Sui and Tang Dynasties* Part 7, "Finance". Beijing: Joint Publishing House, 2004. 156-160.

9 Gu Jiguang. *Research and Interpretation on the Fubing System*. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 1962.

Although the system of hereditary conscription (*shibingzhi* 世兵制) was still prevailing among the Southern Dynasties, from the end of the Eastern Jin onwards, elite troops that could compare to the northern garrisons and militia were composed of enlisted recruits. The collapse of the *fubing* system ensued from the disintegration of the equal-field system, which left no more soldiers to be enlisted in the assault-resisting garrisons. The emergence of recruited troops, such as the Army of Inspired Strategy (*shencejun* 神策軍) and the military commissioners (*fanzhenbing* 藩鎮兵) after the Mid-Tang period can thus be traced back to the Southern Dynasties. In other words, the military had been 'southernized.'

The equal-field, grain-labor-cloth tax, and *fubing* systems were the three main pillars of the nation-building project undertaken by the Sui and Tang Dynasties. They also all happened to be mainly implemented in the North, and they all collapsed successively during the Mid-Tang period. On the contrary, the institutions that superseded them, namely the tenancy system dominated by powerful landholders, the two-tax system, and the mercenary system (*mubingzhi* 募兵制) all bore resemblance to the Southern Dynasties' institutions. This demonstrates that, from the Northern and Southern Dynasties to the Early Tang, history followed two concurrent threads of development.

During the Sui and the Early Tang periods, institutions derived mainly from the Northern Dynasties' model. However, they existed, especially in the South, alongside forces that had persisted since the Southern Dynasties. For practical purposes, both the Sui and Tang Dynasties attempted to harmonize those two dynastic trends on a national level. Through the integration of Northern and Southern institutions, they also sought to homogenize the whole country by attenuating regional differences.

By the Mid-Tang period, this integration process was finally completed. The southern dynastic trend, or the southern model, became predominant. The emergence of the tenancy system, the two-tax system and the mercenary system precisely indicates the advent of a trend of development based on the southern model. From that period onward, the whole country embarked on a transition period in which dynasties would bear more and more resemblance to the Southern Dynasties. This endeavor of the Sui and Tang to unite the North and South regions, and the Tang's gradual inclination towards the southern model, is also what set in motion the 'Tang-Song period of reforms' discussed later in this article.

We still need to admit that the institutions borrowed from the Northern Dynasties were not outdated altogether. In reality, the Southern Dynasties of the Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen were corrupted in many aspects. To talk about 'the southernization of dynasties' does not signify that the Song, Qi,

Liao, and Chen institutions were indiscriminately replicated. On the contrary, it implies that those institutions were refined. The Tang and Song Dynasties incorporated them to the institutional framework inherited from the Han and Jin Dynasties, a framework which had already been enhanced by the dynamism and innovative systems of the Northern Dynasties. For example, since the Southern Dynasties' tenancy system was based on private retainers working the lands of powerful magnates, it differs greatly from the tenancy system introduced during the Mid-Tang Dynasty. It is precisely by reintroducing the practice of registering the masses, an essential feature of the equal-field system, that the Northern Dynasties struck a severe blow to the already declining influential clans and their system of retaining peasants, thereby paving the way for the establishment of the new tenancy system. Moreover, although some soldiers were being recruited at the end of the Eastern Jin, troops were predominantly composed of hereditary soldiers (*shibing* 世兵) and private troops (*sibingzhi* 私兵制). It is again precisely the Northern Dynasties' *fubing* system, which brought troops under the control of the state and offered them good remuneration, which tremendously weakened the old systems of the Southern Dynasties. The *fubing* system therefore produced the conditions necessary for the establishment of a military system recruiting regular mercenaries. Finally, the imperial examination system (*kejuzhi* 科舉制) that replaced the nine-ranks system (*jiupin zhongzheng zhi* 九品中正制) was established by the Sui Dynasty once more in reference to Northern Dynasties' nation-building strategies. Since it brought to an end the arrogation of political privileges by influential families, it could hardly have emerged directly from the Southern Dynasties. The nobility's ascension led in fact to the corruption of the Southern Dynasties' officialdom, compelling Southern rulers to appoint only officials of humble status to important positions.¹⁰

2 The 'Tang-Song Period of Reforms' Theory, or the Second Occurrence of Northern and Southern Dynasties and Their Trend of Development

In 1921, Japanese scholar Naitō Konan published "A General View on the Times of the Tang and Song Dynasties", in which he advanced the Tang-Song reforms theory. Two major contributions can be drawn from his systematic analysis:

10 Zhao Yi. "How the Southern Dynasties Let Poor but Talented Scholars Occupy Important Positions". *Notes on Twenty-two Histories*. vol. 8. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984, p. 172.

first, the innovative conclusions he came to by analyzing Chinese history from its internal logic; second, his division of ancient Chinese history into important phases: the Remotes Ages, the Middle Antiquity (3rd to 9th century), and the Recent Antiquity.

Why did the Tang-Song reforms, which occurred under the rule of the Liao, Jin, Eastern Xia and the early part of the Yuan Dynasties, happen once again to be divided along north/south geopolitical lines? How did those regimes, governed by northern minorities, influence the Tang-Song reforms? What explains the fact that the institutions developed by the Yuan and Ming Dynasties were different from those established after the mid-Tang and the Song period? How come the late-Ming's institutions were, on the contrary, quite similar to those of the Southern Song?

If we accept this hypothesis of a second "Northern and Southern Dynasties" era in Chinese history, these are certainly some of the more difficult questions that need our attention. Even though the Tang-Song reforms theory can inform us on the tremendous social changes of the Tang-Song era, and provides us with a general idea of the ensuing historical developments, it still leaves some important features of the post-Mid-Tang period unexplored. Even though the theory of the Tang-Song reforms remains highly informative and valuable, it still needs to be further developed. Three aspects in particular ought to be more carefully investigated: first, the situation in the North under the rule of the Liao, Jin, East Xia and Early Yuan Dynasties; second, the systemic differences between North and South from the 10th to the 13th century and the far-reaching ramifications of the implementation of a 'northern' system after the Yuan Dynasty's unification. And third, the possible existence of different systemic factors apart from the Tang-Song reforms which could have significantly influenced Chinese society at the time.

I will now focus my analysis on the feasibility of using the above mentioned Tang-Song reforms theory on the Yuan Dynasty.

