Political legitimacy in Chinese history : the case of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-535)

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Political Legitimacy in Chinese History: The Case of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-535)

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北人詆南為島夷，南人指北為索虜，在當日之人，不務修德行仁，而徒事口舌相譏，已為至卑至陋之見。

Northerners slighted Southerners as “Island Barbarians,” while Southerners pointed to Northerners as “Plaited Barbarians.” The people in those days never worked at cultivating their virtue or practicing benevolence. Instead, they just looked for occasions to dispute and slander one another. It was a show of the most vulgar and ugliest kind.

— Emperor Yongzheng 雍正 (r. 1722-1735)

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Preface

Four years ago, when I started doing my Ph.D. research in Leiden, I never thought it would turn out to be a journey this tough but joyful. It has been a challenging task to "talk" with various politicians, philosophers, and historians in Chinese history, and investigate their distinct views on legitimacy. Luckily, many people supported me along the way.

It is hard to adequately express my gratitude to my mentor, dr. Paul van Els, one of the most warm-hearted and encouraging supervisors that I have ever seen. He guided me into the groves of academe, and continuously offered me kind encouragement. I thank him for his wonderful support during my entire Ph.D. period.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my other supervisors, prof. dr. Franke Pieke and prof. dr. Hilde De Weerdt, both of whom meticulously read this manuscript. Pieke's comments on the aim and structure of this dissertation greatly helped me improve this work; and De Weerdt is a paragon of erudition who taught me how to do rigorous scholarship. I also thank prof. dr. Barend ter Haar, who provided insightful comments the issue of sinicization, and prof. dr. Ding-Xiang Warner, who gave me crucial feedback on Wang Tong.

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I owe the deepest appreciation to my parents for supporting my choice of an academic career even though they knew it would take me far from their side. They also provided me with financial support that enabled my studies in Leiden.

In the end, I thank you, my reader. It is a great joy to see that you share with me an interest in the issue of political legitimacy in Chinese history. I hope you will find as much happiness in reading this dissertation as I experienced writing it. *Omnes homines natura scire desiderant*.

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List of Abbreviations

Jinshu 晉書, *JS*

Liangshu 梁書, *LS*

Nan Qi shu 南齊書, *NQS*

Sanguozhi 三國志, *SGZ*

Songshu 宋書, *SS*

Weishu 魏書, *WS*

Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑒, *ZZTJ*

Introduction

According to political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, "legitimacy" in the political context refers to "the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society."[1] Legitimacy is widely considered to be necessary for any regime, including historical Chinese dynasties. A great number of written sources, some dating back more than three thousand years, reveal how dynasties throughout Chinese history strove to legitimize their rule, and how pre-modern Chinese philosophers, historians, and politicians discussed both the theory and practice of political legitimacy, that is, both general principles and specific cases. There is a wealth of sources available to us that reveal the diverse views on legitimacy in the Chinese tradition.[2]

As any political power requires legitimacy to maintain its rule, this naturally applies to times when the geopolitical area we now know as China was governed by ruling houses that are Chinese. The issue became pressing in times when the land was divided among several ruling houses, such as the period of the Three Kingdoms 三國 (220-280), and in times when China was governed by non-Chinese ruling houses, such as the Yuan Dynasty 元 (1272-1368). The issue became even more pressing when China was both divided and at least one of the ruling houses was non-Chinese. This was the case during the so-called Period of Disunion (220-589), when the northern half of the realm was governed by several non-Chinese ruling houses, including the Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏 (386-535), and the southern half of the realm by several Chinese ruling houses, namely the Liu Song 劉宋 (420-479), the Southern Qi 南齊 (479-502), the Liang 梁 (502-587) and the Chen 陳 (557-589), which are collectively referred to as the Southern Dynasties 南朝 (420-589). The various ruling houses of this period, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, introduced diverse ways to legitimize their rule and delegitimize that of the other regimes. After the Period of Disunion, this "contest for legitimacy" between the north and the south

[1] S. M. Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Basis of Modern Politics* (NY: Doubleday, 1960), 77.

[2] Please note that although the word "legitimacy" was not used by early Chinese thinkers and historians and therefore might appear to be used anachronistically in the context of early Chinese history, it will be used in this dissertation to denote the general sense of their arguments in order to promote ease of understanding. This also applies to its closest Chinese approximation, "*zhengtong*," which will be explained below.

became a topic of heated debate among a great number of Chinese scholars, who proffered diverse views on the legitimacy of specific dynasties, leading to a variety of theories on political legitimacy.

The two factors outlined above – the fierce quest for legitimacy at the time, and the heated discussions afterwards – make this period eminently suitable for a study of Chinese views on political legitimacy. Hence, the major focus of this dissertation is an important yet hitherto unexplored issue, the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, in the context of the dynamic and complex aspects of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy.

State of the Field

In order to offer a robust study of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, three kinds of relevant literature will be reviewed in this section: (1) legitimacy theories in the Western and Chinese traditions, (2) studies of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy, and (3) studies of the Northern Wei Dynasty.

Theories of Legitimacy

The term "legitimacy," according to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "entered political discourse via controversies over the rightful succession to the restored French throne after the Napoleonic period (1799–1815)."[3] This is quite similar to the term *zhengtong* 正統, the most popular traditional Chinese approximation of the Western concept of legitimacy. This Chinese term, which was first introduced by the historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) during the Eastern Han Dynasty 東漢 (25-220), denoted "correct filiation or proper bloodline in reference to the genealogical transmission of the imperial family of Liu Bang, or Gaozu, the founder of the Former Han Dynasty," as present-day historian Hok-lam Chan indicates.[4] Apparently, both "legitimacy" and "*zhengtong*" originate from discussions about succession to the throne, in both France and China. The two terms were later imbued with fundamental political notions to denote people's recognition and acceptance of

[3] David Beeham, "Legitimacy," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 538.
[4] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China: Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115-1234)* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 22.

the validity of the authority of a political power. In the following sections, a general literature review is provided to indicate how legitimacy has been understood historically in the Western and Chinese scholarships.

Western Theories

Long before the actual term "legitimacy" entered into the political field, Western thinkers had already pondered the underlying idea of political legitimacy, although they used different terminology. The ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle suggested that rightful rule should be in accord with justice.[5] Aristotle, for instance, argued that "governments which have a regard to the common interest are constituted in accordance with strict principles of justice."[6]

Medieval Christian scholars introduced the idea of a divinely ordained "legitimacy." For instance, Thomas Aquinas argued that monarchs derive authority directly from the will of God since they act as God's vicegerents in the secular world. He suggested that the monarch should be subject to God by the command of both nature and heaven.[7]

During the Enlightenment, the social contract theory became prevalent when discussing legitimacy. Philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau reinterpreted legitimacy by introducing the social contract theory, which, as present-day scholar Ian Hurd notes, "treats legitimacy as a contract that transfers authority between the individual and the institution."[8]

Modern thinker Max Weber studied legitimacy in empirical ways. He indicated that legitimacy was a belief, saying, "The basis of every authority, and correspondingly of every kind of willingness to obey, is a belief, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige."[9] Weber further postulated three

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[5] Plato argued that "we should be most likely to discover justice" in a state that aims to bring happiness to its entire people. See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shoery (London: Harvard University Press, 1937), 317. Plato described justice as "doing one's own work and not meddling with what is not one's own." Ibid., 210.

[6] Aristotle, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, ed. Stephen Everson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 71.

[7] Aquinas argued that "just as in the divinely instituted natural order lower natural things are necessarily subject to higher things and are moved by them, so too in human affairs inferiors are bound to obey their superiors by virtue of the order of natural and divine law." See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. William Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 58.

[8] Ian Hurd, "Legitimacy." in *Princeton Encyclopedia of Self-Determination*, http://pesd.princeton.edu/?q=node/255.

[9] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, eds. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 263.

pure types of legitimate authority for all regimes: (1) the traditional (i.e. legitimacy derives from societal tradition and is possessed by inheritance, as in traditional Chinese monarchy); (2) the charismatic (i.e. legitimacy derives from the charisma of the leader, as in Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy); and (3) the rational-legal (i.e. legitimacy is obtained by abiding to legal procedures, as in most democratic states at the present time).[10] Following Weber's perspective, Easton pointed out three sources of legitimacy, "from underlying ideological principles, from attachment to the structure and norms of the regime as such, or from devotion to the actual authorities themselves because of their personal qualities."[11] Lipset introduced the notion of "effectiveness" to explain the maintenance of legitimacy, saying "prolonged effectiveness over a number of generations may give legitimacy to a political system," while "a breakdown of effectiveness, repeatedly or for a long period, will endanger even a legitimate system's stability."[12]

Contrary to Weber, the influential modern philosopher John Rawls rejuvenated the emphasis on justice in understanding legitimacy. He indicated that the latter should rely directly on the abidance of justice, arguing that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions, no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust."[13]

Many scholars also highlight the significance of democracy when discussing legitimacy. Allen Buchanan notes that "where democratic authorization of the exercise of political power is possible, only a democratic government can be legitimate."[14] Schumpeter links democracy with elections, saying that "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the

[10] Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," *Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions* 4.1(1958): 1-11. Weber's typology was initially popular in political studies. See John H. Schaar, *Legitimacy in the Modern State* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1981), 15. However, scholars nowadays question Weber's views. See Mattei Dogan, "Conceptions of Legitimacy," in *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, eds. Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (London: Routledge, 1992), 119. Robert Grafstein, "The Failure of Weber's Concept of Legitimacy," *Journal of Politics* 43 (1981): 456.
[11] David Easton, *A Systems Analysis of Political Life* (New York: Wiley, 1965), 289.
[12] Lipset, *Political Man*, 82, 80.
[13] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 3.
[14] Allen Buchanan, "Political Legitimacy and Democracy," *Ethics* 112.4 (2002): 689.

election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will."[15] Democracy is one of the most influential ideas in discussions about legitimacy in the present day, which underpins and ensures a representative democracy, a widely-acknowledged political system that has prevailed worldwide in the modern period.

Summarizing previous scholars' ideas on legitimacy, Habermas identifies two groups: "empiricists" and "normativists."[16] The former group studies legitimacy using primarily empirical methods, focusing on the constitutions, functions, and typology of legitimacy. The latter group tends to base legitimacy on various normative values such as justice or democracy. In other words, there are two major approaches to studying legitimacy in Western traditions. The first approach comprises an empirical study of legitimacy (e.g. Weber not only describes legitimacy as a belief but also postulates three pure types of legitimate authority). The second approach views legitimacy from a normative perspective (e.g. scholars such as Aristotle and Rawls argue that just rule ensures a legitimate state, whereas others, such as Aquinas and Buchanan, establish religious devotion or democracy as the crucial value of political legitimacy). Interestingly, we see parallels between approaches adopted by Western scholars and pre-modern Chinese scholars in the study of legitimacy, which will be described in the following section.

Chinese Theories

It is a difficult task to give a clear definition of *zhengtong*, the most prevalent Chinese approximation of "political legitimacy." Although this term first appeared in the period of the Eastern Han Dynasty, it is only from the Song Dynasty 宋朝 (960-1276) onwards that the word *zhengtong* was used by most scholars when discussing issues related to political legitimacy. By contrast, other terms such as *zhengrun* 正閏 or *zhengshuo* 正朔, which have a similar meaning to *zhengtong*, gradually lost their

[15] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1947), 269.
[16] Jürgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 204. A similar expression comes from Felix Oppenheim, who argues that legitimacy has two dimensions: "descriptive-legal" and "normative-moral." See Felix E. Oppenheim, "The Language of Political Inquiry: Problems of Clarification," in *Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 1*, eds. F. I. Greenstein and N. W. Polsby (MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 283-336. Habermas criticizes both groups, arguing that the former neglects the embedded normative values of legitimacy and the latter immerses itself in a transcendent area with little concern for the empirical aspect of legitimacy. He concludes that any discussion about legitimacy should address both aspects. Ibid., 204.

popularity in scholars' relevant discussions.[17] According to Hok-lam Chan, z*heng* 正 means "rightful, rectified, or legitimate," while *tong* 統 could be understood as "succession or unification" in Chinese etymology.[18] In practical use, *zhengtong* in the traditional Chinese context often served as an adjective that described a monarch or his dynasty as the rightful ruler of the central realm (*zhongguo* 中國, one analogy of China in the ancient Chinese context).[19] In other cases, z*hengtong* also referred to the rightful (*zheng*) succession (*tong*) of the throne or dynasty.[20] In addition to the two aforementioned meanings, *zhengtong* could also mean the orthodox (*zheng*) tradition (*tong*) of an ideology. In conclusion, although the meaning of *zhengtong* is not identical to the meaning of the Western term "political legitimacy," it is often used to discuss an allegedly legitimate monarch or dynasty in Chinese history and that is why scholars nowadays often translate *zhengtong* into the political notion of legitimacy.[21]

Long before the term *zhengtong* appeared, ancient Chinese politicians and philosophers had already discussed the idea of political legitimacy, albeit using different terms. In the ancient period, the idea of divinely ordained authority prevailed. Various surviving records indicate that the rulers of the Shang Dynasty 商朝 (approximately 1550-1045 BCE) ascribed their rightful rule to the divinely ordained authority of their deified ancestors and a supreme deity called "Lord on High" (*shangdi* 上帝).[22] This is somewhat similar to the medieval European idea that rightful authority derived from the will of God. The ensuing Zhou Dynasty 周朝 (1045-256 BCE) continued the idea of divinely ordained authority by introducing the doctrine of the "Mandate of Heaven" (*tianming* 天命). According to *Book of*

[17] Lei Ge 雷戈, "Zhengshuo, Zhengtong yu Zhengrun 正朔, 正統與正閏," *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 6(2004): 23-31.
[18] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 21. As will be mentioned in Section 5.1.2.1, Chan's views on *zhengtong* could derive from Ouyang Xiu's views.
[19] *Zhongguo* 中國, the central realm, refers to the known world in Chinese in history. The term will be clarified further in the section below titled "My Contribution."
[20] Peter Bol interprets *zhengtong* as the "'correct succession' of dynasties that were the 'legitimate' successors of the sage-kings of antiquity as possessors of heaven's mandate." See Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 132. Also see Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun* 中國史學上之正統論 (Shanghai: Yuandong chubanshe, 1996), 1-4, 75-76.
[21] Hok-lam Chan insists that "the Chinese approximation of the Western concept of legitimacy, in the sense of the ruler's mandate and the recognition of his right to govern, is known as *zhengtong*." See Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 21.
[22] David N. Keightley, "The Religious Commitment: Shang Theology and the Genesis of Chinese Political Culture," *History of Religions* 17 (1978): 211-225. This dynasty is also distinguished for its high frequency of sacrificing livestock or slaves to the Lord on High, which was aimed at maintaining and solidifying their legitimacy. Ibid., 212-214.

Documents, Heaven – the cosmological realm wherein the natural laws of the secular world are created – granted the mandate to the ruler of the Zhou Dynasty due to his righteous and virtuous rule, and thereby authorized him to overthrow the previous dynasty and govern the secular world.[23] From then on, throughout most of Chinese history, the Mandate of Heaven served as a norm for legitimacy.