The Occupation-Based Census and the Whole Population's Mobilization for Forced Labor

During the period following the Qin and Han Dynasties, two new institutions successively took root in Chinese society: the regular census of the population, and a hierarchical class order dividing people into four categories, namely, scholars, peasants, artisans, and merchants. Among them, the census was by far the most important. By making possible the imposition of taxes and forced labor on a national level, it strengthened the centralization of state power. The ranking of the 'four occupations' order also reflects the government's preference for officials and peasants, and its will to restrain the artisans, craftsmen,

and merchants' influence. Following the Tang-Song reforms, this hierarchical order proved to be more flexible. As a result, the official class enjoyed more mobility on a geographical and inter-generational level since one's status did not only depend on his ancestry anymore. The merchants' situation also started to improve, and the relation between peasants and the state also changed a lot. During the Song Period, landowners' and tenants' households were compiled under a centralized registration system, thus bringing relations between landlords and tenants under the control of the state. Under this system, taxes and rotational state service were requisitioned from the landowners only. The Yuan Dynasty introduced an occupation-based registration system, in which the masses were classified according to professions as various as farmers, soldiers, messengers, salt producers, craftsmen, hunters, Nestorians priests, Buddhist monks, Taoist priests, Muslims clerics, Confucian scholars, and medical practitioners. The nature and amount of time of service requisitioned from those citizens depended on their classification in the registration system.¹¹ This system obviously diverged from the Song's, which divided the masses only in four categories, and controlled the relationship between landlords and tenants. He Ziquan (何茲全) points out that the Yuan Dynasty's decision to requisition the whole population for rotational service was quite a big change. The masses were not only registered, they were also under obligation to serve. Xiao Qiqing also tells us that "the Yuan government established an occupation-based hereditary system going hand in hand with a 'conscription' system in order to mobilize manpower and material resources." It was also intended "to hamper the natural mobility of the social classes." Xiao Qiqing finally considers it an "adverse current" in the development of Chinese history.¹² There is no doubt that the reintroduction of the old system enlisting the whole population for forced labor resulted in the deterioration once more of the relationship between the government and its subjects.

The Nobility's Right to Enfeoffment and the Slavery System

By the time of the Tang and Song Dynasties, the imperial clan's system of enfeoffment by which the noble families bequeathed their properties to their descendants had virtually disappeared. There are many instances however of the revival of the enfeoffment system during the Yuan Dynasty including

11 Huang Ching-lien. "The Division of Registered Households and their Respective Political and Economic Status in the Yuan Dynasty". *Journal of Department of History* No. 2. National Taiwan University, 1975.

12 He Ziquan. "The History of China' Social Development: the Yuan Society". *Journal of Beijing Normal University* No. 5. 1992; Xiao Qiqing, 2007.

the feudal practices of the grasslands' feudal states, the resurgence of fiefs in the central plains (including Henan, western Shandong, southern Shanxi and Hebei), and the appearance of fief holders taking over the administration of previous land grants. Many commanding generals from the Jin Dynasty's nobility also enslaved the captured population. Slaves and maidservants working at the service of the nobility were then referred as *qukou* (驅口). As Xiao Qiqing said, "the restoration of slavery by the Jin Dynasty is an example of society going backward."¹³ The practice of capturing the population to serve the nobility was still prevalent when the Jin and Southern Song Dynasties were conquered by the Yuan. These *qukou* were mainly used for work in the house. According to the law, they belonged to the lowest class of society—their masters were entitled to sell them and had the right to arrange their marriage.¹⁴ Even though, drawing near to the unification by the Yuan, the enfeoffment and slavery system were partially remodelled, they still endured until the Ming Dynasty. These two systems were completely at odds with the Tang-Song reforms which "liberated peasants from the yoke of the nobility and the state," and initiated "the decline of bondage relations at a private and public level."

The Government-Run Handicraft Industry's Renewed Prosperity

The Warring States period terminated the government's monopoly on commerce and the handicraft industry. The Qin and Han Dynasties witnessed the rapid development of private handicraft industries which proliferated for a while. During the Wei-Jin period, the handicraft industry was once more managed by the state. From the mid-Tang onward, and especially during the Song Dynasty, private industries were no longer restrained by the state, and they proliferated rapidly. However, as early as Genghis Khan's invasion of China, the Yuan began to bring the industries back under the control of the state. The Yuan government attempted to develop a large-scale industry, and retained a lot of craftsmen through the requisitioned service system. The apparatus of the state was made of overlapping and multifarious structures, and the administration was quite ineffective. Private industries still managed to survive in some instances, such as the case of Hangzhou's silk-weaving industry that appeared to promote wage labor.¹⁵ Nevertheless, those enterprises were inevitably constrained by the government. The nationalization of the handicraft

13 Xiao Qiqing, 2007.

14 "Records on Military Affairs". *Book of Jin*. Vol 44; Tao Zongyi, "Slaves" Chapter from *Retirement to the Countryside* Vol. 17. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1959, p. 208.

15 Zheng Tianting. "About Xu Yikui's 'Zhigongdui' ". *Historical Research* No. 1, 1958.

industry undeniably hampered the normal development of private industries and commodity economy. Looking at the general tendency of the Yuan period, we can also confirm that it constituted a regression from the commodity and monetary systems established by the Tang-Song reforms.

Differences between the North and the South's Agricultural Economy and Financial Systems

The displacement of economic centers from the North to the South during the Tang-Song period, coupled with the chaos created from repeated invasions by the Jurchens and Mongols in the central plains, resulted in the North lagging far behind the developed economies of its southern neighbours. Having preserved the model inherited from the Tang-Song reforms, areas south of the Yangtze had prosperous and developed economies. Based on preliminary data, during the Yuan period, the three southern provinces Jiangzhe (江浙), Huguang (湖廣), and Jiangxi (江西) had an annual levy in grains that was equivalent to 2.86 times the amount collected in the central plains' inland regions, and their annual government income from business taxation was 25% higher than in the inland region.¹⁶ The government was thus relying more than ever on the Southeast.

The northern and southern economies also differed greatly in their taxation methods. Southern regions were still following the Southern Song's tenancy system, in which landlords owned large estates. In the North, a large proportion of the land was held by peasants or divided into small or middle-sized estates owned by landlords. The use of private slaves for manual labor was still prevalent to some extent. In the South, the taxation on agricultural products was also conducted according to the 'two-tax' system inherited from the Southern Song Dynasty. Both the poll and land taxes were still unevenly enforced in the North. Levies were collected using silk or silver in the North; payments were made with silver and paper notes in the South. The taxation principle of levying all households uniformly may have differed in name, but it is still reminiscent of the "grain-labor-cloth tax system" abrogated during the Tang dynasty. This is a clear indication of how the North's agricultural economy and financial system diverged greatly from the course set by the Tang-Song reforms.

16 "Records of Food and Commodities I". *The History of the Yuan Dynasty* vol. 93; "Records of Food and Commodities II". *The History of the Yuan Dynasty* vol. 94. The annual amount of business tax collected from the northern inland regions included that collected in Dadu (capital city of the Yuan Dynasty) and Shangdu (Xanadu, the former capital of the Yuan Dynasty).