In the Warring States Period (453-221 BCE), philosophers added two kinds of influential ideas to determine rightful rule. (1) Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BCE) indicated that the rightfulness of a ruler relied on his properly practicing both "benevolence" (*ren* 仁) and "rites" (*li* 禮), which highlighted the significance of moral behavior.[24] His follower Mencius 孟子 (372-289 BCE) added that if a ruler imposed despotic policies on his people, he could lose his right to rule, which was then condemned to come to a premature end.[25] (2) Another ancient Chinese thinker, Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305-240 BCE), approached legitimacy in an empirical manner.[26] In writings ascribed to him, Zou Yan developed the doctrine of "Five Dynastic Phases" (*wude* 五德). This doctrine was based on the idea of "Five Phases" (*wuxing* 五行), in which five basic "phases" were identified from which everything in the universe was created: earth, wood, metal, fire, and water.[27] Introducing this idea into the political field, Zou Yan's "Five Dynastic Phases" is premised on the idea that each dynasty that possesses the Mandate of Heaven inherits one of the five "dynastic phases" and that each dynasty's phase is determined by the phase of the dynasty it overcame, leading to the following succession: Earth → Wood → Metal → Fire → Water.[28] To examine how this proceeds in practice: the Qin Dynasty 秦朝 (221-206 BCE) declared the

[23] *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義, ed. Li Xueqin 李學勤 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 459-68.
[24] Confucius, *The Analects (Lun Yu)*, trans. Lau, D. C. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), 109, 205.
[25] Mencius, *Mencius*, trans. Lau, D. C. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), 35.
[26] Wang Aihe describes modern scholars' views on Zou Yan, saying "this scholar's of philosophy is a combination of magic and science according to Feng Youlan, or a scholar of naturalists according to Needham…Schwartz sees Zou Yan as a pioneer of Han Confucianism, initiating the fusion of cosmology with Confucian values." See Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6. For some further studies on Zou Yan, see Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture*, 75-128; Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 25-27; Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 356-369.
[27] These five phases succeed one another (e.g. wood leads to fire) and they are associated with fivefold items (e.g. the five directions, the five primary colors, the five planets, and so on). For further studies, see Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China. Vol. 2 History of Scientific Thought* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 232-253.
[28] Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political*, 75-128.

acquisition of the "water" phase after it had replaced the Zhou Dynasty, which was marked by the "fire" phase.[29] The adoption of a dynastic phase *de facto* served as one of the dominant ways to legitimize dynasties in Chinese history until this practice faded, from the Song Dynasty onwards.[30]

Thinkers during the Han Dynasty 漢朝 (202 BCE-220 CE) adopted mainly the two aforementioned perspectives, with different developments. The influential scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE), for instance, introduced cosmological factors to develop Confucian ideas on legitimacy. Having established a monarch's moral behavior to be the crucial determinant of his legitimacy, Dong Zhongshu highlighted the reciprocal relationship between Heaven and the monarch, assuming that Heaven manifested its support for or objection to the monarch's rule through auspicious portents (such as the appearance of a legendary dragon or phoenix) or ominous portents (such as floods or famine).[31] Another Han Dynasty scholar, Liu Xin 劉歆 (50 BCE-23 CE), reinterpreted Zou Yan's Five Dynastic Phases doctrine and argued that the five dynastic phases followed a sequence in which one phase generated its successor, as opposed to Zou Yan, who argued that the one phase overcame the other. Liu Xin then argued that the permutations of dynastic phases were as follows: Wood → Fire → Earth → Metal → Water. Following this idea, the Western Han Dynasty 西漢 (202 BCE-9 CE) proclaimed Fire to be its dynastic phase, and as having been directly generated by the Wood phase of the Zhou Dynasty (thereby presenting the intermediary Qin Dynasty as extrinsic to the permutation of phases, and hence as an illegitimate "leap dynasty").[32]

The Sui Dynasty 隋朝 (589-618) thinker Wang Tong 王通 (584-617) provided various standards of the rightful rule, such as the occupation of the central realm and the adoption of Confucian political principles. He also argued that rulers, whether Chinese or non-Chinese, could be viewed as rightful rulers if they met these standards.[33]

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[29] Ibid. 14.
[30] Liu Pujiang 劉浦江, "The End of the Five Virtues Theory: Changes of Traditional Political Culture in China since the Song Dynasty," *Frontiers of History in China* 2 (2007): 513-54.
[31] The ruler should observe auspicious portents to discover whether or not he still holds the Mandate of Heaven. See Gary Arbuckle, "Inevitable treason: Dong Zhongshu's Theory of Historical Cycles and Early Attempts to Invalidate the Han Mandate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115(1995): 585-97.
[32] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 17-21.
[33] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaoshu* 中說校註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), 5.149.

During the Song period, scholars came up with innovative ways to understand the term "*zhengtong*." On the one hand, the famous historian Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) provided a new semantic interpretation of the term as two separate words: *zheng* in his view denoted the upright position, whereas *tong* referred to the unification of the central realm. Ouyang Xiu concluded that a dynasty could be described as *zhengtong* only when it met the requirements of commanding a just position and unifying the realm.[34] On the other hand, various Neo-Confucian thinkers introduced the "Heavenly Principle" (*tianli* 天理), which Bol interprets as "the endowment of the totality of *li* in the person to which he could turn for moral guidance,"[35] to discussions about *zhengtong*. The great Neo-Confucian thinker Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), for instance, suggested that obedience to Heavenly Principle was of considerable significance to *zhengtong*.[36] Since Zhu Xi's thought became the official ideology after the Song Dynasty, his idea of *zhengtong* prevailed.

From the 19th century, China encountered increasing challenges from the West, causing previous definitions of *zhengtong* to gradually lose their validity. Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873-1929) criticized previous scholars' views on legitimacy. He not only branded the term *zhengtong* as ridiculous but also introduced Western views, arguing that only democracy and constitutionalism could justify a ruling regime.[37] In accordance with Liang Qichao's ideas, modern Chinese scholars adopted a new concept, "in accordance with the law" (*hefaxing* 合法性), as a literal translation of legitimacy, with this neologism replacing the term *zhengtong*.

In short, scholars in Chinese history have adopted two major approaches to what we now call legitimacy. The first and most obvious one was to focus on various manifestations of legitimate rule, which could be different dynastic phases (as Zou Yan and Liu Xin argued), various auspicious portents (as Dong Zhongshu stressed), subscription to Confucian political principles (as Wang Tong described), or the occupation of the central realm (as Ouyang Xiu pointed out). The second approach centered on the origin of legitimate rule. In terms of the doctrine of Mandate of

[34] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 39.
[35] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 167.
[36] Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 8.22. Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 39-40. Zhu Xi also expresses his support for the idea of Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), who considers the unification of the central realm to be the crucial requirement for legitimacy. See Li Jingde 黎靖德, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 105.2636.
[37] Liang Qichao, *Liang Qichao quanji* 梁啟超全集, *vol.2* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1999), 736-753.

Heaven, the origin of *zhengtong* was a divine Mandate, and Confucians also derived it from rulers' moral behavior or "Heavenly Principle."

Research on Traditional Chinese Views on Legitimacy

Several modern scholars have studied traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. In this section two kinds of scholars' relevant publications are introduced: studies on the general views of Chinese theories of legitimacy and specific cases of legitimacy in Chinese history.

General Overviews

Among the general overviews of legitimacy in the Chinese tradition, the most notable one is *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun* 中國史學上之正統論 (Discourse on Legitimacy in Chinese Historiography) by Rao Zongyi 饒宗頤, which was published in 1996. The most crucial contribution of this book is its extensive collection of relevant primary sources. Rao's book also provides us a brief introduction to views about legitimacy found in Chinese history. Its conclusion highlights the great significance of the dynastic phase theory and Ouyang Xiu's views on *zhengtong* in understanding traditional Chinese views on legitimacy.[38] Other scholars wrote similar general monographs on the evolution of views on legitimacy in the Chinese tradition, or they wrote scholarly articles to investigate the origin or general features of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy.[39] For English readers, general studies of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy can be found in the writings of Hok-lam Chan and Richard Davis.[40]

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[38] Ibid., 74-78.

[39] In addition to Rao's book, other general monographs concerning Chinese theories of legitimacy in history, see Zhao Lingyang 趙令揚, *Guanyu lidai zhengtong wenti de zhenglun* 關於歷代正統問題的爭論 (Hong Kong: Xuejin chubanshe, 1976). Wang Wenxue 汪文學, *Zhengtong lun—Faxian dongfang zhengzhi zhihui* 正統論--發現東方政治智慧 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2002).
For studies on the origin or features of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy, see Dong Enlin 董恩林, "Shilun lishi zhengtongguan de qiyuan yu neihan 試論歷史正統觀的起源與內涵," *Shixue lilun yanjiu* 史學理論研究 21 (2005): 13-22. Lei Ge, "Zhengshuo, Zhengtong yu Zhengrun," 23-31. Jiang Mei 江湄, "Zhengtong lun de xingqi yu lishiguan de bianhua 正統論的興起與歷史觀的變化," *Shixue yuekan* 9(2004): 16-18. Wang Dong 王東, "Zhengtong lun yu zhongguo gudai shixue 正統論與中國古代史學," *Xueshu jie* 學術界 5 (1987): 66-71. Dong Enlin relies on the "Sino–barbarian dichotomy" to discuss legitimacy in the Chinese tradition in his article. Lei Ge indicates that the origin of *zhengtong* has a close relationship with the traditional Chinese calendar. Jiang Mei and Wang Dong highlight that *zhengtong* influenced traditional Chinese historical thoughts in various ways.

[40] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 19-45. Richard Davis, "Historiography as Politics in Yang Wei-chen's Polemic on Legitimate Succession," *T'oung Pao* 69 (1983): 33-72.

In addition to general overviews of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy, today's scholars also focus on specific legitimization practices in Chinese history. Hou Deren 侯德仁 provides a list of relevant Chinese studies.[41] For relevant Western studies, think, for instance, of Sarah Allan's book *The Heir and the Sage*, in which she points out that the legendary founders of ancient Chinese dynasties were used to support these dynasties' authority.[42] Similarly, Lai Ming-chiu discusses the legitimation function of state sacrifices in the Qin and Han dynasties.[43] Burchard Mansvelt Beck studies legitimation methods that the Later Han Dynasty adopted based on historical records from the *Houhan shu* 後漢書 (History of the Later Han Dynasty).[44] Similarly, Michael Loewe and Tiziana Lippiello discuss how the Han Dynasty introduced factors such as auspicious omens, mythology, and divination in order to support their legitimate status.[45] Carl Leban and Lance Eccles study legitimacy in the Western Jin 西晉 (265-316) and the Southern Dynasties.[46] Howard Wechsler investigates ritual and cosmological legitimation methods in the Tang Dynasty 唐朝 (618-907).[47]

Case Studies

There are several periods in Chinese history in which the issue of political legitimacy was exceptionally pressing. During these periods, in which the geopolitical area now known as China had various coexisting dynasties, such as in the Three Kingdoms and the Song Dynasty periods, dynasties competed with one another to be the supreme

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[41] Hou Deren 侯德仁, "Jin sanshi nianlai de zhongguo shixue zhengtonglun yanjiu zongshu 近三十年來的中國史學正統論研究綜述," *Lanzhou xuekan* 蘭州學刊 7(2009): 203-206.

[42] Sarah Allan, *The Heir and the Sage: Dynastic Legend in Early China* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1981).

[43] Ming-chiu Lai, "Legitimation of Qin-Han China: from the Perspective of the *feng* and *shan* Sacrifices (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)," in *The Legitimation of New Orders: Case Studies in World History*, ed. Yuensang Liang (Chinese University Press, 2007), 1-26.

[44] B.J. Mansvelt Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han: Their Author, Sources, Contents, and Place in Chinese Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1990).

[45] Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy in Han China* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994). Wang Aihe, *Cosmology and Political Culture*. T. Lippiello, *Auspicious Omens and Miracles in Ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms, and Six Dynasties* (Sankt Augustin: Monumenta Serica Institute, 2001).

[46] Carl Leban, "The Accession of Sima Yan, AD 265: Legitimation by Ritual Replication," *Early Medieval China* 16 (2010): 1-50. Lance Eccles, "The Seizure of the Mandate: Establishment of the Legitimacy of the Liang Dynasty (502-557)," *Journal of Asian History* 23 (1989): 169-180.

[47] Howard J. Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk: Ritual and Symbol in the Legitimation of the T'ang Dynasty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). L. Wagner, "Art as an Instrument for Political Legitimation during the Tang: The Small Seal Script and the Legitimation Seal," *Oriens Extremus* 40 (1997): 159-196.

ruler of the central realm. In other cases, dynasties were short-lived, such as the Qin and Sui Dynasty, or ruled by non-Chinese monarchs, such as the Yuan and Qing dynasties respectively, and hence failed to fully achieve legitimacy. Numerous scholars past and present proffer distinct opinions concerning these three kinds of legitimacy disputes. In this section, I briefly outline their views, starting with the most notable periods in Chinese history, before touching upon lesser studied ones.

The Three Kingdoms

The first influential legitimacy dispute in Chinese history took place in the period of the Three Kingdoms. After the Eastern Han Dynasty collapsed, three kingdoms gradually came to stand out.[48] The "legitimacy competition" occurred primarily between the Cao Wei 曹魏 (220-265) and Shu Han 蜀漢 (221-263) dynasties.[49] Pre-modern scholars' opinions concerning this legitimacy dispute can be divided into two categories: Chen Shou 陳壽 (233-297) and Ouyang Xiu, for instance, supported Cao Wei regime since this dynasty, in their view, possessed either the rightful dynastic phase or great power and extensive territory.[50] Xi Zaochi 習鑿齒 (?-383) and Zhu Xi, however, argued for the Shu Han's legitimacy since that dynasty, in their view, was the continuation of the legitimate Han Dynasty by the same royal bloodline.[51]

Current studies on the Three Kingdoms' legitimacy dispute are fragmented. Most of them focus on specific legitimization practices. For instance, Qin Yongzhou 秦永洲 points out that cosmological propitious portents and the dynastic phase doctrine had been introduced by the rulers of the Three Kingdoms to underpin their

[48] The Three Kingdoms age began in 220 when the Cao Wei Dynasty was established, and it ended in 280 when the Western Jin, the successor of the Cao Wei, united China. The other two dynasties, the Shu Han and the Eastern Wu 東吳 (229-280), were established in 221 and 229, and occupied the southwestern and southeastern parts of China respectively. It should be noted that these dynasties called themselves "Wei," "Han" and "Wu" respectively. To distinguish them from other Chinese states with similar names, people in a later period added a relevant adjective before the original names of these dynasties

[49] Before declaring its legitimate status in 263, the Sun Wu dynasty demonstrated its subjection to the Cao Wei Dynasty, indicating that this dynasty nominally agreed with the Cao Wei's supreme status. See Chen Shou 陳壽, *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (hereafter SGZ) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 47.232.
The mighty Cao Wei occupied most of northern China, while the Shu Han Dynasty declared continuity with the allegedly *zhengtong* Han Dynasty.

[50] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 36, 91-95.

[51] Ibid., 44-45, 48-49, 303-304, 311-313. For more studies of Xi Zaochi, see Andrew Chittick, "Dynastic Legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch'ih and the Problem of Huan Wen," *Asia Major* 11.1 (1998): 21-52.

legitimacy.[52] David Knechtges and Howard Goodman conducted detailed studies to uncover how the Cao Wei Dynasty introduced "abdication" (*shanrang* 禪讓) to establish its legitimate status.[53] A few others have focused on scholarly discussions on the Three Kingdoms' legitimacy dispute. Simon Shen, for instance, explains why increasingly scholars in history support the Shu Han Dynasty's legitimate status.[54] Anne McLaren's research shows that scholars in the Song and Yuan Dynasties introduced their debates of the Three Kingdoms legitimacy dispute to promote their conception of *zhengtong*.[55]

The Song

Another heated topic in Chinese history was whether the Song Dynasty was the legitimate ruler of the central realm. In its time, the Song Dynasty competed with the Khitan Liao Dynasty 遼朝 (907-1125) and the subsequent Jurchen Jin Dynasty 金朝 (1115-1234) for the status of legitimate ruler of the central realm.[56] Three primary views concerning the Song's legitimacy can be found among pre-modern Chinese scholars. Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖 (1241-1318) and Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357-1402), for instance, supported the Song's legitimacy because of this dynasty's adherence to Chinese culture.[57] Lü Zhen'gan 呂貞幹 (early 13th century) and Zhao Bingwen 趙秉文 (1159-1232), by contrast, ascribed *zhengtong* to the Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin due to their possession of the rightful dynastic phase and their adoption of Chinese

[52] Qin Yongzhou 秦永洲, "Sanguo shiqi zhengtong guannian jianlun 三國時期正統觀念簡論," *Shandong shifan daxue xuebao* 山東師範大學學報 6 (1999): 38-40.

[53] David R. Knechtges, "The Rhetoric of Imperial Abdication and Accession in a Third-Century Chinese Court: The Case of Cao Pi's Accession as Emperor of the Wei Dynasty," in *Rhetoric and the Discourses of Power in Court Culture*, eds. David Knechtges and Eugene Vance (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 3-35. H. L. Goodman, *Ts' ao P'i Transcendent: Political Culture and Dynasty-Founding in China at the End of the Han* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998).

[54] Simon Shen, "Inventing the Romantic Kingdom: The Resurrection and Legitimization of the Shu Han Kingdom before the Romance of the Three Kingdoms," *East Asian History* 25 (2003): 25-42. Shen's major point is that the Shu Han's legitimate status "indeed went through a process of romanticization" for various reasons. Ibid. 27.

[55] Anne McLaren, "Challenging Official History in the Song and Yuan Dynasties: The Record of the Three Kingdoms," In *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print: China, 900-1400*, eds. Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerdt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 317-348.

[56] It is noteworthy that both the Northern Song and Southern Song named themselves "Song." Later scholars introduced the term "Northern Song" to refer to the first period of the Song from 959 to 1126, after which the Song Dynasty lost its capital, Kaifeng, and fled to Southern China. The Southern Song refers to the second period of the Song, from 1126, when the Song Dynasty in exile established the capital Lin'an 臨安 (the current Hangzhou 杭州) to 1279, when the Yuan Dynasty conquered the Song Dynasty.

[57] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 115, 121-123, 151, 154-157.

culture.[58] The last view is represented by the Yuan scholar Xiu Duan 修端 (1279-1340), who considered all three dynasties *zhengtong* because of their lengthy existences.[59]

Present-day scholars also show an interest in the "legitimacy competition" among the Song, Liao and Jin. Jing-shen Tao and Morris Rossabi investigated the "legitimacy competition" between the Northern Song 北宋 (960-1126) and the Liao, and highlighted the fact that the two dynasties finally agreed on their equal status, at least to some extent.[60] Hok-lam Chan provides one of the most influential monographs relevant to the Jin Dynasty's legitimacy in Western academia, which is focused on the debate among Jin scholars concerning the selection of a rightful dynastic phase in order to better support their dynasty's legitimacy.[61] Liu Pujiang 劉浦江 authored a series of influential papers in Chinese in which he not only investigated the legitimation methods used by the Liao and Jin dynasties but also examined how scholars in history discussed the legitimacy of those two dynasties.[62] Chen Fangming 陳芳明 and Richard Davis offer useful introduction regarding the Song scholars' views on *zhengtong*.[63]

Other Dynasties

It should be noted that scholarly questions have been posed regarding the legitimacy of two types of dynasties, as mentioned previously. Some dynasties were short-lived, such as the Qin and Sui dynasties, while others were ruled by non-Chinese, such as the Yuan and Qing 清朝 (1644-1911) dynasties. Although all of them "unified" the central realm (in that they controlled most of the area now known as China) and their

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[58] Ibid., 311, 303. Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 254.