*The Gradual Marginalization of Scholars and the Transformation
of the Ruler-Subject Relationship to a Master-Slave One*

Following the introduction of the imperial examination in the Tang-Song era, a class of officials gradually appeared, weakening the traditional ruler-subject bonds. The advent of Neo-Confucianism (理学) meant that officials were now pursuing both the ideals of the *dao* (道) and the *li* (理). Officials still claimed loyalty to the sovereign, but they also emphasized the precedence of Confucian orthodoxy (道統) over “the rule of the prince” (君統), which meant that even the ruler was subjected to Confucian precepts.¹⁷

The Yuan rulers opted quite early for the preservation of Confucianism. By adopting Han customs, they enabled Confucianism and Confucian scholars to gain prominence. They also promoted the idealist school of Neo-Confucianism as the state orthodoxy to be taught in all official schools. However, Mongol rulers never completely embraced Confucianism themselves, and always disregarded it as culturally inferior. Confucianism was no more revered as the supreme orthodoxy, and Confucian scholars gradually started to be marginalized. They could still enjoy special treatment such as exemption from requisitioned service as explicitly stipulated in the census regulations, and were still nominated to serve as instructors in the public systems, or as minor officials. However, the imperial examination system on which Confucian scholars relied to advance their career since the Tang-Song period, had not yet been reinstated. Therefore, the majority of scholars reached a dead end when trying to follow the Confucian precept affirming that “officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars.” Even though some historians positively assess the impact of the imperial examinations’ abolishment,¹⁸ it is still widely recognized that Confucian scholars endured an unfavourable fate, and were gradually deprived of their prestige during the Yuan Dynasty. Their marginalized status is revealed notably by the saying “scholars take precedence only over beggars,” which became prevalent under the reign of Kublai Khan, as well as in the poetry of Wang Yishan (王義山) when he lamented the unenviable position of scholars appointed to tedious and onerous tasks: “the lonely and desolated official should endure the coldest nights.”¹⁹

17 Liu Zehua. *History of Ancient Chinese Political Thought*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1992. p. 487, 551; Zhang Fentian. *The Concept of Chinese Emperors*. Beijing: China People's University Press, 2004, p. 566.

18 Wang Ruilai. “History of the Imperial Examination System's Abolition: Based on Research on the Yuan Dynasty”. *The End of the Imperial Examination System and the Rise of Study on Imperial Examination*. Wuhan: Huazhong Normal University Press, 2006.

19 “General Introduction”. *Collected Works by Zheng Sixiao*. Shanghai: Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, 1991, p. 186; Wang Yishan “Sending Yu Zhongqian Off to Jiangzhou for Teaching”. *Jiacun Leigao* Vol. 1.

Some emperors of the Song Dynasty declared that “the country shall be governed hand in hand with the officials.”²⁰ An unwritten rule also protected officials from incurring the death penalty. Under the Yuan however, Kublai Khan and his successors’ conception of the ruler-subject relationship was influenced by the master-servant relationship still customary in the grasslands. Officials could be beaten or executed, depending solely on the emperor’s will. Kublai Khan notably issued an imperial decree stating that “officials who do not serve diligently, no matter Han or Hui, will be killed and their family executed.”²¹ The first Yuan dynasty emperor considered all officials as servants, regardless of their rank. Only by showing dedication and loyalty could one be considered a competent official, and thus whoever did not abide by those rules was automatically considered deserving the death penalty. Such was the fate of high officials and prime ministers Wang Wentong (王文統), Lu Shirong (盧世榮), Sengge (桑哥), Guo You (郭佑), and Yang Jukuan (楊居寬). It has also been said that Yuan Emperor Toghon Temür (Shundi) trod in his predecessors’ footsteps by sentencing more than 500 first-rank ministers to capital punishment.²² That kind of practice contrasts sharply with the 300 years of the Song Dynasty, during which the enforcement of the death penalty was not extended to officials.

***Military Conquest as the Ultimate Objective of the State:
The Introduction of the Provincial System and the Incorporation
of the Borderlands Under a Centralized System of Administration***

Shortly after the reunification of the country by Kublai Khan, the territory was divided in eleven provinces, known as *xingsheng* (行省): Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi (江西), Huguang (湖廣), Henan, Liaoyang (遼陽), Lingbei (岭北), and Zhengdong (征東). The provincial system was primarily intended for establishing military dominance and for quelling possible rebellions. Provinces also played a pivotal role in coordination relations

20 Zhang Qifan. “Brief Introduction to the Northern Song Dynasty’s ‘Emperor and Scholars Co-governance’”. *Research on the Politics of the Early Song*. Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 1995.

21 “Records of Emperor Shizu”. *The History of the Yuan Dynasty* Vol. 10. Up to September, the 16th year of the Yuan Dynasty.

22 Ren Chongyue. *Unofficial History of the Gengshen Emperor* Vol. 2. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House, 1991, p. 156; Yao Dali. “Discussion of the Imperial Power of the Yuan Dynasty”. *Collection of Academic Works* Vol. 15. Shanghai Far East Press, 1999, p. 305; Qu Wenjun. “On the Master-and-Slave Oriented Development of the Relationship between the Emperors and his Ministers in the Yuan Dynasty”. *Jianghai Academic Journal* No. 1, 2004.

between the central government and the regions, since they served as transfer stations for the collection of taxes and the enforcement of administrative policies. The system had been conceived based on the Jin Dynasty's Branch Department of State Affairs (*xingshangshusheng* 行尚書省) and the Mongols' Three Great Judges (*xingduanshiguan* 行斷事官). During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, power relations between the center and the regions were thus integrated into a new hierarchical structure, which deeply influenced the Ming and Qing Dynasties, as well as modern China.²³

In order to administer the borderlands, dynasties belonging to the Han ethnic group, such as the Tang and Song, had all implemented a 'subordinated prefecture' policy (*jimi zhengce* 羈縻政策). The subordinated prefectures (*jimizhou* 羈縻州) were in fact a subdivision of prefectures in name only: they generally did not have to submit any census report, and did not pay any tribute.²⁴ The Yuan government, for its part, created a position for Local Officials (*tuguan* 土官), in accordance with the local customs. It enforced the household census and set up a postal system in those areas, and also subjected them to tax payments and military service.²⁵ Kublai Khan specifically declared in an imperial decree: "examining and verifying the population is the duty and responsibility of the local officials; since it is applied in all the other areas of the nation, there should be no exception for the border areas."²⁶ In the eyes of the Mongol rulers, the minorities were not considered barbarians; they were only meant to be subjugated, and so were the Han Chinese. They dismissed the *jimi* policy altogether, and instead undertook to bring all military, political, and financial matters under the direct jurisdiction of the state. This kind of endeavour ultimately stemmed from military thinking, the Mongol rulers being mostly concerned with the idea of military conquest.

Some of the changes described above (the *qukou* slaves, the fief holders taking over land grants, policies regarding agriculture, finances and taxes, etc.) had been inherited from dynasties set by northern minorities, namely the

23 Li Zhi'an. *Research on the Xingsheng System*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2000.

24 Ma Dazheng. *History of the Governance of the Border Areas in Ancient China*. Vol. 4&5. Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House, 2000.

25 Fang Tie. *General History of the Southwest China*. Vol. 6 Chapter 3. Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House, 2003.

26 "Records of Emperor Shizu XIV". *The History of the Yuan Dynasty*, Vol. 17. Up to January, Bing-chen (丙辰) the 29th year of the Yuan Dynasty; "Records of Geography VI". *The History of the Yuan Dynasty* Vol. 63. Up to December, Ding-hai (丁亥) the 3rd year of Zhizhi during the reign of Emperor Yingzong of the Yuan Dynasty; "Records of the Emperor Taiding I". *The History of the Yuan Dynasty* Vol. 29. Up to January, Wu-shen (戊申) the first year of Emperor Taiding's reign.