[59] Liu Pujiang, "Deyun zhizheng yu Liaojin wangchao de zhengtongxing wenti 德運之爭與遼金王朝的正統性問題," *Zhongguo shehui kexue* 中國社會科學 2 (2004):189-203.

[60] Jing-shen Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven: Studies in Sung-Liao Relations* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988). Morris Rossabi, *China among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[61] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*. This book specifically describes these debates among the Jurchen Jin officials concerning choosing a rightful dynastic phase. Michael Rogers conducted a similar but more brief study. See Michael Rogers, "The Late Chin Debates on Dynastic Legitimacy," *Sung Studies Newsletter* 13 (1977): 57-66.

[62] Li Pujiang's relevant papers are included in his book *Songmo zhijian: liaojin qidan nüzhen shi yanjiu* 松漠之間:遼金契丹女真史研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008).

[63] Chen Fangming 陳芳明, "Songdai zhengtonglun xingcheng beijing yiji qi neirong 宋代正統論形成背景及其內容," *Shihuo yuekan* 食貨月刊 8 (1971): 418-430. Richard Davis, "Historiography as Politics," 33-72.

supreme rule was not challenged, scholars in later periods were divided about these dynasties' *zhengtong*.

As for pre-modern scholars, opponents of the Qin and Sui dynasty's legitimate status, such as Zhu Xi and Fang Xiaoru, accused these two dynasties of having an ephemeral and immoral rule, whereas supporters such as Li Yanshou 李延壽 (?-628) and Ouyang Xiu highlighted the Qin and Sui's unification of the central realm.[64] Opponents of the Yuan and Qing's legitimacy, such as Fang Xiaoru and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692), considered non-Chinese or "barbarian" dynasties, as they used to call them, illegitimate, whereas supporters such as Xiu Duan and Li Ciming 李慈銘 (1830-1895) applauded the Yuan and Qing for their unification of the central realm and adoption of Chinese cultural conventions.[65]

As for today's scholars, most of them concentrate on the various legitimization practices the aforementioned dynasties employed. For example, Li Yan 李琰 and Ming-chiu Lai show that the Qin Dynasty used ancestor worship or state sacrifices to support their political legitimacy.[66] Herbert Franke and Crossley separately point out that the rulers of the Yuan and Qing adopted various kinds of legitimacy practices from Chinese or non-Chinese culture.[67] Other scholars pay attention to traditional Chinese thinkers' views on these short-lived or non-Chinese dynasties. Liu Pujiang specifically describes how the Ming scholars viewed the Yuan's legitimacy.[68] Wei Chongwu 魏崇武, Jiang Mei 江湄 and Yang Nianqun 楊念群 conducted studies on views regarding *zhengtong* in the Yuan and Qing periods.[69]

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[64] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 94-95, 151-55.
[65] Ibid., 151-55, 199, 132-133, 244.
[66] Li Yan 李琰, "Qinchao jinzu guannian yu zhengquan hefaxing jiangou 秦朝敬祖觀念與政權合法性建構," *Shoudu shifan daxue xuebao* 首都師範大學學報 3 (2016): 24-30. Ming-chiu Lai, "Legitimation of Qin-Han China," 1-26
[67] Herbert Franke. *From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: the Legitimation of the Yüan Dynasty* (München: Verlag der Baerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1978). Pamela Kyle Crossley, "Review: The Rulerships of China," *The American Historical Review* 97.5 (1992): 1468-1483. Crossley thoroughly reviews western studies on relevant issues in that paper.
[68] Liu Pujiang, "Yuanming geming de mingzu zhuyi xiangxiang 元明革命的民族主義想像," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 中國史研究 3(2014): 79-100.
[69] Wei Chongwu 魏崇武 "Lun Mengyuan chuqi de zhengtong lun 論蒙元初期的正統論," *Shixueshi yanjiu* 史學史研究 3(2008): 34-43. Jiang Mei, "Yuandai zhengtong zhibian yu shixue sichao 元代正統之辨與史學思潮," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 3(1996): 35-42. Yang Nianqun 楊念群, *Hechu shi Jiangnan? Qingdai zhengtongguan de queli yu shilin jingshen de bianyi* 何處是江南?清代正統觀的確立與士林精神世界的變異 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2011), 260-303. The previous two scholars focus on scholarly views in the Yuan Dynasty, while the last one is a study of how the mid-Qing emperors and scholars understood legitimacy.

In short, two major approaches are employed for the study of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. Many scholars explore general perspectives on traditional views on legitimacy, such as the origins and features of Chinese theories of legitimacy. The rest of them focus on specific legitimation practices or legitimacy cases in history. While these studies reveal diverse aspects of traditional Chinese views on political legitimacy, there is room for improvement. Few studies have combined the two aforementioned approaches, investigating specific legitimacy cases or practices on the one hand and analyzing general perspectives of traditional views on legitimacy on the other. The aim of this dissertation is to improve our understanding of legitimacy in Chinese history by focusing on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. It comprises an in-depth study of the legitimation practices adopted by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, many of which have not been well studied yet by modern scholars. The traditional Chinese views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei are also analyzed, and the theoretical background and evolution of traditional Chinese ideas about legitimacy are examined.

Research on the Northern Wei

As one of the more prominent dynasties in the Period of Disunion, the Northern Wei features prominently in modern studies of this era. This section introduces influential publications concerning the Northern Wei in general and its legitimacy in particular.

General Studies

Most current scholars study the Northern Wei from three perspectives, namely historical, religious, and political.[70]

Various influential Chinese historians, such as Chen Yinque 陳寅恪, Tang Changru 唐長儒, Zhou Yiliang 周一良, Wang Zhongluo 王仲犖, Tian Yuqing 田餘慶, and Li Ping 李憑 provide us with works on various perspectives of the Northern

[70] For the overall bibliography of Chinese studies concerning the Tuoba people and the Northern Wei, see four papers from Ren Aijun 任愛君 and Li Yuexin 李月新, "Jin bainian lai (1900-2008) Wuhuan xianbei shi yanjiu suoyin 近百年來 (1900-2008) 烏桓鮮卑史研究索引," *Chifeng xueyuan xuebao* 赤峰學院學報 11(2009):4-7; 30.12 (2009): 231-237; 31.1 (2010): 216-221; 31.2 (2010): 215-220. Two other scholars have written an update from 2009-2014. See Li Tinglin 李亭霖 and Suo Yajie 索雅傑, "2009-2014 Wuhuan Xianbei shi yanjiu suoyin 2009 年-2014 年烏桓鮮卑史研究索引," *Chifeng xueyuan xuebao* 36(2015): 273-275.

Wei's history.[71] Western academics likewise offer similar studies related to the history of the Northern Wei. For example, Charles Holcombe and Kenneth Klein contribute a detailed and insightful description of the history of Tuoba 拓跋 people and the dynasty they established, the Northern Wei.[72] Focusing on the *Weishu* 魏書, the official history of the Northern Wei, Jennifer Holmgren investigates the early history of the Tuoba people.[73]

A great number of scholars have focused on Buddhism in the Northern Wei.[74] Chin-Yin Tseng, Amy McNair, Benjamin Rowland, and Dorothy Wong studied the Buddhist art of the Northern Wei.[75] Their studies demonstrated that Buddhist culture during the Northern Wei's reign influenced the Northern Wei's politics and society in various ways.

Many academics also take an interest in the Northern Wei's politics. Andrew Eisenberg discusses the retired emperorship and the empress dowager institution of the Northern Wei in his book *Kingship in Early Medieval China*.[76] Valentin

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[71] Chen Yinque 陳寅恪, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi jiangyan lu* 魏晉南北朝史講演錄 (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1987). Tang Changru 唐長孺, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong* 魏晉南北朝論叢 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000). Zhou Yiliang 周一良, *Wei Jin Nanbeichaoshi lunji* 魏晉南北史論集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963). Wang Zhongluo 王仲犖, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 魏晉南北朝史 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2003). Tian Yuqing 田餘慶, *Tuoba shitan* 拓跋史探 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 2003). Li Ping 李憑, *Beiwei Pingcheng shidai* 北魏平城時代 (Beijing: *Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe*, 2000).

[72] Charles Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," *Early Medieval China* 19 (2013): 1-38. Kenneth Douglas Klein, "The Contributions of the Fourth Century Xianbei States to the Reunification of the Chinese Empire" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1980).

[73] Jennifer Holmgren, *Annals of Tai: Early T'o Pa History According to the First Chapter of the Wei-shu* (Canberra: Australian National University press, 1982). This book consists of a general discussion of early Tuoba history and a detailed translation of the first chapter of the *Weishu;* a chapter notes the Tuoba history prior to the establishment of the Northern Wei.

[74] Japanese scholars also provide many studies of Buddhism in the Northern Wei. For example, early in 1942, Tsukamoto Zenryu had already presented his famous study on Buddhist thought in the Northern Wei. See Tsukamoto Zenryu 塚本善隆, *A History of Early Chinese Buddhism: from its Introduction to the Death of Hui-yüan* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1985). Erik Zürcher demonstrates how Buddhism spread during the early medieval China in his famous book, *The Buddhist Conquest of China*. Unfortunately, the book does not deal with Buddhism among the Northern Wei. See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China: the Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1959).

[75] Chin-Yin Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei: Constructing Material Cultural Expressions in the Northern Wei Pingcheng Period (398-494 CE)* (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 2013). Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, Politics, And Patronage in Medieval Chinese Buddhist Sculpture* (Voorkant: University of Hawaii Press, 2007). Benjamin Rowland, "Notes on the Dated Statues of the Northern Wei Dynasty and the Beginnings of Buddhist Sculpture in China," *The Art Bulletin* 19(1937): 92-107. Dorothy Wong, "Ethnicity and Identity: Northern Nomads as Buddhist Art Patrons during the Period of Northern and Southern Dynasties," in *Political Frontiers, Ethnic Boundaries and Human Geographies in Chinese History*, eds. Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt (London: Routledge, 2003), 80-118.

[76] Andrew Eisenberg, *Kingship in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 23-92.

Golovachev analyses matricide in the Northern Wei's royal family.[77] Jennifer Holmgren focuses on female's roles in the politics of the Northern Wei.[78] Their studies offer distinct aspects of the Northern Wei's politics that benefit our understanding of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, as this dissertation will demonstrate.

Studies on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute

Some present-day scholars have specifically focused on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Wang Chaohai 王朝海, for instance, wrote a monograph on various legitimacy practices of the Northern Wei.[79] Unfortunately, his book provides few general descriptions of the legitimization practices undertaken by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, or views on legitimacy by scholars from the Period of Disunion and beyond. Other modern studies on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, as mentioned below, could be divided into two types, those on legitimacy practices and those on pre-modern discussions about legitimacy.

Some scholars have focused on the diverse legitimation practices employed by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. Kang Le's 康樂 book describes various Chinese customs that the Northern Wei adopted to enhance its legitimacy status.[80] Qin Yongzhou revealed that both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties used Chinese cultural practices to demonstrate their legitimacy.[81] Luo Xin 羅新 investigated how the Northern Wei and earlier non-Chinese dynasties in the Sixteen Kingdom period (4th century CE) used dynastic phases to legitimize their rule.[82] He Dezhang 何德章 argues that the dynastic name of "Wei" greatly supported the

[77] V. C. Golovachev, "Matricide among the Tuoba-Xianbei and its Transformation during the Northern Wei," *Early Medieval China* 1 (2002): 1-14.

[78] Holmgren, *Women's Biographies in the Wei-shu: A Study of the Moral Attitudes and Social Background Found in Women's Biographies in the Dynastic History of the Northern Wei* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1979). Holmgren, "The Harem in Northern Wei Politics. 398-498 A.D.: A Study of T'o-pa Attitudes to the Institution of Empress, Empress-Dowager, and Regency Governments in the Chinese Dynastic System during Early Northern Wei," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26(1983): 71-96.

[79] Wang Chaohai 王朝海, *Beiwei zhengquan zhengtong zhizheng yanjiu* 北魏政權正統之爭研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2014).

[80] Kang Le, "An Empire for a City: Cultural Reforms of the Hsiao-wen Emperor (A.D. 471-499)" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1983). Kang Le 康樂, *Cong xijiao dao nanjiao: guojia jidian yu beiwei zhengzhi* 從西郊到南郊: 國家祭典與北魏政治 (Taibei: Daohe chubanshe, 1995).

[81] Qin Yongzhou, "Dongjin Nanbeichao shiqi zhonghua zhengtong zhi zhengduo yu zhengtong zaizao 東晉南北朝時期中華正統之爭與正統再造," *Wenshizhe* 文史哲 1 (1998): 70-77.

[82] Luo Xin 羅新, "Shiliuguo Beichao de wude liyun wenti 十六國北朝的五德曆運問題," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 3(2004): 47-56.

Northern Wei's legitimacy in its early period.[83] Anna Seidel points out that Daoism played a significant role in the Northern Wei's legitimation practices.[84] Lance Eccles reveals how one of the Southern Dynasties, the Liang Dynasty, resorted to the practice of "abdication" to establish its legitimacy.[85]

Several scholars have focused on traditional views about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Ma Xiaoneng 馬小能 suggests that historians in the Northern and Southern Dynasties period introduced the factor of Chinese ethnicity largely in order to discuss legitimacy.[86] Liu Pujiang reveals the fact that discussions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute greatly affected Tang historians' views on legitimacy.[87]

Present-day scholars have clearly made progress in studying the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, elucidating various legitimacy practices and traditional views on the dispute. However, their studies still fail to establish a solid basis for investigating the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Firstly, current studies actually provide us with a fragmented image of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Academics pay a great deal of attention to a limited number of legitimation methods used by the Northern Wei, such as the adoption of a dynastic phase and Chinese cultural practices. In fact, both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties made use of many other legitimization practices, which deserve to be studied as a group. This will be done in this dissertation.

Secondly, current studies provide a partial image of traditional opinions on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Wang Chaohai and Liu Pujiang briefly studied scholars' views prior to the Song Dynasty. A few other studies focused on opinions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute that were held after the Song Dynasty, which are actually more diverse than the previous period. A complete study of traditional views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei, as this dissertation does,

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[83] He Dezhang 何德章, "Beiwei Guohao yu zhengtong wenti 北魏國號與正統問題," *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 3(1992): 113-125.
[84] Anna Seidel, "Imperial Treasures and Taoist Sacraments: Taoist Roots in the Apocrypha," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of RA Stein, II*, ed. Michel Strickmann (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 1983), 291-371.
[85] Eccles, "The Seizure of the Mandate," 169-180.
[86] Ma Xiaoneng 馬小能, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shixue zhengtong guannian de tedian 魏晉南北朝史學正統觀念的特點," *Xuexi yu tansuo* 學習與探索 4 (2010): 214-216.
[87] Liu Pujiang, "Nanbeichao de lishi yichan yu suiting shidai de zhengtonglun 南北朝的歷史遺產與隋唐時代的正統論," *Wenshi* 文史 02 (2013): 123-51.

could reveal shifting opinions about the Northern Wei and their legitimacy in history. Thirdly, recent studies do not offer an examination of pre-modern Chinese scholars' discussions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in order to explore the traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. The topic of whether the Northern Wei was the legitimate ruler of the central realm indeed attracted the attention of scholars from the Period of Disunion to the Qing period. Their diverse ideas, as this dissertation reveals, not only provide us with many clues regarding the foundational doctrines and the practical criteria underpinning traditional Chinese views on legitimacy, but also vividly demonstrate the evolution and disintegration of these views.

My Contribution

As mentioned above, recent studies not only fail to provide a comprehensive study on the legitimacy practices and traditional views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei but also fail to explore the traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. With a view to supplementing and furthering our understanding of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, the aim of this dissertation is to make three major contributions: (1) To provide an in-depth study of the legitimation practices employed by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties; (2) To provide a detailed study of the intellectual history of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute; (3) To explicate some approaches to understanding the traditional Chinese views on legitimacy.

Legitimation Practices of the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties

This dissertation comprises an investigation into a set of actual legitimation practices enacted by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties.

The Northern Wei, in my analysis, generally adopted five types of legitimation practices to establish their legitimacy from scratch, since they did not have predecessors from which to inherit legitimacy resources. The first was to establish Wei 魏 as its dynastic name in its early period, indicating the Northern Wei's aspiration to borrow legitimacy from the earlier Cao Wei Dynasty.[88] The second practice was to adopt the corresponding dynastic phase of Metal from the Western Jin Dynasty in its middle period, which could designate the Northern Wei as the

[88] See Section 2.1.1.

successor of the Western Jin Dynasty.[89] The third practice was to establish the Northern Wei's geographical legitimacy by transferring its capital from Pingcheng 平城 (present-day city Datong 大同) to the historically and culturally more meaningful city of Luoyang 洛陽.[90] The fourth was to adopt Chinese cultural conventions with the aim of making the Northern Wei a worthy successor of previous Chinese dynasties.[91] The last practice was to implement various diplomatic strategies to motivate most of the Northern Wei's surrounding states to accept its supreme status.[92]

The Southern Dynasties adopted four primary types of practices to preserve their legitimate status since they inherited their legitimacy from their predecessors by way of rightful succession. The first was to apply the tradition of "abdication" as a justification for their establishment by usurpation.[93] The second practice was to record various auspicious portents and present these as a testimony to their legitimacy.[94] The third practice was to occupy the central realm in a symbolical way. The Southern Dynasties not only cited an ancient prophecy to prove that their capital Jiankang 建康 (present-day Nanjing 南京) was the rightful capital of the central realm but also established numerous "immigrant commanderies" (*qiaojun* 僑郡) to display their occupation of the central realm.[95] The fourth practice was that the Southern Dynasties, similarly to the Northern Wei, sought diplomatic support for their legitimate status.[96]

The Intellectual History of the Northern Wei Legitimacy Dispute

This dissertation also examines the writings of scholars throughout Chinese history who provided influential ideas concerning the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties.

Following a chronological order, five stages of the intellectual history of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute will be explicated. In the first stage, historians of the Period of Disunion, such as Wei Shou 魏收 (506-572), Shen Yue 沈約 (441-531) and Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯 (487-537), appealed to Chinese ethnicity to support or deny the

[89] See Section 2.1.2.
[90] See Section 2.1.3.
[91] See Section 2.1.4.
[92] See Section 2.1.5.
[93] See Section 2.2.1.
[94] See Section 2.2.2.
[95] See Section 2.2.3.
[96] See Section 2.2.4.

Northern Wei's legitimate rule.[97] In the second stage, scholars during the Sui and Tang dynasties, such as Wang Tong and Li Yanshou, argued from historical and geographical perspectives when discussing the rightful rule. They considered both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties to be legitimate. Another scholar, Huangfu Shi 皇甫湜 (777-835), supported the Southern Dynasties' legitimacy because of their adherence to the Confucian culture.[98] In the third stage, two scholars of the Northern Song Dynasty, Zhang Fangping 張方平 (1007-1091) and Chen Shidao 陳師道 (1053-1102), supported the Northern Wei's legitimate status by developing Wang Tong's ideas.[99] Another two Northern Song historians, Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) highlighted the significance of the unification of the central realm and rejected the *zhengtong* of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties.[100] In the fourth stage, scholars from the Southern Song 南宋 (1127-1276) onwards put more emphasis on Confucian principles when discussing *zhengtong*. Zheng Sixiao and Fang Xiaoru introduced that idea to deny the *zhengtong* of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties.[101] In the last stage, two Chinese scholars during the late Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty, Wang Fuzhi and Liang Qichao, were highly critical of previous discussions on *zhengtong* and argued that no dynasty in history, including the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, possessed legitimate status.[102] Altogether, this solid selection of scholars enables us to have a comprehensive and representative overview of how traditional Chinese scholars solved the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.

Traditional Chinese Views on Legitimacy

In addition to providing a comprehensive study of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, another aim of this dissertation is to contribute to our understanding of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. With this in mind, two fundamental doctrines and five practical criteria of legitimacy in Chinese tradition will be introduced.

The first fundamental doctrine is the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven. As mentioned previously, the monarchs of the Zhou Dynasty introduced this doctrine to

[97] See Section 3.1.
[98] See section 3.2 and Chapter 4.
[99] See Section 5.1.1.
[100] See Section 5.1.2.
[101] See Section 5.1.3, 5.2.1.
[102] See Section 5.2.2.

support their right to rule. T'ang Chun-I points out three aspects of this doctrine: "Heaven is seen as omnipresent and impartial, favoring no particular man or nation," and "the Heavenly mandate is conferred on a man only after his cultivation of virtue," and "to preserve the Heavenly *ming* [Mandate], men ought to cultivate virtue; and the Heavenly *ming* is unceasing."[103] In sum, the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven is that the monarch's legitimacy derives from Heaven. The monarch should rule righteously and virtuously and cultivate his virtues; otherwise, his mandate will be bestowed on another.[104] This explains the origin, possession, and transfer of legitimacy. It establishes the mandate from Heaven as its origin. The possession of legitimacy rested upon a monarch's cultivation of his virtue and whether he secured the wellbeing of his people. The Mandate was transferred to another when Heaven removed the mandate from the monarch because he failed to carry out his responsibilities and rule his people despotically or fatuously. Throughout Chinese history, the Mandate of Heaven was viewed as the most significant source of legitimacy. This dissertation illuminates the fact that the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven underpinned pre-modern scholars' discussions on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.

The second fundamental doctrine is the doctrine of "All Under Heaven."[105] In general terms, "All Under Heaven" refers to the world as it was known to pre-modern Chinese people. The basis of this doctrine, according to early Northern Song scholar Shi Jie 石介 (1005-1045), was that "Heaven lies above and earth lies below, and that which lies at the center of heaven and earth is called the Central Lands, while those who dwell on the fringes of heaven and earth are called the barbarians (*Yi*) of the four quarters. The barbarians of the four quarters are outer, and the Central Lands are

[103] T'ang Chun-I, "The Tien Ming [Heavenly Ordinance] in Pre-Ch'in China," *Philosophy East and West* 11(1962): 203-204.
[104] Allan expresses a similar view by saying that "heaven's command determined the ruler. Heaven normally transferred its mandate hereditarily, but if a king violated the principles of heaven, he lost his moral imperative, and the right to rule was bestowed on another." See Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*, 13.
[105] As Pines's studies show, the term "*tianxia*," which is normally translated as All Under Heaven, "became an inclusive term that comprised both the Central States and alien lands," and it "was evidently identical to the entire known world." See Yuri Pines, "Changing Views of *tianxia* in Pre-imperial Discourse," *Early China* 23.74 (2002): 104-105. In this paper it is argued that *tianxia* referred to "the area under the rule of the Son of Heaven, that is the Zhou realm" in the Spring and Autumn period (春秋時代, 771 to 476 BCE), "transcended its original boundaries" in the Warring States period and referred to the entire known world thereafter. Ibid., 104,108. For other studies on the historical transformations of the doctrine of All Under Heaven, see Wang Mingming, "'All under heaven' (*tianxia*): Cosmological Perspectives and Political Ontologies in Pre-modern China," *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2.1(2013): 337-383.

inner." 夫天處乎上，地處乎下。居天地之中者曰中國，居天地之偏者曰四夷。四夷，外也；中國，內也。[106] This doctrine describes the two parts of the world known to early Chinese people, namely the central realm, which has various names in the traditional Chinese context, such as *zhongguo* 中國, *zhongzhou* 中州 or *zhongyuan* 中原, and the surrounding "barbarian" area.[107] The central realm refers to the heartland and significant parts of the geographical area now known as China. The "barbarian" area is situated on the fringes of China and beyond the traditional Chinese cultural world. Moreover, as Shi Jie points out, the doctrine of All Under Heaven supports a kind of dichotomy or polarity between so-called "barbarians" and "Chinese." Although the people of the geographical area that we call China historically called themselves *Xiaren* 夏人, *Huaren* 華人, *Hanren* 漢人, *Zhongguoren* 中國人 and so on, throughout this dissertation, "Chinese" will broadly refer to dwellers of the central realm who shared the culture, languages, family ties and other relationships with other members of the same Chinese cultural world. "Barbarian," which is derived from the Greek *barbarous*, is used by modern scholarship to translate a series of traditional Chinese terms, such as *Yi* 夷, *Di* 狄, *Rong* 戎, *Hu* 胡 or *Fan* 藩, by which the early and medieval Chinese referred to peoples who lived in the "barbarian" area.[108] In this dissertation "barbarian" will be used to refer to non-Chinese people, even though I completely disagree with pre-modern Chinese scholars' prejudices with respect to non-Chinese people. As pointed out by Qian Mu 錢穆, Xiao Gongquan 蕭公權 and many others, the idea that Chinese culture was inherently more advanced than and superior to that of than any other civilizations

[106] Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the Yi-Di in Mid-Imperial China, 600–1300" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2014), 195-210.
[107] For the expression "the central realm" in the traditional China's context, see Li Dalong, "'The Central Kingdom' and 'the Realm Under Heaven' Coming to Mean the Same: The Process of the Formation of Territory in Ancient China," *Frontiers of History in China* 3.03 (2008): 323-352. In Chinese history, the central realm was only one of diverse appellations that referred to China. It was only from the middle of the Qing Dynasty that this term came to prevail. For relevant studies, see Gang Zhao, "Reinventing China: Imperial Qing Ideology and the Rise of Modern Chinese National Identity in the Early Twentieth Century," *Modern China* 32.1(2006): 3-30.
[108] Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," xiii- xviii. Di Cosmo describes the similarity between traditional Chinese terms such as *Yi*, *Di* and the "barbarian" in the west. See Nicola Di Cosmo, *Ancient China and its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 100.

prevailed in pre-modern China.[109] The dichotomy between "barbarian" and "Chinese" thus supports the assumption that a culturally Chinese ruler is the eligible recipient of the Mandate of Heaven.[110] In the doctrine of All Under Heaven, the central realm is thus the place in which rightful rule exists. This dissertation reveals that this doctrine was frequently referred to by dynasties and scholars in relation to legitimacy.

Two aforementioned doctrines underpin traditional thinking on legitimacy in Chinese history. Moreover, the Mandate of Heaven and All Under Heaven doctrines also support five practical criteria of *zhengtong*, which I discovered in traditional discussions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute: cosmological, moral, historical, ethnic, and geographical. The following paragraphs are a general introduction to the aforementioned criteria.

(1) The cosmological criterion relates to a wide range of cosmological factors, such as various auspicious portents, which were seen as indicative of a dynasty's legitimate status. This criterion is related to the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, in terms of which Heaven is viewed as the origin of legitimacy; thus cosmological phenomena are interpreted as signals from Heaven, supporting or negating a dynasty's legitimacy.

(2) In terms of the moral criterion, legitimate status is determined on the basis of a monarch's morality. Supported by the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, the moral criterion relates to the centrality of a monarch's ethical principles in determining whether his rule is legitimate.

(3) In terms of the historical criterion, a rightful dynasty is defined by its historical link to a previous – and purportedly legitimate – dynasty. This criterion is closely related to the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, because it relates to the transfer of a mandate, and therefore legitimacy, between consecutive dynasties.

(4) In terms of the geographical criterion, the occupation of the central realm determines a legitimate dynasty. This criterion is closely related to the doctrine of All Under Heaven, in terms of which legitimate rule can be found only in the central

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[109] See Qian Mu 錢穆, *Zhongguo wenhuashi daolun* 中國文化史導論 (Shanghai: Sanlian shudian, 1988), 35. Xiao Gongquan 簫公權, *Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi* 中國政治思想史, *vol. 2* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 商務印書館, 1946), 55-58.

[110] In the traditional Chinese context, the dichotomy or polarity between so-called "barbarians" and "Chinese" is quite prevalent. The "barbarians" are seen as inferior and the Chinese as superior, due to their different places of origin and the adoption of Chinese culture or Confucian codes. See Pines, "Beasts or Humans," 59–102. Qian Mu, *Zhongguo wenhua*, 90-93. Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," xiii.

realm.

(5) The ethnic criterion means that a dynasty comprising Chinese rulers who adhere to Chinese culture could be described as legitimate. This criterion is validated by the All Under Heaven doctrine, which implies the superior status of Chinese culture, Chinese moral principles and so on.

The traditional Chinese views on legitimacy are far more complex than described here. Nevertheless, the aim is to demonstrate that viewing the matter through the lense of the two fundamental doctrines and five criteria can greatly improve our understanding of pre-modern views of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, as well as of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy more generally.

Research Questions

The key question that is addressed in this dissertation is: How was political legitimacy, or *zhengtong*, understood in Chinese history? Seen through the prism of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, the answer to that question can be divided into three main parts.

The first part comprises a focus on the legitimization practices of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. What specific methods did the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties adopt in order to demonstrate the rightfulness of their rule? Why did those two sides strive to be legitimate? How successful were they?

In the second part, the focus will be on the theorization of political legitimacy in early and medieval Chinese history, from the Northern Wei to the Qing Dynasty. Which dynasties did historians and thinkers determine to be rightful, the Northern Wei, Southern Dynasties, neither, or both? What motivated their views? How did their views evolve in the context of differing historical contexts?

In the third part, the scope is broadened with an analysis of what the Northern Wei case can tell us about traditional Chinese views on political legitimacy. What theories and criteria underpinned these views? What was the course of the evolution and disintegration of traditional Chinese views on political legitimacy?

Source Problems

This dissertation comprises a study of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute by means of a close reading of relevant textual sources. Two issues play an important role here: (1) the selection of relevant sources; (2) the reliability of selected sources.

(1) There are numerous historical sources that record a wide range of legitimacy practices in the period of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. To keep the range within feasible limits, in this dissertation the focus is on those practices that fit the five practical criteria of legitimacy outlined above. For other practices, such as the endorsement of Buddhism to support the legitimacy of one's rule, I refer to scholars who studied these practices in the past and present. This facilitates the provision of a relatively complete image of the legitimation practices of the Northern Wei period.

There were also numerous politicians and scholars throughout Chinese history who wrote about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Judging by the frequent references to their works, some of them, such as Wang Tong and Ouyang Xiu, greatly influenced later scholars. In this dissertation, the influential scholars serve as representatives of various views. Other thinkers, such as Li Yanshou and Zheng Sixiao, may have been less influential, but they distinguish themselves by their revolutionary ideas and are therefore investigated, even if their views received less attention than others.[111] For other relevant scholars, this dissertation will briefly introduce their views and explain the reason why they were not widely accepted.

(2) Generally speaking, this dissertation relies on two types of primary resources: (a) official dynastic histories, such as the *Weishu*, the *Songshu* 宋書 (History of the [Liu] Song Dynasty), and the *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (History of the Southern Qi Dynasty), which record the histories of the dynasties mentioned in their titles; and (b) the surviving writings of pre-modern scholars, despite the fact that there are, unfortunately, questions regarding their authenticity and reliability.

An official history of each dynasty was completed after the fall of that dynasty by compilers who worked under the auspices of the next dynasty. The historiographical accuracy and reliability of the official histories are questionable because they contain demonstrably exaggerated passages or political rumors that were

[111] In some cases, although some thinkers' views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei grew academically popular in history, little attention is paid to them in this dissertation since their ideas were largely the same as those found in their predecessors' discussions, with little innovation.

intended to smear the opponents of their compilers.[112] For instance, the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* contain the rumor that the Tuoba clan, which founded the Northern Wei, was a mixture of Xiongnu 匈奴 and Chinese people. The aim of this rumor, as will be mentioned in section 3.1.2, was to depict the Tuoba people as being of impure and inferior blood.[113] Therefore, the relevant passages from the official histories are taken to represent the views of their compilers, not as historical reality. Furthermore, the writings attributed to some traditional Chinese scholars were demonstrably not, or not entirely, written by them.[114] Most notable are the books attributed to Wang Tong, an influential supporter of the Northern Wei's legitimate status. Present-day studies demonstrate that the extant edition of Wang Tong's writings contains many "forged" parts that derive from Wang Tong's family members and his book editor, the Northern Song Dynasty scholar Ruan Yi 阮逸 (11th century).[115] Studies of Wang Tong's views based on Ruan Yi's edition are therefore inevitably questionable due to these additions. The problem is not as regrettable as it seems, however, because the authenticity of the extant editions of Wang Tong's writings does not matter greatly in relation to the study of Wang Tong's ideas. This is because Ruan Yi's version presents a unified ideology of Wang Tong, which distinguishes his distinct concept of legitimacy from all the other scholars.[116] Thus in this dissertation "Wang Tong" is used to refer to the alleged author of Wang Tong's books and Ruan Yi's extant edition is taken as a valuable source for the ideology of Wang Tong, even though that edition may be problematic and cannot be attributed in its entirety to the historical Wang Tong.

Outline

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. In the first two chapters, the focus is on the various legitimation practices adopted by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. The next three chapters comprise a description of pre-modern Chinese

[112] For detailed studies, see Section 3.1. When introducing the three Standard Histories to study the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, this dissertation also includes present-day studies of relevant issues in order to base the dissertation on historical reality.
[113] For further study, see Section 3.1.2.
[114] Another similar case is Zheng Sixiao's books. For detailed studies, see Section 5.1.3.
[115] For instance, the extant edition provides a roster of Wang Tong's disciples and friends that is demonstrably inauthentic. Section 4.1.2 provides a detailed study of this issue.
[116] For a detailed discussion concerning that issue, see Section 4.1.

scholars' discussions regarding the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. The final chapter comprises a study of traditional Chinese views of legitimacy.

Chapter 1 provides the historical background of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. How did the Tuoba people establish the Northern Wei dynasty? What constituted the rise and fall of the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the ensuing Southern Dynasties?

Chapter 2 comprises a study of the "contest for legitimacy" between the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. Why and how did those two sides strive to be the rightful rulers of the central realm? How did they attempt to legitimize their rule? Were their efforts successful?

Chapter 3 comprises an examination of the views of two groups of pre-Song scholars who participated in a discussion about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. The first group consists of three historians in the Period of Disunion. Why and how did the northern historian Wei Shou support the Northern Wei's legitimacy? Why did the southern historians Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian share a totally different view and firmly insist on the Southern Dynasties' legitimate status? The second group consists of two scholars who were attached to the Tang Dynasty court. Why did the Tang historian Li Yanshou treat both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties as equally legitimate? How does one understand the late Tang scholar Huangfu Shi's criticism of the Northern Wei's legitimacy?