Liao, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties. On the other hand, some changes had principally been imported from the Mongol nobility. Such was the case of the census based on occupation, the enrollment of the whole population for forced labor, the revival of the enfeoffment system, the nationalization of the handicraft industry, the marginalization of Confucian scholars, the returned predominance of the ruler-subject relationship, and the incorporation of the borderlands under a centralized system of administration. In comparison with the Tang-Song reforms described by Naitō Konan, the changes brought about during the Yuan Dynasty appear quite different. They formed the foundations for the Northern Dynasties' institutions, and for the corresponding 'northern dynastic' developmental trend in that area.

Concerning the above variations and changes, American historian Mark Elvin once pointed out that the scientific, technological, and economic stagnation that ensued from the Mongolian invasion brought about a dark period of regression that lasted through the Yuan Dynasty to the Early Ming. This period created a break in the history of China, severing the trends that had until then been predominant. In contrast, the new cycle of economic development that started during the Late Ming period was a direct continuation of the achievements realized during the Tang-Song's scientific and technological revolution. It also constituted a further advance in the economic integration of the whole country.

On the other hand, according to the 'Song-Yuan-Ming transition' theory advanced by Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, while the North was afflicted by the numerous armed uprisings that erupted during the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties, the South and its peripheral regions escaped the massive destruction occurring in the North. As such, progress remained uninterrupted in the South, and southern economies and societies continued to develop. According to this view, the Song-Yuan-Ming period does not constitute "a break in the history of China," but rather a 'transition' situated between the Tang-Song reforms, and the prosperous period of the Qing Dynasty.²⁷

Xiao Qiqing, who generally agrees with the 'transition' theory, made a brilliant exposition of the tremendous economic, social and cultural differences between the Northern Jin and the Southern Song Dynasties. He also explained the processes by which the North and South had been integrated during the

27 Smith, Paul and Richard von Glahn, 2003.

Yuan Dynasty. He finally pointed out the 'transition' theory's main limitation, which is that it overlooked the transformations occurring in the North.²⁸

The changes described above occurred through a complex series of twists and turns, which makes their analysis quite difficult. I consider them, for my part, as resulting from factors inherent in the second occurrence of Northern and Southern Dynasties, namely the predominance of ethnic minority rulers during the Liao, Xia, Jin, and Yuan northern dynasties, and regional differences between the North and South. Since both regions were either in confrontation or isolated from each other for more than three centuries, the achievements of the Tang-Song reforms were for the most part preserved by the Northern and Southern Song Dynasties. During the Liao, Xia, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties, Northern rulers deviated from the previous trajectory of development and the whole structure of northern society underwent radical transformations. The northern dynastic trend thus arose from this period, whereas the southern dynastic trend was revealed during the Tang-Song period of reforms. In other words, this second division of China in Northern and Southern Dynasties did not proceed only according to the trend set by the Tang-Song reforms. On the contrary, during this period, both dynastic trends tend to intertwine. The southern dynastic trend that traversed the Tang-Song reforms and the northern dynastic trend of the Liao, Xia, Jin, and Yuan, thus evolved concurrently from 960 to 1276 (the 317 years of the Song reign), and finally merged during the 93 years that followed the reunification of China by the Yuan (in 1276). This fusion bears unmistakable resemblance to the circumstances following the unification by the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

Elvin's rupture theory may be relatively too sweeping and lacking in precision, but Smith and von Glahn's transition theory is definitively one-sided. Their analysis is indeed limited to the southern regions' sustained development, and completely ignores changes occurring in the North. In reality, due to the Yuan's reunification and the unique policies promoted by Zhu Yuanzhang, (Emperor Hongwu) and his son (see below), the 'northern dynastic trend' gained in importance from the 13th to the 16th century, and was even dominant for a while. In the mid-1500s, the integration of southern institutions into the northern system was finally accomplished; both trends of development were thus reconciled, and merged. A hybrid structure ultimately emerged, featuring the economic structures of the South, and the political system of the North.

28 Xiao Qiqing, 2007.

Proponents of the 'transition theory' also divided history after the Mid-Tang period in three parts: the Mid-Tang and Northern Song period; the Southern Song, Yuan, and Early Ming period; and the Late Ming and Qing period. This classification may be summarized by the Recent Antiquity period (or Modern Times), which encompasses history from the Mid-Tang to the Qing Dynasty. The model established by the Tang-Song reforms was indeed perpetuated throughout this entire period of time. The complex circumstances from the 13th to the 16th century were only a manifestation of the confrontation of Northern and Southern regimes, and of regional differences. This understanding of the developmental trends' merging, as elaborated above, precisely derives from a comprehensive study of this historical period, which investigates both the North and South's situations. It finally answers some of the questions left unexplored by the rupture and transition theories.

3 The Early Ming's Adoption of Yuan Institutions and the Merging of the Northern and Southern Trends

After the reunification of China, differences between the North and South still persisted throughout both the Yuan and Ming Dynasties. Those regimes' political and cultural inertia allowed for the North and South to remain in the state of confrontation and isolation they had already endured for 317 years. This antagonistic pattern was mostly noticeable in the important regional and ethnic differences still existing between southerners and northerners. It is also well-known that the Yuan established a new hierarchical order, which accorded predominance to the Mongols. The second caste consisted of *Semu* people (色目), a term which literally signifies 'colored eyed,' but was meant to refer to an 'assorted category' of people. The *Semu* people thus included various minorities that had pledged allegiance to the Yuan. They were followed in rank by Chinese people from the Han majority, and Southern people were relegated to the lowest rank. Although this stratification system was one of the Mongol rulers' policies to segregate and oppress some ethnic minorities, it also reflected to some extent the real political and cultural differences existing among those four castes. A poem composed by Wang Yuanliang (汪元量), from the Southern Song Dynasty, notably illustrates the division between northerners and southerners after the Yuan army captured Hangzhou:

Sun goes down over the mountains at the western frontier
Rain falls nonstop beyond the gate of the northern border
People in the North laugh, and southerners shed their tears

Some will always cherish the memory of a past emperor
Just as Du Fu bows in salute to Cukoo

During the final years of the Yuan, the scholar Ye Ziqi (葉子奇) also declared: "Since the reunification, the North has been placed above the other areas, and the northerners have been considered superior to the southerners."²⁹ Under the Yuan, the use of the term 'southerners' remained relatively stable, since it referred most commonly to people who had originally been part of the Southern Song empire. The term 'northerners' however had both a narrow and broader meaning: the first one referred only to the Mongols and the *Semu* people, while the second one also encompassed the Han Chinese leaving in the North. Wang Yuanliang and Ye Ziqi most probably referred to 'northerners' in the broader sense. Those writings either meant to contrast the joy or grief felt by both sides after the capture of Hangzhou, or to denounce the imperial court's munificence towards northerners, which discriminated against the southerners. Still, those two interpretations both evenly reveal how this severe lack of understanding between northerners and southerners persisted during the entire duration of the Yuan Dynasty. As early Qing historian Tan Qian (談遷) put it, confrontation between the North and South only ended during the Ming Dynasty (see below for further details).