Chapter 4 is devoted to the highly influential writings ascribed to the Sui thinker Wang Tong. Why do the *Zhongshuo* 中說 and *Yuanjing* 元經, two books ascribed to Wang Tong, support the Northern Wei's possession of legitimacy? How did Wang Tong's ideas bridge the gap with respect to scholarly considerations related to the Northern Wei's legitimacy that came before and after him?

In Chapter 5 the focus is on five groups of scholars from the Song Dynasty to the end of the Qing Dynasty. Why and how did two Song scholars, Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao, support the Northern Wei's legitimacy? How did two Song historians, Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang, use their understanding of *zhengtong* to reject the legitimate status of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties? How did the Southern Song scholar Zheng Sixiao deny the Northern Wei's legitimacy by stressing that being Chinese is the prerequisite of legitimacy? How did the Ming scholar Fang Xiaoru introduce Neo-Confucianism to discuss the Northern Wei

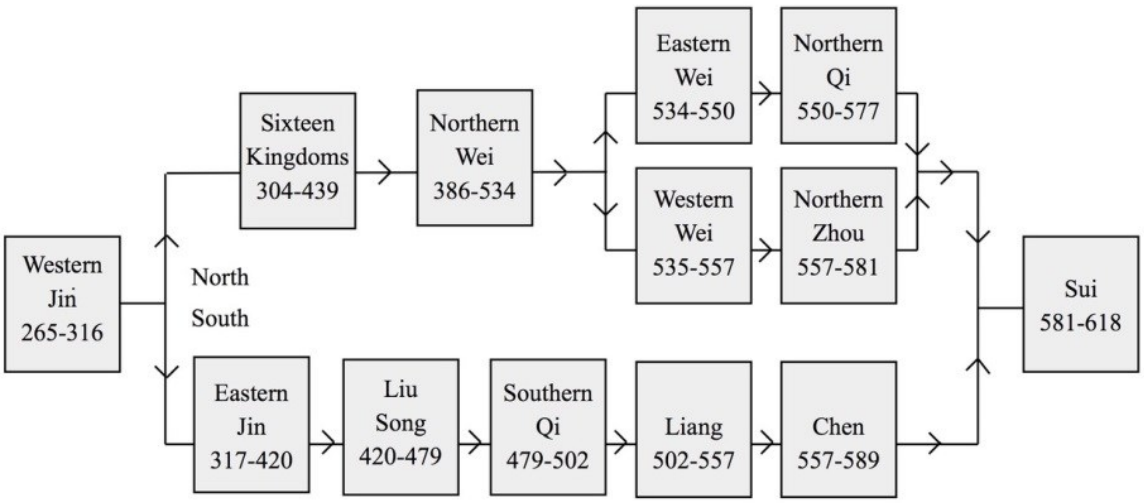
legitimacy dispute? What are reasons for which the late Ming literatus Wang Fuzhi and the Qing thinker Liang Qichao argued that no dynasty in Chinese history, including the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, could possess *zhengtong*?

In Chapter 6, historical Chinese views about legitimacy are examined. What doctrines and criteria underpinned the diverse views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei that were proclaimed by monarchs and held by scholars in China's history? Can one understand their views about legitimacy *per se* by reviewing their ideas on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute? How do these views evolve and disintegrate in the course of history? What is the current influence of these views?

Chapter 1. History of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties

The period of the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties was a dynamic time in Chinese history. As Lewis points out, it was characterized by five major historical themes: the extension of knowledge of China and the outside world, the emergence of a cultural and literary elite, the appearance of a military institution based on hereditary military households, the division between government and society, and the rise of Daoism and Buddhism.[1] The focus of this chapter, however, is on the political history of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, which will serve as the historical background to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. It begins with a description of how the Tuoba people, the ruling ethnic group of the Northern Wei, gradually established their state in northern China. Thereafter, their growth and fall are described. The political history of contemporaneous dynasties in southern China is subsequently investigated.

Chart 1. Dynasties in the Period of Disunion



[1] Mark Edward Lewis, *China Between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 2-4.

1.1 History of the Tuoba Tribe and the Northern Wei

The founders of the Northern Wei Dynasty were the Tuoba, a northern clan of the larger Xianbei 鮮卑 ethnic group that originated from the Xianbei Hill 鮮卑山.[2] The first mention of the Tuoba people in Chinese dynastic records dates from the year 275, when the Western Jin Dynasty noted that a small frontier nomad group named "Tuoba" deferentially paid their tribute.[3] In little over a century later, in 386, the Tuoba had managed to establish their own dynasty, the Northern Wei, and another half a century later, in 439, they completely controlled northern China.[4] They firmly ruled the north for nearly a century, but failed to conquer southern China and finally split into two courts after a series of revolts in 534.[5] The following section comprises a discussion of the history of the Tuoba people and their dynasty.

1.1.1 Origin and Early History of the Tuoba Tribe

The Tuoba people offer an account of their origin that can only be considered legendary. In the beginning of the *Weishu*, it is written that the Tuoba are the direct descendants of Chang Yi 昌意, the (currently considered mythical) governor of the northern part of what is now China. Chang Yi was also allegedly the youngest son of the Yellow Emperor 黃帝, the legendary ancestor of the Chinese people.[6] Although

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[2] Originally, the Xianbei people was a branch of the so-called *Donghu* 東胡, who settled down in the Khingan mountain area in around the second century B.C. For the origin and early history of Xianbei people, see Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 3-10.

[3] Fang Xuanlin 房玄齡 and others comp., *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin Dynasty, hereafter *JS*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 3.65.

[4] The Tuoba named their state "Wei" 魏, which was also the name of the (Cao) Wei Dynasty 曹魏 (220-266) in the Three Kingdom Period. Later historians, faced with the problem of more than one dynasty by the name of Wei, variously referred to the Tuoba dynasty as "Northern Wei" 北魏, "Tuoba Wei" 拓跋魏, "Later Wei" 後魏, or "Yuan Wei" 元魏. (The latter appellation comes from the fact that the Tuoba leader changed his surname to "Yuan" 元 in 493.) For the sake of consistency, I shall use the name Northern Wei in my discussion in order to distinguish this dynasty from other Weis in Chinese history.

[5] The Northern Wei split into the Eastern Wei 東魏 (534-550) and the Western Wei 西魏 (535-557) in 534. The former Wei were replaced by the 北齊 (550-577), while the latter Wei handed over power to the Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581) in 557.

[6] Wei Shou 魏收, *Weishu* 魏書 (hereafter *WS*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 1.1 explains that the name Tuoba means the "pure descendent" (*ba* 跋) of "the land" (*tuo* 拓). Some scholars agree with this explanation. See An-King Lim, "On the Etymology of T'o-Pa," *Central Asiatic Journal* 44 (2000): 30-44. A greater number of scholars see this explanation as farfetched. The real meaning of Tuoba hence remains unclear. Luo Xin summarizes the most relevant discussions and advances the idea that "Tuoba" was merely the official title of Liwei 力微, the first influential chieftain of the Tuoba clan. See Luo Xin, "Lun Tuoba Xianbei zhi deming 論拓跋鮮卑之得名," *Lishi yanjiu* 6 (2006): 32-48.

any genealogical link to the mythical heroes Chang Yi and the Yellow Emperor has to be legendary, their origin in Xianbei Hill, located in the northeast of China and the alleged birthplace of most Xianbei people, could be real.[7] However, some historians describe the Tuoba tribe as a hybrid Xiongnu clan from the north-western steppes.[8]

At the end of the twentieth century, scholars found tangible evidence concerning the origin of the Tuoba tribe. Mi Wenping 米文平, a Tuoba specialist, led an archaeological expedition in 1980 and found nineteen lines of vague Chinese characters carved in the Gaxian cave 嘎仙洞, which is located in the Greater Khingan Range 大興安嶺.[9] Subsequent studies of these characters indicated that they could have been left by a Northern Wei official named Li Chang 李敞 (mid-5th century), who is reported to have conducted the ceremony of Tuoba ancestral worship in that cave.[10] This discovery, combined with other relevant archaeological finds, suggests that the area surrounding the Gaxian cave could be the earliest habitat of the Tuoba people that we know of, and it also suggests that the Tuoba probably originated from the far reaches of northeast China, and not the northwestern steppes.[11]

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[7] See Mi Wenping 米文平, "Xianbei yuanliu jiqi zuming chutan 鮮卑源流及其族名初探," *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線 3(1982): 210-13. Archaeological evidence also proves that most early Xianbei people lived in northeast China. See Dun Jinji 孫進己 and Sun Hai 孫海, "Xianbei kaoguxue wenhua 鮮卑考古學文化," *Caoyuan wenwu* 草原文物 2(2003): 59-70.

[8] See Shen Yue 沈約, *Songshu* 宋書 (hereafter *SS*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 95.2321. *Nan Qi shu* 南齊書 (History of the Southern Qi Dynasty, hereafter *NQS*) offers a detailed description. It says Li Ling 李陵 (?-74BCE), a great general of the Western Han Dynasty, surrendered to the Xiongnu people after a tragic military failure. Thereafter, he settled down in the Xiongnu area and married a Xiongnu woman named "Tuoba." People referred to their offspring as "Tuoba people." See Xiao Zixian 蕭子顯, *NQS* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 57. 993. Scholars began to doubt this hypothesis from the Qing Dynasty onwards. Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814) suspected that it might have been a "contemporary rumor." See Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji* 廿二史箚記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 9.191.

[9] Mi Wenping, "Xianbei shishi de faxian yu chubu yanjiu 鮮卑石室的發現與初步研究," *Wenwu* 文物 2 (1981): 1-7. The geographical coordinates of the Gaxian cave are N50˚38', E123˚36'.

[10] The *Weishu* records that the early Tuoba people built an ancestral temple in a stone cave near Xianbei Hill before they migrated to northern China. It also notes that the Wuluohou 烏洛侯 people, a small tribe living in the Greater Khingan Range, reported that they had found that temple when they paid tribute to the Northern Wei court in 443. The Northern Wei court sent Li Chang to visit that place. Li Chang found that cave and conducted a ceremony of ancestral worship there. His ceremonial address is recorded in the *Weishu*. Mi Wenping discovered that these characters in the Gaxian cave were identical to Li Chang's ceremonial speech from the *Weishu*. See Mi Wenping, "Xianbei Shishi," 1-7.

[11] See Tong Zhuchen 佟柱臣, "Gaxiandong Tuobatao zhuwen shike kao 嘎仙洞拓跋燾祝文石刻考," *Lishi yanjiu* 6 (1981): 36-42. Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 15-16. Luo Xin provides a new perspective on the study of Gaxiandong. His paper suggests that the Northern Wei formulated the idea that the Tuoba people originated from Gaxiandong in order to represent themselves as the authentic successors of the Xianbei people and the rightful rulers of the far reaches of northeast China.

If the far northeast of China is indeed the birthplace of the Tuoba people, a power vacuum on the steppes could explain why they migrated almost two thousand kilometers south and finally settled on the northern frontier of the Western Jin Dynasty's territory in the mid-third century.[12]

Map 1. Migration of the Tuoba People

According to the historical records, the Xianbei people originally settled down near the northern frontier of the Qin Dynasty. They were defeated by the Xiongnu people, the first dominant ethnic group in the steppe, and moved to the Greater Khingan Range area in the first century BCE.[13] One century later, in 91 CE, increasing attacks by Eastern Han Dynasty forces, combined with years of natural disasters, forced the majority of the Xiongnu people to flee to what is now Inner Asia, leaving a power vacuum on the steppe. The Xianbei people seized this opportunity and occupied the former Xiongnu lands.[14] According to the *Weishu*, Tuoba Tuiyin 拓跋推寅, the

See Luo Xin, "Minzu qiyuan de xiangxiang yu zaixiangxiang, yi gaxiandong de liangci faxian wei zhongxin 民族起源的想像與再想像,以嘎仙洞的兩次發現為中心," *Wenshi* 2 (2013): 5-26.

[12] Holcombe shares this view, see Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 3-6.

[13] *SGZ*, 30.836.

[14] Fan Ye 范曄, *Houhan shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), 90.2985-86.

chieftain of the Tuoba people, led the migration towards the south and they settled around Lake Hulun 呼倫湖.[15]

Two centuries later, another power vacuum on the steppes triggered the second migration of the Tuoba. From the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty, China had experienced endless revolts and had consequently virtually exhausted its agrarian and military population. To increase its supply of farmers and soldiers, the Eastern Han and following dynasties then turned to "barbarian" frontier groups that had become compliant. During the second and third century CE, large numbers of nomadic people migrated into China to serve as serfs or mercenaries.[16] A power vacuum emerged in the border area again, and the Tuoba, along with other steppe peoples, were attracted to move even further south to the northern border area of Chinese dynasties' territory.[17] In the late second century CE, the Tuoba people launched their second wave of migration. They travelled southeast and finally arrived at the southern slope of Yin Mountain 陰山, the former heartland of the Xiongnu people.[18]

The Tuoba people lived in this Yin Mountain area for the next three centuries.[19] During this period, under several strong chieftains, they evolved from being a nomadic tribe into a sedentary state.

Tuoba Liwei 拓跋力微 (r. 220-277) was the first chieftain after the second migration. In 258 CE he successfully formed a tribal confederacy to rule the Yin Mountain area.[20] That is why the Western Jin Dynasty originally referred to the Tuoba

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[15] *WS*, 1.2.

[16] Barfield writes: "When revolts arose inside China, the Han government saw the nomads as both a danger to the dynasty and as an important defense." See Thomas J. Barfield, *The perilous frontier: nomadic empires and China* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 92. For similar discussions, see Tang Changru, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao*, 121-81. One Western Jin official anxiously noted that half the population in the Guanzhong area 關中, the heartland of the Western Jin dynasty, were non-Chinese then. See *JS*, 56.1533.

[17] Tian Yuqing, *Tuoba Shitan,* 147. For more detailed descriptions about this migration route, see Wu Songyan 吳松岩, "Zaoqi Xianbei muzang yanjiu 早期鮮卑墓葬研究" (PhD diss., Jilin University, Changchun, 2010), 95-98.

[18] *WS*, 1.2. This area had served as the heartland of many mighty nomadic powers, such as the Xiongnu, Tuoba, Turk, and Tangut.

[19] Some Tuoba people kept on migrating southwest and ultimately settled down in the Hehuang 河湟 region (in the middle of present-day Gansu 甘肅 province). See *JS*, 126.3141-58. This group of Tuoba was called as Tufa 禿髮 people and they established the South Liang 南涼 state (397-414). Further studies indicate that some of them became the ancestors of the Tangut and Tibetan people. See Lü Yifei 呂一飛, "Tangdai Tubo yu Weijin nanbechao de tufa Xianbei 唐代吐蕃與魏晉南北朝的禿髮鮮卑," *Zhongguo zangxue* 中國藏學 4 (2004): 146-153.

[20] Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 16.

tribe as "a Xianbei tribe led by Liwei" 鮮卑力微.[21] In less than two decades, the confederacy collapsed and Liwei died soon afterwards.[22]

Three decades after Tuoba Liwei's death, in 307, another powerful Tuoba leader, Tuoba Yilu 拓跋猗盧 (r. 307-316), was enthroned. After serving the Western Jin Dynasty as a mercenary in their battles against non-Chinese usurpers, in 310 the Western Jin Dynasty granted Yilu the title of "Chanyu" 單於,[23] and enfeoffed him with the land of Dai 代, a rich agrarian area in northern China, effectively making him Duke of Dai 代公. In 315, Yilu even received the title of King of Dai 代王, which entitled him to establish the Kingdom of Dai (315-376).[24] However, only one year later, in the midst of disputes concerning his successor, Yilu was killed by his son.[25]

In 338 another famous Tuoba ruler, Tuoba Shiyijian 拓跋什翼犍 (r. 338-376) became the king of Dai. Shiyijian seems to have been a formidable strategist. On the one hand, he strengthened Dai's power by looting other steppe tribes. On the other, he gradually abandoned Tuoba's former steppe politics and built a Chinese-style state with bureaucratic and legal institutions.[26] Shiyijian also built the capital of Dai in Shengle 盛樂 and provided his people with nearly half a century of relative peace. This came to an end in 376, when the Former Qin Dynasty 前秦 (351-394), which then ruled over the northern part of China, attacked and conquered Dai. Shiyijian was reportedly killed while attempting to escape.[27]

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[21] *JS*, 3.65. Liwei seems to have become subject to the Cao Wei Dynasty and the subsequent Western Jin Dynasty, and sent his son to Luoyang (the capital of both dynasties) as a hostage, as was customary at the time. *WS*, 1.4-5. In ancient China, sending a hostage to the Chinese government was a conventional way for nomadic tribes to express their submission. Cf. Yang Lien-sheng, "Hostages in Chinese History," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15(1952): 507-521.

[22] *JS*, 36.1057, *WS*, 1.5 records that the Eastern Jin had concocted a plot to alienate the Tuoba confederacy.

[23] The title *Chanyu* was coined by the Xiongnu Empire to denote their rulers. After their empire collapsed, the Eastern Han and the later Chinese dynasties bestowed the title *Chanyu* on the steppe rulers. The Northern Wei later invented the new title of *Khan* 可汗 and made this title the legitimate one for subsequent steppe powers. See Luo Xin, "Xiongnu Chanyu minghao yanjiu 匈奴單於名號研究," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 2 (2006): 23-36.

[24] *WS*, 1.7.