It is true that the political changes brought about by the Yuan Dynasty, such as the reunification of the country, transformed the northern and southern 'dynastic' trends into trends that were merely aligned on regional differences. Furthermore, it did not take long before those two trends, or differences, started to merge. According to Xiao Qiqing, the main achievements realized through this process were as follows: the establishment of a nationwide transport and postal network; the creation of an official currency and a national weights and measures system, which allowed for the emergence of a market economy; the coordination of the South and North's economies achieved by the booming market; the cultural blending of the northern and southern cultures, as reflected by the spread of Neo-Confucianism to the North; and the introduction of the opera to the South. On the other hand, the differences in development between the two regions kept expanding—while southern economies

29 Tao Zongyi, "Wang Shuiyun". *Retirement to the countryside* Vol. 5. p. 56; Wang Yuanliang, "On Music Master Mao Minzhong's North-bound Journey" *Zengding Hushan Leigao* Vol. 1. Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1984, p. 24; Ye Ziqi, "Restraint & Caution". *Cao mu zi* Vol. 3 Part I. p. 55, 49.

flourished, the North's kept lagging behind, and finally both regions failed to integrate efficiently.³⁰

Northern factors usually prevailed during the first stage of this integration process, due to the predominant influence of the northern dynastic trend in the Yuan regime. Many features described above, such as the national census, the requisitioned service, the nobility's right of enfeoffment, the revival of slavery, the nationalization of the handicraft industry, the reinforcement of the ruler-subject relation, the provincial system, and the integration of the borderlands, all infiltrated southern societies to a different degree. This integration pattern was not significantly altered during the Early Ming, but it was certainly poles apart from the path chosen by later regimes.

Even though the Ming Dynasty established its capital in Nanjing, the "Southern Capital", it still maintained a lot of institutions that had been established by the northern Yuan. This explains Emperor Zhu Di's decision to move the capital to Yanjing (nowadays Beijing), as well as the distinct northern or southern policies promulgated by the founder of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, and his son Zhu Di. Most of Zhu Yuanzhang's old subordinates were from the barren areas west of the Huai River. They lived along the Hao (濠), Si (泗), Ru (汝), and Ying (潁) Rivers, and in the cities of Shouchun and Dingyuan (壽春, and 定遠, both in Anhui Province), which stretched across the Huai River. They were "used to toil, had no desire for luxurious life, and were not like those southerners who had been indulged in pleasure."³¹ The past Song and Jin's borderlands had been located in this exact region, and it is also where the Song Dynasty and the Mongol Empire had met. In the late years of Kublai Khan, it had been incorporated into the Henan (河南) and Jiangbei (江北) provinces, and it was thus distinguished from the three southern provinces.

Those regions bordering the North and South of China were the first to witness Zhu Yuanzhang's and his old subordinates' rise to power during the Yuan and Ming period. However, the emperor and his old generals all belonged to the northern people in customs and origins, and could not possibly identify with southerners. Furthermore, since most of the Susong (蘇松) officials (nowadays Jiangsu) allied themselves with Zhu Yuanzhang's long-time foes, Zhang Shicheng (張士誠) and Chen Youliang (陳友諒), the emperor never

30 Xiao Qiqing. "Differences and Similarities in the Northern and Southern Dynasties' Development in Pre-Modern China—Focus on the Southern Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties' Economic Society Culture". *Tsinghua History Lectures—Preliminary Edition*. Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2007.

31 *Discussions about the [Ming] State* Vol. 2. p. 342.

considered southerners to be on his side. On the contrary, he always considered confrontation, rather than cooperation, to be the best strategy when dealing with southern people, to the point of promulgating stern policies intended to oppress wealthy families and officials from Susong. In contrast, the emperor tended to show a lot of concern for northern natives, and sentenced to death southern examiners, such as Bai Xindao (白信蹈), for having showed favoritism towards southern officials. Following this event, which was known as the “North-South Civil List Case” (“南北榜”, 1398), Zhu Yuanzhang personally directed the imperial examination and nominated 61 northerners to the post of officials.³²

Emperor Jianwen, for his part, appointed southern natives, such as Qi Tai (齊泰), Huang Zicheng (黃子澄), and Fang Xiaoru (方孝孺), to important positions. He advocated clemency and equal taxation of both the north and south provinces. He finally refused to adopt Zhu Yuanzhang’s oppressive strategies and severe penal law, as well as the heavy taxation of the Susong region. The southern-oriented policies of Emperor Jianwen were in fact completely opposite to his grandfather’s.

However, when Zhu Di launched the “Jingnan Campaigns” (靖難之役 1399–1402) and invaded Yanjing, he recruited the Yuan generals Zhang Yu (張玉), the Mongol Huo Zhen (火真), as well as the brave and bellicose Mongol Duoyan Guards (朵顏三衛). The North Zhili Province (北直隸, nowadays Beijing, Tianjin, Henan, part of Hebei and Shandong) proved to be a reliable rear base for Zhu Di, and it provided him with both military recruits and government income. Zhu Di’s greatest campaigns were also set in Yanjing and the Gobi desert. After having vanquished Emperor Jianwen, Zhu Di finally moved the capital to Yanjing, and ruthlessly repressed those who had supported his predecessor, among whom were many southern officials. His policies were without a doubt even more northern-oriented than those pursued by Zhu Yuanzhang.

According to research by Zheng Kesheng (鄭克晟) and Danjo Hiroshi, Zhu Di’s policies following the Jingnan Campaigns, Zhu Yuanzhang’s “North-South Civil List Case,” Zhu Gaochi’s “North-South examination papers”³³ (*nanbeijuan* 南北卷), and a series of cases that occurred during Zhu Yuanzhang’s reign, such as the “Blank Seal Case” (*kongyinan* 空印案 1382), the “Hu Weiyong Case” (胡惟庸之獄 from 1380 to 1392), the “Guo Huan Case” (郭桓案 1385),

32 “Biography of Liu Sanwu”. *The History of the Ming Dynasty* Vol. 137; “Records of Election II”. *The History of the Ming Dynasty* Vol. 70; Danjo Hiroshi. *The Historical Structure of the Ming Dynasty’s Autocratic Rule*. Part 1 Chapter 4. Tokyo, 1995.

33 A system according to which 60% of the officials had to be selected from the southern regions.

the “Li Shanchang Case” (李善長之獄), and the “Lan Yu Case” (藍玉之獄), were all aimed to crush the landlords of the South, to eradicate the ‘southern regime’ that had risen during the Early Ming, and to establish a unified dynasty. The antagonistic pattern between North and South, which was produced by the ambivalent orientations of the Early Ming emperors, was quite similar to the Yuan Dynasty’s own political pattern. As Tan Qian puts it, “the land is divided into North and South, so are the people into northerners and southerners. . . . and they have always been in conflict. Governmental affairs all depend of who is the chancellor in charge.”³⁴

“The Biography of Wang Ao” in *The History of the Ming Dynasty* records: “The Emperor (Zhu Di) wanted to set the capital in Beijing, because he wanted to employ northern officials.” It was said that the Grand Secretary Jiao Fang (焦芳), an official under Emperor Wuzong, from Qinyang (沁陽) (Henan), “loathed southerners and would feel delighted once a southern official was dismissed from the government. When he talked about ancestors, he would slander those from the South and praise those from the North. He always suggested to Liu Jin (劉瑾, a eunuch) that southern officials could not hold major positions in the government.”³⁵ Zheng Kesheng had it right when he advanced that from the beginning to the end of the Ming dynasty, the government policies reflected conflicts between the Northern and Southern landlords.³⁶

To sum up, the moving of the capital to Yanjing and the Ming’s north-oriented policies did not only perpetuate the Yuan’s antagonistic pattern, it also created a situation in which Ming institutions were bearing more and more resemblance to the Yuan’s. The Yuan reforms enumerated earlier, which differed slightly from the Tang and Song’s, deeply influenced the Early Ming’s rulers. Many features of the Ming Dynasty’s are reminiscent of the Yuan period: the life-long military service system, the household-based requisitioned service, the government-run handicraft industry, the registration of craftsmen, the issue of banknotes, the long-enduring contrast between political economies of the North and South, the incorporation of the three provincial offices to the provincial system, imperial clan enfeoffment, and the decimation of meritorious ministers and scholar-officials. The northern dynastic trend, that traversed the period of China’s second North-South division, tenaciously lingered during the Early Ming Dynasty, and was even dominant for a while.

34 *Discussions about the [Ming] State* Vol. 19, p. 4913.

35 “Story of the Eunuch Faction”. *The History of the Ming Dynasty* Vol. 360.

36 Zheng Kesheng *On the Origins of the Political Struggles of the Ming Dynasty*. Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 1988, p. 81. Also refer to the book’s first edition.

The transfer of the capital to Yanjing by Zhu Di was a decisive moment in Chinese history. If Emperor Jianwen had not been vanquished, or again if Zhu Di would not have moved the capital to the North, the historical phase during which China followed two different trends of development would have been much shorter, and the merging of those two trends, allowing for the South to be predominant again, would certainly have happened earlier, and China would have southernized more quickly. It is indeed unfortunate that history did not occur like this, but rather followed the path initiated by Zhu Di when he moved the capital to Yanjing. Contingent factors, such as Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di's personal backgrounds and preferences, influenced considerably the trajectory of the northern dynastic trends during the Early Ming, and ultimately granted predominance to the northern institutions. Therefore, we can divide the merging of the northern and southern trends into two phases: the early stage, during which northern systems prevailed, and the middle phase during which southern institutions were revered again. It thus appears that the merging of both developmental trends was ultimately delayed for almost 200 years. If we add the 242 years of the Southern Song-Jin-Yuan period, this second occurrence of two trends of development originating in northern and southern dynasties and persisting through regional differences afterwards, lasted more than four and a half centuries. This considerably long period of time in China's history, which occurred after the Tang-Song reforms, deserves more attention from historians. It is also the reason why this article has mainly focused on the second division of China between North and South.

There were obvious differences between the early and middle periods of the Ming Dynasty. During the Mid-Ming, southern institutions became predominant, and replaced northern institutions such as the life-long military service system, the household-based requisitioned service, the government-run handicraft industry, and the registration of craftsmen. As a result, the southern dynastic trend that had been inaugurated by the Tang-Song reforms gradually became the dominating trend of development.

From the Life-Long Military Service System to the Mercenary System

When the Ming came to power, they adapted the Yuan military system made of Battalions (*qianhu* 千戶) and Imperial Guardsmen (侍衛親軍), by setting up guarding garrisons (*weisuo* 衛所). They also kept using the Yuan life-long military system, according to which, soldiers were registered in a separate category, and were subordinated to the Commissioner-in-chief (*dudufu* 都督府), whereas the common people were still administered by the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu* 戶部). This 'soldier status' was hereditary, and therefore the enlisting of one man into the army signified that all of his descendants would

have to follow this path as well. This was not an enviable fate, since the social, legal, and economic status of soldiers was quite low. The drafted often tended to associate with soldiers who had been banished, and often sought to escape the army. During the reign of Emperor Hongzhi, deserting soldiers already accounted for 60 to 70 percent of the guarding garrisons. At the beginning of his reign, Emperor Yingzong sent officials all over the country, entrusting them with the mission to recruit soldiers, who were then supported financially by the regime. At first, the enlisting of recruits aimed to replenish troops in the capital and defense areas along the northern border. Later, in the struggle against the Japanese pirates' invasion, voluntary soldiers were also enlisted to form the Qi's Army (戚家軍) and the Yu's Army (俞家軍).³⁷ After the reintroduction of a recruiting system, military service was perceived as a vocation, rather than a plight, and soldiers were practically cast from the same mold as the Tang's Army of Inspired Strategy, or the Song's Imperial Guards. This transition from the life-long military system to a mercenary system ended up mirroring many of the southern institutions established by the Tang-Song reforms.

From the Household-Based Requisitioned Service to the "Single Whip" Tax System (yitiaobianfa 一條鞭法)

The Ming first adopted the Yuan household-based requisitioned service, which divided the entire population into specific categories determining the nature and amount of work they were expected to serve. More than eighty professions were identified under this registration system; they included oil producers, wine producers, sheep herders, cattle farmers, horse farmers, fruit growers, vegetable growers, musicians, doctors, gold producers, silver producers, boatmen, fishermen, and so on. A life-long and mandatory service was required from all—different households would provide different service at different working fields, and each household had to provide a certain number of laborers. The Early Ming allowed people to provide less labor if they paid more taxes, however taxes and forced labor were the exact same, as people had to work the land they were allocated anyway, either to pay their taxes, or to accomplish requisitioned time. This whole system was based on the idea that the emperor had dominion over the whole country's territory and population. The land belonged to the emperor, so did the people, and every person, regardless of his

37 "Records of Military Affairs II: The Guardians". *The History of the Ming Dynasty* Vol. 90; "Records of Military Affairs II: Cleaning up the military". *The History of the Ming Dynasty* Vol. 92; Xiao Lijun. "On mid & late-Ming Dynasty's Military System" (Doctoral Thesis). Nankai University, 2005. See chapter III, Section 3: "The Development of the Ming Dynasty's Mercenary System".

or her occupation, had to fulfill the service allotted to them according to the registration system.³⁸ This system virtually replicated the Yuan system.