[25] Ibid 1.8-9. In Chinese historiography, the Dai state is never regarded as one of the Sixteen Kingdoms 十六國. The reason, as Klein says, is that "it was an ill-organized confederacy of nomads that maintained a precarious existence." See Klein, "The Contributions of Xianbei States," 118.

[26] *WS*, 1.9-10.

[27] Ibid., 1. 11-17.

1.1.2 Rise and Fall of the Northern Wei Dynasty

After defeating the Kingdom of Dai in 376, the Former Qin Dynasty divided Dai territory into two parts, which were granted to the Tiefu 鐵弗 tribe and the Dugu 獨孤 tribe.[28] Two men from the Tuoba tribe who could potentially create trouble were put under supervision. Tuoba Kuduo 拓拔窟咄 (?-386), the oldest surviving prince of Tuoba Shiyijian, was imprisoned in Chang'an 長安, the capital city of the Former Qin,[29] while the grandson (or son) of Tuoba Shiyijian,[30] Tuoba Gui 拓跋珪 (371-409), was guarded by the Dugu tribe.[31] In 383, the Former Qin Dynasty collapsed almost overnight after suffering a disastrous defeat at the hands of the Eastern Jin Dynasty 東晉 (317-420).[32] In the ensuing decades, northern China witnessed various states emerging and warring against each other, which was a positive development for the Tuoba people.

On February 20, 386, Tuoba Gui declared the reestablishment of the Kingdom of Dai and acceded to the throne.[33] This date is seen as the birth of the Northern Wei Dynasty, given that Tuoba Gui in the next decade renamed his state, changing it from Dai to Wei. As Klein states, "succession among the early Tuoba was 'fraternal', i.e. passed from elder to younger brother."[34] Therefore, in the Tuoba people's eyes, Tuoba Gui was not a legitimate king because the title should have gone to his uncle, Tuoba Kuduo.[35] Some Tuoba people even planned a coup to kill Tuoba Gui. A fledgling ruler, Tuoba Gui thus fled to his mother's tribe, the Helan 賀蘭 tribe.[36] Fortunately for him, the Later Yan Dynasty 後燕 (384-407), the contemporaneous Xianbei rulers of the northern Yellow River basin (the area on the lower reaches of the Yellow River),

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[28] *WS*, 24.610. The Tiefu tribe was a Xiongnu tribe that remained a major enemy of the Tuoba people. It is this tribe that appealed for military support from the Former Qin Dynasty, which led to the collapse of the Kingdom of Dai. The Dugu tribe, on the other hand, served as a loyal ally of the Tuoba people for a long time.
[29] Ibid., 15.385-386.
[30] It is a little difficult to determine the relationship between Shiyijian and Tuoba Gui. *WS* describes Tuoba Gui as the grandson of Shiyijian, while the *SS* and *NQS* name Tuoba Gui as the youngest son of Shiyijian.
[31] *WS*, 24.610.
[32] *JS*, 114.3917-3919. This battle, known as the "Battle of Fei River" 淝水之戰, is considered to be one of the most significant battles in Chinese history. See Michael C. Rogers, "The Myth of the Battle of the Fei River (AD 383)," *T'oung Pao* 54 (1968): 50-72.
[33] *WS*, 1.20. In the Chinese lunar calendar, the said date is the sixth day of the first month.
[34] Klein, "The Contributions of Xianbei States," 97.
[35] In fact, the Former Qin treated the Tuoba Kuduo as a more legitimate Tuoba leader, and Dugu tribe also supported Tuoba Kuduo's claim to be king. See *WS*, 1.20, 15.385-86.
[36] Ibid., 15.385-386.

offered Tuoba Gui help.[37] In the winter of 386, the Later Yan defeated Tuoba Kuduo and secured Tuoba Gui's throne.[38]

In the following years, Tuoba Gui solidified his rule through a series of military victories. He defeated most of the steppe powers and established his hegemony over the steppes.[39] In 391, Tuoba Gui challenged the Later Yan's power by supporting the enemies of that dynasty.[40] The Later Yan suffered a bitter defeat at the hands of Tuoba Gui in 395.[41] In the following year, Murong Chui 慕容垂 (r. 386-396), the ruler of the Later Yan, led his remaining troops on a revenge mission, but after only a few successes he grew too sick to continue this campaign and died during the retreat.[42] With its military power all but exhausted, the Later Yan could be conquered by Tuoba Gui. To display his ambition, Tuoba Gui chose "Glorious Beginning" (*Huangshi* 皇始) as the name of his reign in August of 396. In September of that year, Tuoba Gui led his troops to the south and occupied the northern central realm, the Later Yan's territory.[43]

In early 398, after years of war, Tuoba Gui returned to the new capital Pingcheng to build his dynasty, which he named Wei 魏.[44] On January 24, 399, Tuoba Gui declared himself "Son of Heaven" (*tianzi* 天子), a title reserved for the highest rulers in the Chinese tradition.[45]

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[37] The reason for their support may be that Tuoba Gui had a blood tie with the Later Yan's royal family. Tuoba Gui's grandmother was a Murong princess and that the Later Yan Dynasty had been established by the Murong tribe 慕容. In addition, Tuoba Gui became subject to the Later Yan and sent his younger brother as a hostage. See Li Haiyan 李海葉, "Tuoba Xianbei yu murongshi de guanxi ji beiwei chunian de zhengzhi bianluan 拓跋鮮卑與慕容氏的關係及北魏初年的政治變亂," *Neimenggu shifan daxue xuebao* 內蒙古師範大學學報 37.5 (2008): 115-117.

[38] *WS*, 1.21.

[39] Ibid., 1.21-23. During this period, Tuoba Gui defeated the Kumoxi tribe 庫莫奚 (in 387), the Tiele tribe 鐵勒 (in 388 and 389), the Rouran tribe 柔然 (in 391), and the Tiefu tribe (in 391). As Klein notes, "With each victory, the Tuoba seized quantities of horses, sheep, and cattle which could be used as payment for the emerging state's major supporters." See Klein, "The Contributions of Xianbei States," 67.

[40] *WS*, 1.24-25. Klein, "The Contributions of Xianbei States," 65-66.

[41] Tuoba Gui recalled his troops and avoided any direct fights with the Later Yan armies. But when his enemies retreated, Tuoba Gui launched surprise attack. See *WS*, 1.24-25. Tuoba Gui even ordered the brutal burial of almost fifty thousand surrenders alive in order to weaken the Later Yan's power as much as possible. See Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (hereafter *ZZTJ*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1956),108. 3423-25.

[42] *JS*, 123.3089-90.

[43] *WS*, 1.26-33.

[44] For the study of why Tuoba Gui adopted this dynasty name, see He Dezhang, "Beiwei Guohao," 113-25. I will also specifically discuss this issue in Section 2.1.1.

[45] *WS*, 1.32.

In the early fifth century, the Northern Wei focused on consolidating their control over the northern half of what is now China, with no discernible intention to unite the southern half as well. Chinese administrative methods were gradually adopted, with the result that this fledgling empire was gradually transformed from being a nomadic state to a Chinese style empire.[46]

The first two Northern Wei's emperors did not live long lives. Tuoba Gui was murdered by one of his sons at the age of thirty-eight.[47] The next emperor, Tuoba Si 拓跋嗣 (r. 409-423), died of a disease at the age of thirty-one after years of battles against the steppe powers and the Liu Song Dynasty 劉宋 (420-479). The third emperor, Tuoba Tao 拓跋燾 (r. 423-452), lived much longer than his forbears. He set about conquering the rest of China in five steps. The first was to regain dominance of the steppes, which he achieved in 429 by defeating the Kingdom of Rouran 柔然 (330-555), which ruled the steppes at the time.[48] The second step was to unite northwest China by conquering the Kingdom of Xia 夏 (407-431), which he achieved in 430.[49] The third step was to conquer the northeast of China, which he achieved in 436 when the Northern Wei defeated the Northern Yan 北燕 (407-436).[50] The fourth move was to unite the far northwest of China, and the Northern Wei indeed annexed the Northern Liang 北凉 (401-439) in 439.[51] The last step was to conquer southern China and defeat the ruling house of that area, the Liu Song Dynasty.[52] Tuoba Tao launched an extensive military campaign against the Liu Song Dynasty in 450, but his armies were firmly blocked at the Yangzi River. Tuoba Tao reportedly grew increasingly mentally unstable, apparently due to his frustration, and was killed by an eunuch in 452.[53]

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[46] See Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 480-483.
[47] Ibid., 490. Tuoba Gui is said to have become increasingly tyrannical from about 400 CE.
[48] *WS*, 91.2293. In the fifth century, the Rouran people were the dominant power on the steppes. In 402, they built their state and invaded the northern frontier of the Northern Wei frequently. See Nikolay N. Kradin, "From Tribal Confederation to Empire: The evolution of the Rouran society," *Acta Orientalia* 58 (2005): 149-169.
[49] *WS*, 4.71-73.
[50] Ibid., 4.86-87.
[51] This move, as Barfield says, brought "a final end to the 'period of the Sixteen Kingdoms' – the longest period of political and social fragmentation ever experienced in China's two thousand years of imperial history." See Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 86. Also see *WS*, 4.89-90.
[52] The Liu Song Dynasty was a powerful competitor. This Chinese dynasty cherished the ambition to "rescue" northern China from "barbarian" hands.
[53] *WS*, 82.2012-13.

The Northern Wei's rulers after Tuoba Tao focused on developing their dynasty's power by introducing various Chinese policies and customs. The famous pioneers of this strategy were Empress Dowager Wenming 文明太后 (442-490) and her grandson, Tuoba Hong 拓拔宏, who is better known as Emperor Xiaowen 孝文帝 (r. 471-499).[54] Through their efforts, various Chinese-style political institutions (such as the equal field system, Chinese-style bureaucracy, and legal and financial systems) were introduced and the civil administration was gradually filled by Chinese officials.[55] In 494, this movement reached a peak when Emperor Xiaowen transferred most of the aristocrats, officials, and residents in Pingcheng to the new capital, Luoyang, a city "filled with the resonance of Chinese dynastic power."[56] In the new capital, in the years 494 to 496, Emperor Xiaowen ordered the Tuoba aristocrats to adopt Chinese surnames, speak Chinese, wear Chinese clothes, intermarry with Chinese nobility, and follow Chinese customs and rites.[57]

However, an escalating social schism eventually destroyed the Northern Wei Dynasty. To defend against steppe invasions, the Northern Wei deployed a large number of Tuoba troops in six garrisons along the frontiers in its early period.[58] In the late fifth century, the transfer of the capital to Luoyang and the diminishing importance of the border garrisons caused the Tuoba garrisons to lose their honored socioeconomic status and privileges, which led to them staging a military uprising in 524.[59] The Northern Wei then became embroiled in a full-scale civil war. In the end, Gao Huan 高歡 (496-547) and Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 (507-556), two border generals, wrestled for power and in 534 they separated the Northern Wei into two courts, the Eastern Wei 東魏 (534-550) and the Western Wei 西魏 (535-557).[60] Soon afterwards, the former one was succeeded by the Northern Qi 北齊 (550-577), while the latter

[54] In 466, the Empress Dowager of Wenming launched a coup and became the real ruler of the Northern Wei for the next two decades. See *WS*, 13.328-30.
[55] Wolfram A. Eberhard, *A History of China* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 144-47. Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 508-513.
[56] Denis C. Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3, Sui and T'ang Chin*a (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 51.
[57] Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier*, 125. Xianbei in Chinese history 25
[58] For most of the fifth century, these six garrisons served as fundamental military bases in fighting with the Rouran state. From the end of the fifth century, the Rouran state was involved in ceaseless battles with the Tiele people. The northern border thus became peaceful and the importance of these garrison-towns decreased. See Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 528-531.
[59] Ibid., 531-533. In 523, the frontier troops suffered a severe food shortage when they defended the territory against the Rouran invasion. This was the last straw, and all six garrisons rebelled in 524.
[60] Ibid., 545-550. The Eastern Wei was succeeded by the Northern Qi while the Western Wei was replaced by the Northern Zhou.

dynasty was replaced by the Northern Zhou 北周 (557–581). The epoch of the Northern Wei had ended.

1.2 History of Southern China

In the three centuries following the collapse of the Western Jin Dynasty in 317, the south of China was governed by the Eastern Jin (318-420) and a series of ruling houses collectively referred to as the "Southern Dynasties" 南朝: Song (420-479), Qi 齊 (479-502), Liang 梁 (502-557), and Chen 陳 (557-588). On the one hand, these Chinese-ruled dynasties sheltered masses of Chinese refugees from the north and they warded off waves of attacks by northern "barbarian" powers. Most of them also competed with the Northern Wei for becoming the rightful ruler of the central realm. On the other hand, the Southern Dynasties experienced unceasing internal struggles between powerful cliques and imperial kinsmen, rendering any stable development within their territory impossible. After nearly three centuries, in 589, the south of China was conquered by a successor of the Northern Wei, the Sui Dynasty. The histories of the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties are outlined in this section.

1.2.1 History of the Eastern Jin Dynasty

In 317, the Western Jin Dynasty collapsed after years of uprisings of the northern "barbarians." In the next year, Sima Rui 司馬睿 (276-323), the King of Langye 琅琊王, ascended the throne of the Jin Dynasty in Jianye 建鄴 and initiated the Eastern Jin period.[61]

The history of Eastern Jin can be described as a continuous alternation of dominant noble families. This is because the Eastern Jin emperors had limited power, owing to their dependence on the support of a few noble families who possessed political and military power. These noble families, meanwhile, strove to increase their power and usurp the throne thereafter, making the politics of the region increasingly

[61] *JS*, 6.143-149. Both dynasties named themselves "Jin." Based on the location of their respective capitals and power bases, scholars use the term Western Jin to denote the Jin Dynasty, which had its capital in Luoyang and ruled the whole of China. By contrast, the Eastern Jin refers to the Jin Dynasty that ruled the south of China and had its capital in Jianye. As Jianye is located to the east of the Yangtze Plain, this dynasty is called the Eastern Jin Dynasty. Jianye 建鄴, modern-day Nanjing 南京, was called "Jianye" by the Eastern Jin and renamed "Jiankang" 建康 in the Southern Dynasties period. For a more detailed study, see Section 2.3.3.

unstable.[62] The Wang family of Langye 琅琊王氏 was the first influential noble family. They provided decisive support in establishing the Eastern Jin and dominated its politics thereafter.[63] In 322, Wang Dun 王敦 (266-324), the military leader of the Wang family, as well as the governor of the Jingzhou area 荊州, rebelled and controlled the court for the following two years. However, he died of illness in 324, on the eve of his long-prepared usurpation.[64] Thereafter, the Yu family of Yingchuan 潁川庾氏 dominated the court for a short period until the Huan family of Qiaoguo 譙國桓氏 came to the fore.[65] Huan Wen 桓溫 (312-373), the leader of the Huan family undertook three successful military expeditions against western and northern "barbarian" states. These successes allowed the Eastern Jin to temporarily reoccupy most of the land south of the Yellow River from 356 to 365, and Huan Wen's power allow him to dominate the court.[66] Huan Wen died on the eve of his long-prepared usurpation in 373.[67]

The mounting threats from noble families compelled the Xie family of Chenjun 陳郡謝氏, the subsequent dominant noble family of the Eastern Jin, to form a new national army in 377,[68] namely the famous Northern Garrison Army 北府軍, which was stationed near the capital and which distinguished itself in the battle against the Former Qin in 383.[69] However, this army soon slid into disarray because various noble families fought each other for control. Huan Xuan 桓玄 (369-404), the new leader of the Huan family and the governor of the Jingzhou area, rebelled in 402. He soon controlled the court, since the Northern Garrison Army surrendered to him in order to preserve its power. Huan Xuan forced the emperor to yield the throne and founded the Chu 楚 Dynasty (403-405) in 403. However, no less than two years later,

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[62] As Eberhard describes it, "The period of the Southern Dynasties is perhaps the period of Chinese history in which cliques were best developed and most powerful." See Eberhard, *A History of China*, 158. For influential studies on this topic, see Tian Yuqing, *Dongjin Menfa zhengzhi* 東晉門閥政治 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1989), 17-23 and Dennis Grafflin, "The Great Family in medieval south China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41(1981): 65-74.
[63] *JS*, 65.1745-54.
[64] Ibid., 98.2553-65.
[65] Tian Yuqing, *Dongjin Menfa*, 106-39.
[66] *JS*, 98.2568-82.
[67] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 310-19.
[68] Chennault provides a detailed study of one noble family, the Xie family. See Cynthia L. Chennault, "Lofty Gates or Solitary Impoverishment? Xie Family Members of the Southern Dynasties," *T'oung Pao* 85 (1999): 249-327.
[69] Rogers, "The Myth of the Battle," 50-72. That battle is known as Battle of Fei River, in which nearly 800,000 Former Qin troops were defeated by 80,000 Northern Garrison troops.