During Emperor Zhengtong's first reign (1436-1449), this system was gradually relaxed by allowing payment in currency, and by gradually reforming the requisitioned service system. The payment of taxes in currency was actually common practice in certain areas since Emperor Xuande's reign (1425-1435). During that period, the government undertook a reform of the tax and requisitioned service system. He attempted to coordinate provincial administrations in order to end the unequal collection of taxes that had been a burden for many farmers in previous years. Moreover, the amount of requisitioned service asked from citizens was thereupon fixed, and rotational time also decreased. According to those reforms, service and tax were more and more paid in silver, grain tax was collected based on the number of laborers, and rules were revised regularly. Those reforms were later adjusted and integrated into the 'Ten-Sections Code' (十段冊法). Under Emperor Wanli's reign (1572-1620), Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng ultimately complemented those reforms by introducing the "Single Whip" tax system. This system aimed to commute all tax payments and labor obligations into a single silver payment. It reestablished the Tang Dynasty's "Double Tax System," but with some innovations. The Late Ming Dynasty therefore bore more and more resemblance to the Tang-Song reform period, a resemblance which further reveals the growing predominance of the southern trend in the development of Chinese history from the Mid-Ming onwards.

From the Government-Run Handicraft Industry and the Registration of Craftsmen to Private Tax-Paying Businesses

During the Early Ming, the handicraft industry consisted mostly of government-run businesses, as had been the case during the Yuan Dynasty. The Ming also carried on the registration of craftsmen for a while, which defined craftsmanship as a hereditary profession. According to this system, rotating and permanent craftsmen were appointed to provide unremunerated service in the government-run industries. After the middle period of the Ming Dynasty, many changes were brought to this system. First, during the short-lived reign of Emperor Jingtai (1449-1457), the original five-shift system was changed into a four-year duty system in order to alleviate the craftsmen's burden. Second, under Emperor Chenghua (1464-1487), rotating craftsmen could be exempted

38 Wang Yuquan. "The Ming Dynasty's Forced Labor Based Household Registration and Taxation System". *Study of Chinese History* No. 1, 1991.

from service by paying a certain amount of silver.³⁹ The craftsmen registration system was eventually undermined by those reforms, and free labor gradually developed, enabling craftsmen to emancipate themselves from the government's fetters. Hence, in the Late Ming period, privately-run businesses came to outgrow the government-run ones, and tax-paying industries began to play a decisive role in the new tax system.

To sum up, the life-long military service system, the household-based requisitioned, and the craftsmen registration all revealed the merging of the northern and southern trends, whereas the reforms introduced during the Late Ming period all featured elements pertaining to the southern dynastic trend originating from the Tang-Song reforms. To make a comprehensive survey of 500 years of history is indeed a laborious task, and the intricate patterns that emerged during this period may often leave us perplexed. Nevertheless, the period following the reign of Emperor Wanli, should not be mistaken as the 'diachronic continuation' of the Southern Song policies. It is a manifestation of the Northern and Southern trends that concurrently traversed China's history. We have unravelled above how those trends progressively merged and recurred one after the other.

It has to be said that some aspects inherited from the Yuan and other northern dynasties have remained until modern times. The appointment of ethnic leaders as commanders in chief during the Early Ming, and favorable pay and provisions for members of imperial clans during the Late Ming, were the legacy of the Yuan Dynasty's enfeoffment system.⁴⁰ The Yuan's authoritarian regime designed a centralized model of governance, by dividing the country into provinces and dispatching troops in all of them. This model was afterwards adapted by creating the Three Provincial Offices and the General Governors and Governors' position. Discrepancies between the South and North's political economies also remained, as well as the despotic nature of the government, and the officials' subordination. In this regard especially, the Ming Dynasty surpassed the Yuan Dynasty.

Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang stated clearly in the *Ming Dynasty Imperial Mandates*⁴¹ that "scholars in the country who do not serve the emperor are

39 Fang Ji. "The Trends of the Ming Dynasty's Handicraft Industry's Development". *History Teaching and Research* No. 4, 1958; Chen Shiqi. "Research on the Ming Dynasty's Handicraft Industry". Wuhan: Hubei People's Press, 1958.

40 Li Zhian. *Research on Enfeoffment in the Yuan Dynasty*. Tianjin: Tianjin Ancient Books Publishing House, 1992; Wu Jihua. "On Vassals and Transfer of Military Power in the Ming Dynasty". *The Continent Magazine* Vol. 34. No. 7 & 8, 1967.

41 *Dagao* 大诰, also known as "The Ming Dynasty's Great Admonitions".

unfaithful. They should be killed and their family executed.”⁴² This mirrors Kublai Khan’s imperial decree: “officials who do not serve diligently, no matter Han or Hui, will be killed and their family executed.” Moreover, Zhu Yuanzhang would directly vilify the Song’s Neo-Confucianism philosophers who elevated the Confucian orthodoxy above the ‘rule of the Prince.’ He deliberately distorted the Confucian logic by claiming that the emperor was the ultimate holder of the Confucian ethical code, using this as justification for the repression and mass execution of officials. As a result, the ‘ruler-subject relation’ as defined by the Yuan emperors prevailed through the Ming Dynasty, and China entered into the darkest period of its history.

Before the Yuan Dynasty, Confucian officials would usually follow the tenet stating that “taking a post or resigning from office should always follow the *dao*.”⁴³ Therefore, officials would only take office if they considered the Emperor to be virtuous, and they otherwise would retire and withdraw from society. Emperors from past dynasties had all been confronted with many of their officials leaving office and going to live in seclusion. Their decision to seclude themselves would depend on whether or not they could abide by the etiquette principles (*li* 禮) while serving the emperor. As such, it was an important indication of how virtuous the Emperor was considered to be.

However, after Zhu Yuanzhang published the *Ming Dynasty Imperial Mandates*, the officials were deprived of their right to retire and live in seclusion. Whoever dared to go live in seclusion was considered unwilling to serve the emperor, the worst offense one could possibly commit, thus condemning him and his family to death. This is certainly the worst manifestation of cultural despotism designed to repress officials, and it went completely against the Song’s precept that “the country shall be governed hand in hand with the officials.” It was even more absurd than the Qing Dynasty’s literary inquisition, and its influence on subsequent generations of scholars was long and pernicious. No wonder that out of the twelve people recorded in the chapter “*Biography of The Hermits*,” in *The History of the Ming Dynasty*, seven were originally Yuan officials that continued to serve the Ming. The rest, like Liu Min (劉閔), had to present their will to resign to the prefecture’s magistrate, and could only legally live in seclusion once their request was sanctioned by the imperial court. This situation resulted from the tyrannical implementation of the imperial mandate to punish any official who was suspected of not serving the emperor.

42 “The Scholars of Suzhou XIII”. *Ming Dynasty Imperial Mandates III*.

43 “Reply to Dong Zhongcheng’s Letter”. *Collections of Works by Yuan Scholars III: Collection of Works by Wu Wenzheng* Vol 7. Taipei: Taiwan Xinwenfeng Company, 1985, p. 171.

When Zhu Yuanzhang arbitrarily executed meritorious officials, and any officials who could not serve him, he may have been reproducing the style of the first Han Emperor, Liu Bang, but he was also perpetuating the Yuan Dynasty's system. Once Zhu Di had defeated Emperor Jianwen, he focused his energies on suppressing officials led by Fang Xiaoru, who had remained faithful to the dethroned emperor. Even though imperial schools proliferated during the Ming Dynasty, the officials never really recovered the status they had enjoyed during the Song Dynasty. On the contrary, they kept being repressed by the emperor, and were caught in a servile relationship, suffering the emperor's despotism. The flogging of officials (*tingzhang* 廷杖) was a common practice till the end of the Ming Dynasty, and in fact represents the quintessence of this dynasty's political culture.