Liu Yu 劉裕 (363-422), a general of Northern Garrison Army, defeated Huan Xuan and restored the throne to the Eastern Jin in 405.[70]

After putting the Eastern Jin emperor back on the throne, it seems that Liu Yu was intent on founding his own dynasty with himself on the throne. According to historiographical sources, he apparently believed military achievement would increase his authority, enabling him to seize the throne for himself.[71] From 405, Liu Yu launched several military campaigns against various northern states and conquered the Southern Yan 南燕 (398-410) and the Later Qin 後秦 (384-417) in 410 and 417 respectively. These victories enabled the Eastern Jin to reoccupy most of China south of the Yellow River, or "four sevenths of All Under Heaven" 七分天下而有其四, as the Liu Song scholar Pei Ziye 裴子野 (469-530) put it.[72] Thereafter, Liu Yu left the front line and returned to Jianye to carry out his usurpation. His troops soon collapsed in ensuing infighting, leaving most of the newly acquired territories to be re-occupied by the northern states, such as Xia and Northern Wei. In 420, Liu Yu finally forced his emperor

Map 2. Map of the early Liu Song Dynasty and the Northern Wei in 440.

[70] *JS*, 99.2585-604. Eberhard, *A History of China*, 161-63.
[71] Ibid., 162.
[72] Pei Ziye 裴子野, "*Songlue* 宋略," in *Wenyuan yinhua* 文苑英華, ed. Li Fang 李昉 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1966), 754.3947.

to abdicate and crowned himself the emperor of Song state 宋, ushering in the beginning of the Southern Dynasties.[73]

1.2.2 History of the Southern Dynasties

History of the Southern Dynasties was marked by fierce infighting within the royal family. This is because the princes, rather than the noble families of the Eastern Jin, firmly dominated political power throughout the period of the Southern Dynasties.[74] Therefore, the Southern Dynasties slid into disorder due to internal succession crises and were finally replaced by other dynasties.[75]

Emperors Wu 宋武帝 (r. 420-422) and Wen 宋文帝 (r. 424-453) of the Liu Song Dynasty are famous for their diligent politics.[76] Their reigns can be seen as the most powerful and prosperous periods in the Southern Dynasties' era. Emperor Wen undertook several military campaigns against the Northern Wei, but all of them failed.[77] In 450, the Northern Wei raided the Liu Song but achieved only a Pyrrhic victory. The great losses suffered by both sides in this battle heralded in a long strategic stalemate.[78] Nevertheless, the Liu Song Dynasty soon slid into instability. Emperors Xiaowu 宋孝武帝 (r. 453-464) and Ming 宋明帝 (r. 465-472) both ascended to the throne by usurpation and began their reigns by killing all the

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[73] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 357-59. Liu Yu used Song 宋, the name of his birthplace, to name his dynasty. Later people called this dynasty the Liu Song Dynasty 劉宋 or "the Song Dynasty ruled by the Liu family," in order to distinguish it from the later and more famous Song Dynasty 宋 (960-1279).

[74] The Southern Dynasties drew lessons from the collapse of the Eastern Jin and thus preserved political and military power inside the imperial clans. For detailed discussions, see Chen Yinque, *Wei Jin nanbeichao*, 140-56, 191, and Tian Yuqing, *Dongjin Menfa*, 326-29. Lewis also says, "The southern dynasties maintained their authority by distributing troops throughout the key regions of the empire and placing each regional command under a member of the imperial family." See Lewis, *China Between Empires*, 70.

[75] Lewis, *China Between Empires*, 71. Chennault also writes that the "Southern Dynasties' emperors held their thrones much more briefly, for a span reaching only six years on average. The dynasties themselves were ephemeral, and internal crises of succession, often violent in nature, punctuated the annals of each regime." See Chennault, "Lofty Gates or Solitary Impoverishment," 257.

[76] Emperor Wu is the posthumous title of Liu Yu.

[77] *SS*, 5.78, 99,101. Emperor Wen's excessive micromanagement of generals and insufficient preparations for campaigns could largely account for these failures.

[78] Ibid., 95.2344-53. Chen Yinque provides a detailed explanation of this stage of strategic stalemate. See Chen Yinque, *Wei Jin nanbeichao*, 226-39.

descendants of the former emperors.[79] The political situation became increasingly volatile, until Xiao Daocheng 蕭道成 (427-482), a relative of the imperial clan, gradually gained power, crowned himself emperor in 479, and founded the Southern Qi Dynasty in 479.[80]

Similarly to the Liu Song Dynasty, although the first two monarchs of the Southern Qi Dynasty, Emperors Gao 齊高帝 (r. 479-482) and Wu 齊武帝 (r. 482-493), allegedly ruled their states diligently, most of their successors were reported to be cruel and prone to usurpation.[81] This was until Xiao Yan 蕭衍 (464-549), a distant cousin of the imperial clan, came to the fore.[82] He rebelled and usurped the throne in 502. His dynasty is known as the Liang Dynasty.[83]

Xiao Yan, or Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty 梁武帝 (r.502-549), was famous for his support of the arts, literature, and Buddhism.[84] His reign lasted nearly half a century, from 502 to 549, and is considered one of the most peaceful and prosperous periods of the Southern Dynasties era. Emperor Wu was said to have become fatuous in his old age. From 527 to 547, the Liang government was forced no less than four times to provide extravagant donations to a Buddhist temple in order to "redeem" their emperor from the temple since he had declared himself a monk and abdicated the throne.[85] The final stroke came in 548 when Hou Jin 侯景 (503-552), a brutal fugitive general of the Eastern Wei, rebelled. Hou Jin besieged the capital city of Jiankang for nearly a year, which caused Emperor Wu to starve to death, after which Hou finally captured the city and destroyed it.[86] In 549, Hou Jin finally dominated the Liang court and soon established his short-lived dynasty of Han 漢, which lasted only from 551 to 552.[87]

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[79] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 365-67. Eberhard thus notes that "nothing happened at court but drinking, licentiousness, and continual murders," Eberhard, *A History of China*, 163.
[80] It was rumored at the time that the imperial family of Liu Song Dynasty would be replaced by King of Qi 齊. Xiao Daocheng thus asked for the title of King of Qi first and named his state Qi later. See *NQS*, 28.517.
[81] Emperor Gao is the posthumous title of Xiao Daocheng.
[82] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 370. Xiao Yan was the governor of Yong province 雍州, the northern part of the Jingzhou area, at that time.
[83] Yao Silian 姚思廉, *Liangshu* 梁書 (History of the Liang Dynasty, hereafter *LS*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 1.4-30, 2.33-35. Also see Eccles, "The Seizure of the Mandate," 169-180. Xiao Yan was enfeoffed with the Liang 梁 area and he named his state Liang. See *LS* 1.17.
[84] Eberhard, *A History of China*, 164. Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 417.
[85] Ibid., 788-91.
[86] *WS*, 98.2181-88.
[87] *ZZTJ*, 162.5071.

Next, Xiao Yi 蕭繹 (508-555), the prince of Liang, as well as the governor of the Jingzhou area, came to the fore. He defeated Hou Jin in 552 and ascended the throne in Jiangling 江陵 (the capital of the Jingzhou area).[88] In 554, the Western Wei raided Jiangling and killed Xiao Yi. The Liang general, Chen Baxian 陳霸先 (503-559), restored the Liang Dynasty in Jiankang, usurped the throne and founded the last southern dynasty, Chen.[89]

The Chen Dynasty dominated only the Lower Yangtze Plain, a much smaller area than the other southern dynasties.[90] This dynasty was even feebler in military power than the preceding dynasties and was finally conquered by the Sui Dynasty in 589. The Period of Disunion thus ended.[91]

[88] *LS*, 5.113-120. Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 422-26.
[89] Yao Silian, *Chen Shu* 陳書 (History of the Chen Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 1.7-25.
[90] Ibid., 3.51-55.
[91] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 435-37.

Chapter 2. The Contest for Legitimacy

From the fourth to sixth centuries, there was a "contest for legitimacy" between the Northern Wei and a series of southern Chinese dynasties (Eastern Jin, Liu Song, Southern Qi, and Liang).[1] Both sides, north and south, conducted complex legitimation practices to prove that they were the rightful rulers of the central realm. The kinds of practices these dynasties adopted and the manner in which they legitimized the Northern Wei or the Southern Dynasties will be examined in this chapter.

2.1 Establishing Legitimacy: The Northern Wei's Practices

The Northern Wei had to establish its legitimacy from scratch since this dynasty did not have any predecessor through which it could establish a valid dynastic lineage. This section focuses on how the Northern Wei established its legitimacy by following five significant methods: (1) by changing its name from Dai to Wei, (2) by choosing Water as its dynastic phase, (3) by transferring its capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang, (4) by adopting Chinese cultural conventions, and (5) by introducing diplomatic support.

2.1.1 Dynastic Name

As the present-day scholar Xu Jun 徐俊 indicates, Chinese dynasties named themselves according to the following conventions.[2] The first and most popular convention was to derive the dynastic title from a place name. Some dynasties (such as the Shang, Zhou, and Qin) derived their names from the location in which the ruling family originated.[3] Other dynasties (such as the regional kingdoms in the Sixteen Kingdoms and the Ten Kingdoms period during the fourth and tenth centuries respectively) took their names from the areas over which they ruled.[4] Several

[1] The Northern Wei collapsed a few decades before the Chen Dynasty was established. Thus the Chen Dynasty is not studied in this chapter, even though it had competed with the northern dynasties for legitimacy.
[2] Xu Jun 徐俊, *Zhongguo gudai wangchao he zhengquan minghao Tanyuan* 中國古代王朝和政權名號探源 (Wuhan: Huazhong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000), 15-17.
[3] Ibid., 43-57.
[4] Ibid., 92-15, 227-242.

dynasties (such as the Western Han, Cao Wei, and Western Jin dynasties) were named after the fief name of their founding monarchs.[5] The second convention was to borrow the name of another dynasty. Many dynasties, such as the Eastern Han, the Eastern Jin, and the Southern Song, had family ties with the rulers of earlier dynasties and thus adopted their names. Because these successors generally had different capital cities or territories, later scholars added directional adjectives to distinguish these otherwise identically-named dynasties.[6] A few dynasties (such as the Yuan, Ming, and Qing) did not follow either of these two conventions. The Yuan, for instance, took its name from the *Yijing* 易經 (also known as *I Ching*), the famous traditional Chinese book of divination.[7] So how about the Northern Wei? Which of the above conventions, if any, did it follow?

It is generally accepted that the Northern Wei dynasty was established in the first month of 386, according to the lunar calendar. In that month, Tuoba Gui re-established the Kingdom of Dai and ascended the throne as King of Dai.[8] Both the kingdom and title were legacies of his ancestors, with the lineage traced back to Tuoba Yilu. As mentioned previously, the Western Jin had enfeoffed Tuoba Yilu with the Dai area and conferred upon him the title of king in 315. The Kingdom of Dai thereupon acted nominally as a vassal state of the Western Jin, and most of the Tuoba leaders initiated their reigns by being enthroned as King of Dai. Tuoba Gui also followed this convention and succeeded as King of Dai in 386.

In May of the same year, Tuoba Gui changed his title to King of Wei 魏王 and retained Dai as the name of his dynasty, though his reason for doing so is not

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[5] Ibid.,58, 78, 87.

[6] Ibid., 71-74, 89-91, 250. Some similarly named dynasties did not share familial ties and later scholars added different adjectives to distinguish between previous and later ones. These adjectives could be the monarch's surname, such as the Cao Wei, Liu Song, and Wu Zhou 武周 (690-705), or temporal adjectives, such as the Former Qin 前秦 (350-394), Later Jin 後晉 (936-947), and Later Han 後漢 (947-951) dynasties. See Xu Jun, *Zhongguo Gudai*, 78-79, 142-143, 180-182.

[7] Ibid., 294-259, 298-299, 308-313. The Yuan Dynasty took its name *yuan* 元 (the Primal) from the *I Ching*. The names of the Ming and Qing are more difficult to determine. According to Hok-Lam Chan, the name of *ming* has two origins: the dynastic phase of the Song Dynasty, Fire (which has a similar meaning to *ming*), and the royal title of king of Ming, which was adopted by two anti-Mongol warlord states that preceded the Ming. See Hok-Lam Chan, "The 'Song' Dynasty Legacy: Symbolism and Legitimation from Han Liner to Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming Dynasty," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 68.1(2008): 91-133. The dynastic name Qing derives from the Five Dynastic Phases theory and some other factors. See Ye Hong 葉紅 and Hu Axiang 胡阿祥, "Daqing guohao shulun 大清國號述論," *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢 4 (2000): 65-77.

[8] Although this state was referred to as Dai at that time, people still tend to refer to it as Northern Wei since Tuoba Gui changed the dynastic name to Wei, as is mentioned above and again in subsequent paragraphs.

recorded.[9] The name "Wei" refers primarily to a region in the central Yellow River basin. This name was first used by the Kingdom of Wei 魏國 (403-225 BCE) in the Warring States period.[10] In the Three Kingdoms Period, the Cao Wei Dynasty named itself "Wei" because its founder, Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220), possessed the title of King of Wei as well as the fief of the Wei region.[11] There is, however, no obvious connection between Tuoba Gui and either of the previous two dynasties called Wei, and the reasoning behind his adoption of Wei as the title of his kingship remains a mystery.

The reason for keeping Dai as the name of his dynasty is also unclear. One possible reason is that Tuoba Gui maintained this name to resist pressure from the Later Yan Dynasty. Established in 384, the Later Yan defined itself as the successor of the Former Yan 前燕 (337-370), a Xianbei dynasty that originally served as a vassal of the Western Jin.[12] In 386, the king of the Later Yan, Murong Chui 慕容垂 (326-396), declared himself Emperor (*huangdi* 皇帝) and Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), the two most supreme titles in the traditional Chinese political context.[13] The doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, as mentioned in the introduction, argues that the legitimate ruler, or Son of Heaven, possessed an exclusive mandate from Heaven, which entitled him to rule over All Under Heaven.[14] Ever since the First Emperor of China 秦始皇帝 (r. 221-210 BCE) introduced the title of "emperor," this title continued to denote that the holder of the title possessed the Mandate of Heaven.[15] Emperor was the title from which all other titles, such as King (*wang* 王) or Duke (*gong* 公), derived their legitimacy. In the case of the Later Yan, by declaring himself emperor, Murong Chui demonstrated his wish to be the supreme legitimate ruler of China. He attempted to demonstrate his supreme position by conferring several (inferior) noble titles upon Tuoba Gui, who resolutely rejected them.[16] Two years later, in a meeting with an envoy of Dai, Murong Chui criticized Tuoba Gui for not accepting the titles. The envoy defended his sovereign by pointing out that both the Later Yan and Dai derived

[9] *WS*, 2.20.
[10] Xu Jun, *Zhongguo Gudai*, 79.
[11] *SGZ*, 1.47.
[12] Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 10-15.
[13] *WS*, 2.21.
[14] Ibid., 95. 2041.
[15] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1959), 6.236.
[16] *WS*, 2.21. The noble titles were King of Shanggu 上谷王 and Western Chanyu 西單於.

their legitimacy from the Western Jin, indicating that both states possessed the same status.[17] Hence, it is possible that retaining the dynastic name of Dai could have been necessary for Tuoba Gui to counterbalance pressure from the Later Yan. In other words, if Tuoba Gui changed the name of his state to Wei, he would break the link with the Western Jin upon which his legitimacy was based.

In 398, "Wei" was finally settled upon as the dynastic name. As He Dezhang points out, this change was possibly triggered by a diplomatic dispute that happened in May of that year when the Later Qin invaded Xiangyang 襄陽 in Eastern Jin territory.[18] A general from Xiangyang sent a letter to a nearby Tuoba general, Tuoba Zun 拓跋遵 (?-407), requesting help. Since the Eastern Jin identified themselves as the successors of the Western Jin, which had endorsed the legitimacy of Dai, the Eastern Jin general did not address Tuoba Gui as King of Dai (or Wei) or use any other honorifics in the letter. Rather, he referred to Tuoba Gui merely as "your reverent brother" (*xian xiong* 賢兄), given that Tuoba Gui was the brother of the general, Tuoba Zun.[19] The *Weishu* records that this infuriated Tuoba Gui, who ordered his official, Cui Cheng 崔逞, to deliver a retort.[20] This did not go well; Cui Cheng called the Eastern Jin ruler "your honored master" (*gui zhu* 貴主), in which "your" referred to the general in Xiangyang. This also infuriated Tuoba Gui, according to the *Weishu*, since he believed that the word "master" suggested that Cui Cheng, his own envoy, viewed the Eastern Jin ruler as legitimate. Cui Cheng was thereupon sentenced to death.[21]

This incident clearly indicates that Tuoba Gui did not see himself as a mere subject of the Eastern Jin. Rather, he was eager to find means by which to demonstrate that his status was equal or even superior to that of the Eastern Jin. Some months later, on July 15, Tuoba Gui gathered officials to discuss his dynasty's name.[22] Most of his officials pointed out that a dynasty's name should derive from either the place from which they ruled or from which their monarchs had originated. Since the Tuoba people had long occupied the Dai area, it was decided that it was best

[17] Ibid., 15.370.
[18] He Dezhang, "Beiwei Guohao," 115.
[19] *WS*, 32.758.
[20] Early in 321, the newly established Eastern Jin conferred the new official title on the Tuoba ruler, Tuoba Yulü 拓跋鬱律 (?-321). However, Tuoba Yulü rejected this conferral, indicating that he considered the Eastern Jin to be illegitimate. *WS*, 1.9.
[21] Ibid., 32.758.
[22] Ibid., 2.32.

to use it as the name of their dynasty.[23] However, Cui Xuanbo 崔玄伯 (?-418), a confidant of Tuoba Gui, supported the new name of "Wei."[24] He argued:

> Although our state has long unified these vast and bare northern lands, it is only you [Tuoba Gui], our majesty, who answered your calling and soared like a dragon. Although our state is old, you have recently received the Mandate of Heaven. Therefore, at the beginning of the Dengguo 登國 reign period (386-396), you proclaimed yourself King of Wei. Moreover, [a few years later] Murong Yong [the ruler of Western Yan 西燕, 384-394] also enfeoffed you with the area of Wei. Now, this "Wei" is a great name. It was the name of a great state [the Cao Wei Dynasty] in the Divine Land [i.e. the central realm] […] I, therefore, consider it appropriate to rename our state "Wei."
> 國家雖統北方廣漠之土，逮于陛下，應運龍飛。雖曰舊邦，受命惟新。是以登國之初，改代曰魏。又慕容永亦奉魏土。夫魏者大名，神州之上國…臣愚以為宜號為魏。[25]

Cui Xuanbo highlighted the importance of Tuoba Gui, whom, he argued, had initiated a new period for the Tuoba state. After Tuoba Gui was enthroned, he had been granted the fief of Wei and received the title of King of Wei, which echoed his possession of the Mandate of Heaven. To that end, in addition to being the name of a well-known Chinese dynasty, "Wei" was now a much more appropriate name than "Dai."