The use of the term *jinshen* (縉紳) to designate officials gradually came to supersede the term *shidafu* (士大夫), which certainly conveyed more reverence (it literally translates as *scholar and grand master*). Such a change might have occurred because officials came to work more and more in regional offices rather than in the imperial court. It could also have been because they often suffered flogging punishment by the imperial court, a practice contradicting the ancient precept instructing that "penalties [should] not extend to high officials." Wang Yangming's (王陽明) Idealistic School also transformed the nature of Neo-Confucianism, by advocating principles which contradicted the former rationalist school. It notably emphasized the notion of 'innate knowing' and principles such as "the mind is the source of reason" (心即理) and "the extension of innate knowledge" (致良知). It no longer stressed the importance of the *dao* and Confucian orthodoxy. The officials who adopted this school of thought did not dare to question the morality of the emperor, or to confront him with Confucian teachings anymore. Their role in the country's administration thus considerably differed from that of scholars who had been valuable advisors to the Song Dynasties' emperor.

Under the Ming emperors' despotic regime, officials who still believed in the Confucian principle instructing them to "lead the emperor to the Way (or *dao*)" (致君行道) had to resign themselves to bend in front of the emperor, and risk death penalty for holding their belief.⁴⁴ As one can easily see, this political culture, based on the authoritarian rule of the emperor and the enslavement of officials that took root during the Yuan and the Early Ming Dynasties, meant that the golden age of emperor and officials working hand in hand was forever gone.

44 Luo Zongqiang, *Research on the Mentality of late-Ming Scholars*. Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2006. Chapter I.

Officials of the Yuan and Ming Dynasties certainly did not have the courageous spirit of their Song predecessors, who abided by the principles of the *dao*. Their sense of being active participants in governmental affairs distinctly deteriorated, and it is only in the tragic fate of exceptional and marginal characters such as Fang Xiaoru Xie Jin (解縉), and Li Zhi (李贄) that we can still perceive a spirit evocative of the Song Dynasty's philosophers and a certain kind of resistance against despotism. A lot of historians who paid attention to the Ming and Qing's authoritarian regimes found them to be quite deplorable. In theory, their despotic policies were predicated on the decline of the nobility. Nevertheless, once the nobility had lost most of its influence on the bureaucracy, the emperor's authoritarianism was reinforced to the detriment of the officials.

Even though the emperor's authority was reinforced during the Song Dynasty, this consolidation still followed the spirit of the Tang-Song reforms, which called for the creation of an authoritarian government by the mutual reinforcement of both the emperor and the ministers' power. The cruel enslavement of officials that occurred during the second northern and southern dynasties was carried on by the Yuan and Ming regimes. It was also perpetuated to some extent during the Qing Dynasty, and therefore authoritarianism dominated Chinese history to an unprecedented level despite the nobility's decline. This persistence should not be attributed to Zhu Yuanzhang and his descendants' ruthless and imperious policies, as much as to their regimes' political and cultural inertia. This inertia was brought about by the import of the old northern system's master-servant relationship, which in turn played an important role in fostering authoritarianism during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties. Finally, more attention should be paid to the question of whether or not such circumstances altered the way we conceive the 'ruler-subject relation' and the officials' relation to the state.

Conclusion

The above analysis demonstrates that the course of Chinese history since Middle Antiquity has been directly influenced by the differences between the northern and southern regions. This differentiation occurred during the two periods of northern and southern dynasties. It therefore appears that the Tang-Song period of reforms was not traversed by a single trend of development, but was determined by the complex interaction of both northern and southern trends. This complexity ought to be further considered by historians who seek to provide a comprehensive analysis of Chinese Middle and Recent Antiquity.

The first Northern and Southern Dynasties, as well as the Sui and Early Tang Dynasties, evolved following the two concurrent northern and southern dynastic trends. The Sui and Tang Dynasties mostly implemented institutions modelled on those of the previous Northern Dynasties. They also carried out the integration of the northern and southern dynastic models on a national level. Following the Mid-Tang period, both trends merged and the whole country started to southernize.

The second occurrence of northern and southern dynasties and their respective concurrent trends was equally important. The Southern Song perpetuated the achievements of the Tang-Song reforms, and mainly followed the southern dynastic trend, whereas the Liao, Xia, Jin, and Yuan Dynasties followed the northern dynastic trend. Those two trends coexisted and blended, and were merged in three distinct phases: the Yuan period, the Early Ming period, and the Mid-Ming period. While the northern trend was predominant during the two early phases, the southern trend became increasingly influential during the Mid-Ming. Those two trends were finally merged under the Late Ming regime.

The Tang-Song reforms were in fact decisive, since they were the connecting link between the two periods of northern and southern dynasties. They resulted from the integration under the Tang of the two dynastic trends, and as such, the second northern and southern trends developed from this period. Moreover, the second southern trend stemmed mainly from those reforms.

The opinions formulated in this article regarding the first occurrence of the northern and southern dynastic trends were drawn upon Chen Yinke's and Tang Changru's 'southernization' theory, as well as from related arguments by Yan Buke, Hu Baoguo, and Chen Shuang. However, my propositions regarding the second occurrence of those trends could more easily stir debates. *The Differences and Integration of the Development of the South and North in the Early Modern China*, which was recently published by Xiao Qiqing, brilliantly exposes the economic, social, and cultural differences that existed between the North and South during the Northern Jin and Southern Song division, and that persisted after the Yuan's unification of China.⁴⁵ Xiao Qiqing's arguments happen to corroborate many of my own findings. However, he only admits that the gap between the North and South widened during the Jin-Yuan period, and never mentions any of the developmental

45 Xiao Qiqing. "Differences and Similarities in the Northern and Southern Dynasties' Development in Pre-Modern China—Focus on the Southern Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties' Economic Society Culture". *Tsinghua History Lectures—Preliminary Edition*. Beijing: Joint Publishing, 2007.

trends that ensued from that period onward. If only those differences between the North and South had been limited to the 242 years of the Southern Song-Jin-Yuan period, I would certainly have cautiously limited myself to a differential approach, and supported a point of view quite similar to Xiao Qiqing's. However, there remains the issue of Zhu Yuanzhang and Zhu Di's contingent role in extending the dominance of the northern trend, and ultimately delaying the southern trend's return to predominance until the Late Ming period. As a result, two trends of development persisted in China for an additional 200 years, which, counting the above mentioned 242 years, had made the whole duration nearly four and a half centuries long. Northern and southern differences obviously evolved during this considerably long period of time. The existence of northern and southern trends during the Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan was also confirmed by Masaaki Chikusa.⁴⁶ Therefore, I consider that the propositions offered in this article are based on a fair appreciation of historical facts.

46 Masaaki Chikusa. *Dynasties of Conquest in China History*. Tokyo: Kodansha Publishing House, 1977.