According to the *Weishu*, Tuoba Gui agreed with Cui Xuanbo and soon issued an edict changing the dynastic name. In this edict, Tuoba Gui declared that "Dai" referred to his ancestors' state, which had long dominated the northern frontier area of China but failed to rule the central realm. However, when he ascended the throne, the central realm was in turmoil without a rightful ruler. He hence led his troops to defeat the rebels and bring peace to the central realm. Tuoba Gui concluded the edict by saying that his state should therefore be renamed "Wei."[26] It is clear that Tuoba Gui

[23] Ibid., 2.32-33.
[24] He Dezhang, "Beiwei Guohao," 116-118.
[25] *WS*, 24. 620-21.
[26] Ibid., 2.32-33.

introduced the new dynastic name of "Wei" in order to proclaim himself the new rightful ruler of the central realm.

There were significant underlying concerns in this discussion about the proper name of the Northern Wei. In accordance with the two aforementioned conventions concerning dynastic names in Chinese history, "Dai" would be the proper name, because it derives from the birthplace of the Tuoba people and had been used by them for many decades. However, this name had a remarkable shortcoming in that, by being endorsed by the Western Jin, it still contained the implication of the Tuoba regime had started as a vassal. After Tuoba Gui occupied northern China and strove to have his state acknowledged as more traditionally Chinese than the Eastern Jin (the alleged successor of the Western Jin), "Dai" was no longer an appropriate name. He had to discard any name that reminded of his earlier vassalage to the Western Jin. The new name of "Wei" would accomplish this and manifest his dynasty's legitimacy.

"Wei" was thus a suitable alternative for Tuoba Gui. On the one hand, this name indirectly challenged the legitimacy of the Jin Dynasty, that is, both the Eastern Jin and its predecessor, the Western Jin. In 266, Sima Yan 司馬炎 (r. 266-290) had usurped the throne from the last ruler of the Cao Wei Dynasty and established the Western Jin Dynasty.[27] In this respect, "Wei" was morally superior to "Jin." On the other hand, Tuoba Gui's realm had a firm right to adopt "Wei" as the new dynastic name. As Cui Xuanbo had argued, Tuoba Gui already held the fief of Wei and the title King of Wei. After Tuoba Gui occupied the Northern China Plain (the territory formerly occupied by the Cao Wei Dynasty), he then had a practical reason to rename his state "Wei." Supported by the historical criterion of legitimacy as mentioned in the introduction, the name of "Wei" indicated a direct historical link between the Cao Wei and the Northern Wei Dynasty, which directly supported the Northern Wei's claim to legitimacy.[28]

2.1.2 Dynastic Phase

The adoption of a dynastic phase was one of the most remarkable means by which Chinese dynasties legitimated their rule. Two major conventions existed regarding its selection. The prevailing one derived from Liu Xin's Five Phases generation theory. As mentioned in the introduction, in terms of this theory, once a new dynasty replaces

[27] *JS*, 3.50.
[28] He Dezhang provides more evidence. See He Dezhang, "Beiwei Guohao," 113-125.

an old one, its phase is automatically generated by that of its predecessor.[29] Many Chinese dynasties, such as most of the Southern Dynasties, followed this convention. For instance, the Eastern Jin's dynastic phase was Metal, which generated the Water Phase. Therefore, once the Liu Song Dynasty replaced the Eastern Jin, it established Water as its dynastic phase.[30] Another convention was for ruling houses to adopt the dynastic phase from an earlier dynasty that they saw as their predecessors. Dynasties such as the Eastern Han, Eastern Jin, Liang, and Southern Song had family ties with earlier dynasties and hence maintained the old dynastic phase so as to indicate that they had inherited their ancestors' legitimacy. For example, the Eastern Jin declared itself the successor of the Western Jin and thus proclaimed the phase of its predecessor, Metal, to be its own dynastic phase. Which of these conventions did the Northern Wei follow?

After defeating the Later Yan, Tuoba Gui introduced various ways to strengthen his reign: changing the name of his dynasty to Wei, setting Pingcheng as the new capital, improving the legal and administrative system, calendar and official ritual system, and adopting the title of emperor.[31] On the day that he declared himself Emperor and the Son of Heaven, on January 24, 399, he gathered his officials to discuss the dynastic phase of the Northern Wei. Cui Xuanbo suggested the Earth Phase.[32] He purportedly offered three justifications for the appropriateness of the Earth Phase.[33] Firstly, he pointed out that the Yellow Emperor was the ancestor of the Tuoba people, and, according to legend, the Yellow Emperor had adopted the Earth Phase for his state.[34] Hence, in Cui Xuanbo's view, the Northern Wei should adopt

[29] For study of the dynastic phases in the Han Dynasty, see Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han*, 133-155.
[30] *SS*, 2.48. Most of the Southern Dynasties followed this convention. For instance, after toppling the Liu Song Dynasty, the Southern Qi Dynasty proclaimed Wood to be its dynastic phase (because Water generates Wood). The Chen Dynasty replaced the Liang Dynasty and adopted the Fire phase (because Wood, which is the dynastic phase of the Liang Dynasty, generates Fire). Since the Liang Dynasty shared the same ruling house as the Southern Qi, this dynasty also adopted the dynastic phase of Wood.
[31] *WS*, 2.33, 2. 34.
[32] Ibid. Cui Xuanbo also suggested that the Northern Wei should adopt the official color (yellow), and number (five). The dynastic phases allegedly had corresponding colors and numbers. For relevant discussions, see Needham, *Science and Civilization*, 232-253.
[33] *WS*, 108.2734. Cui Xuanbo did not apply the prevailing Five Phases generation theory in his argument. Some reasons for this will be provided in the following paragraph.
[34] The Yellow Emperor had been described as the ancestor of various non-Chinese people for various reasons. See Marc Andre Matten, "Zuowei minzu rentong fuhao de Huangdi, bei chuangzao de chuantong 作為民族認同符號的黃帝,被創造的傳統?" in *Qingdai zhengzhi yu guojia rentong* 清代政治與國家認同, eds. Liu Fengyun 劉鳳雲 and others (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012), 76-110.

the same phase.[35] Secondly, in a Tuoba legend an auspicious monster described as resembling a bull had guided their ancestors across the forest during their second migration. Cui Xuanbo pointed out that the animal that corresponded to the Earth Phase was the bull, and hence that the Northern Wei should adopt this phase. Thirdly, during the second half of 396, a dazzling yellow star (supernova) had sparkled twice in the night.[36] Cui Xuanbo insisted that this celestial portent predicted the emergence of a new and true emperor, Tuoba Gui. In his view, the Northern Wei should adopt the dynastic phase of Earth, for it corresponded with the yellow color of the star. Tuoba Gui agreed with Cui Xuanbo and declared the assumption of the Earth Phase.

Why did Cui Xuanbo introduce these uncommon reasons to suggest an appropriate dynastic phase, rather than resorting to the prevailing Five Phases generation theory? There are two possible reasons. First and foremost, the Northern Wei did not have the qualification to adopt the Five Phases theory. As mentioned above, in terms of the Five Phases generation theory, the five phases are transferred in a continuous sequence from the previous dynasty to its successor. Once a new dynasty replaced the old, the old dynastic phase ended and automatically generated the dynastic phase of the new dynasty. That being the case, the Northern Wei had defeated the Later Yan, a short-lived dynasty that did not have a recorded dynastic phase. At the time, only the Eastern Jin was associated with a dynastic phase, namely Metal. The Northern Wei did not replace or conquer the Eastern Jin and thus failed to receive a rightful dynastic phase. Secondly, the Cao Wei Dynasty had also adopted the Earth Phase. It is highly possible, as He Dezhang suggests, that Cui Xuanbo proposed sharing the same dynastic phase with the Cao Wei Dynasty in order to suggest a direct historical link between the Cao Wei and the Northern Wei, even though the two ruling houses were not related by blood.[37]

The Northern Wei maintained the Earth Phase for a century after Cui Xuanbo's proposal was accepted. However, in 490, Emperor Xiaowen issued an edict ordering his officials to gather to discuss a new dynastic phase. The edict declared that the Earth Phase was not appropriate since it was not in accordance with the Five Phases

[35] Needless to say, to us the Yellow Emperor is a legendary ruler, and the Five Phases theory postdates his supposed reign period by more than two millennia, but Cui Xuanbo was seemingly unaware of this.
[36] *WS*, 153.2389.
[37] He Dezhang, "Beiwei Guohao," 118.

generation theory. In the edict he continued by asking his officials to reconsider their dynasty's dynastic phase.[38]

The crucial criterion when applying the Five Phases generation theory, as mentioned above, was to be able to identify a legitimate predecessor whose dynastic phase would have automatically generated that of the Northern Wei's phase. In 490, officials overcame that difficulty and, adopting the Five Phases generation theory, proposed two distinct dynastic phases to Emperor Xiaowen.

Gao Lü 高閭 (?-502) insisted on the Earth Phase but offered an explanation that was different from that of Cui Xuanbo. First, Gao Lü argued that earlier northern "barbarian" states (of the so-called Sixteen Kingdom Period) could be considered rightful predecessors of the Northern Wei. He stressed that a state could acquire legitimacy as well as a rightful dynastic phase once it occupied parts of the central realm.[39] As Gao Lü mentioned, since these northern "barbarian" states, such as the Later Zhao 後趙 (319-352), the Former Yan 前燕 (337- 370) and the Former Qin, had indeed occupied the central realm, their dynastic phases could generate suitable ones for the Northern Wei. Next, Gao Lü provided the following sequence: Western Jin, Metal → Later Zhao, Water → Former Yan, Wood → Former Qin, Fire.[40] Gao Lü argued that the Northern Wei was established shortly after the Former Qin collapsed. Although the Northern Wei did not replace the Former Qin directly, the Former Qin could still be viewed as its predecessor and hence the Fire Phase of the Former Qin generated the Earth Phase of the Northern Wei.[41]

Li Biao 李彪 (440-501) and Cui Guang 崔光 (449-552) insisted on the Water Phase instead. They pointed out that all of the "barbarian" states mentioned by Gao Lü were illegitimate due to their brutal and short-lived reigns. Both officials argued that only the possession of the Mandate of Heaven made a dynasty legitimate. They stressed that the Tuoba tribe had maintained a friendly relationship with the Western Jin and was awarded the Kingdom of Dai for their support. When the Western Jin fell into disorder, the Mandate of Heaven automatically transferred to the next virtuous candidate, the Kingdom of Dai – or so they argued. Li Biao and Cui Guang described a sequence of events in which the Western Jin gave way to the Northern Wei, making

[38] *WS*, 181.2744.
[39] Ibid., 181. 2744-45.
[40] See Luo Xin, "Shiliuguo Beichao," 47-56.
[41] *WS*, 181.2744-45.

the Metal Phase of the Western Jin generate the Water Phase of the Northern Wei.[42] In other words, these two officials argued that the Western Jin could still act as the rightful predecessors of the Tuoba Wei, even though that dynasty had perished long ago, and several kingdoms had come in between.

There are some similarities between the proposals by Gao Lü on the one hand, and Li Biao and Cui Guang on the other. For instance, all three saw the Western Jin Dynasty as a legitimate predecessor and denounced the Eastern Jin as illegitimate. They also cited Liu Xin's Five Phases generation theory in their discussions. However, they still arrived at different conclusions, indicating their dissimilar understandings of legitimacy. Gao Lü argued for the Earth Phase since he regarded the northern "barbarian" kingdoms as the legitimate predecessors of the Northern Wei. For him, the occupation of the central realm (which corresponds to the geographical criterion of legitimacy that was identified in the introduction to this dissertation) was a significant source of legitimacy. Li Biao and Cui Guang supported the Water Phase because they saw the possession of the Mandate of Heaven as the main source of legitimacy. In their view, the mandate transferred from the Western Jin to the Kingdom of Dai and hence to the subsequent Northern Wei, making the Western Jin the rightful providers of the Northern Wei's dynastic phase.

Emperor Xiaowen proved to be an ambitious ruler. He not only introduced Chinese practices to replace Tuoba customs, but also strove to conquer the Southern Qi and unify the central realm. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that Emperor Xiaowen favored the latter conception. Supported by the historical criterion of legitimacy identified in the introduction, the Water Phase could highlight a historical link between the Western Jin – a well-acknowledged Chinese dynasty that had ruled over the entire central realm – and the Northern Wei, and thereby legitimate his dynasty. In February of 491, Emperor Xiaowen issued an edict changing the dynastic phase, saying the Water Phase was more appropriate than the Earth Phase.[43] Most subsequent dynasties, such as the Sui, Tang, and Song Dynasty, acknowledged the Water Phase of the Northern Wei and derived their own dynastic phase from it.[44]

[42] Ibid., 181.2746.
[43] *WS*, 181. 2746-47.
[44] Liu Pujiang, "Nanbeichao de Yichan," 127-152.

2.1.3 Capital City

Chinese monarchs took into account many factors when selecting their capitals. Ordinarily speaking, a city with outstanding objective advantages – such as superior agricultural yield, advantageous defensive positions, and good infrastructure – increased its chances of being chosen as the capital.[45] Alternatively, a city that had served as a capital before could also be chosen as the capital of later dynasties. Following the historical criterion of legitimacy outlined in the introduction, a dynasty could "borrow legitimacy" from its predecessor by sharing the same capital. The Northern Wei followed that tradition to determine their capital city. The following discussion examines how this dynasty improved its legitimacy by establishing the prominent Chinese city of Luoyang as its capital.[46]

The capital of the Kingdom of Dai was Shengle, a small city located in the center of the Yin mountain area. When Tuoba Gui revived the Kingdom of Dai in 386, he kept Shengle as the capital.[47] However, when he renamed his state Wei in 398, he transferred the capital city to Pingcheng, a northern frontier city of many Chinese dynasties.[48] The main reason for this change, as Li Pin points out, was the advantages that Pingcheng offered.[49] Shengle was a relatively new city that, as archaeological discoveries reveal, lacked many urban facilities.[50] Pingcheng, on the other hand, had a better infrastructure and a solid food supply, in addition to being located closer to the North China Plain that the Tuoba had recently begun to dominate.

Pingcheng remained the capital for the next century, until 493 when Emperor Xiaowen declared Luoyang the rightful capital and moved there. The reasons for this are as follows.

During the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, the Northern Wei gained superiority over their neighbors. In the north, the Northern Wei had greatly weakened the ruling power

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[45] For further studies see Ye Xiaojun 葉驍軍, *Zhongguo ducheng fazhan shi* 中國都城發展史 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1988), 13-15; Zhou Zhenhe 周振鶴, "Dongxi paihuai yu nanbei wangfu, Zhongguo lishi shang wuda ducheng dingwei de zhengzhi dili yinsu 東西徘徊與南北往復-中國歷史上五大都城定位的政治地理因素," *Huadong shifan daxue xuebao* 華東師範大學學報 41.1(2009): 32-39.

[46] For a recent study on this issue, see Dai Yulin 戴雨林, "Beiwei Xiaowendi qiandu Luoyang wenti yanjiu zongshu 北魏孝文帝遷都洛陽問題研究綜述," *Luoyang daxue xuebao* 洛陽大學學報 1 (2005): 96-99.

[47] *WS*, 2.20

[48] Ibid., 2.33.

[49] Li Ping, *Beiwei Pingcheng*, 289-302.

[50] Su Bai 宿白, "Shengle Pingcheng yidai de Tuoba Xianbei 盛樂平城一帶的拓跋鮮卑," *Wenwu* 11(1977): 38-46.

of the steppe, the Rouran state, and finally subjugated it in 478.[51] Meanwhile, the Northern Wei gradually extended their dominance over the south, suppressing the Liu Song and Southern Qi south of the Huai River 淮河. The Southern Dynasties, meanwhile, fell into a cycle of endless usurpations and infighting, which greatly weakened their power. The Northern Wei then had the opportunity to become a fully-fledged Chinese-style dynasty located on Chinese soil.

When Emperor Xiaowen assumed the reins of the Northern Wei in 490, his priority was to enhance his authority. One of the methods he used, as He Dezhang points out, was to rebuild Pingcheng into a more magnificent Chinese-style capital.[52] Historical records show that Pingcheng was previously a rudimentary capital with very basic and simple buildings.[53] On Emperor Xiaowen's order, magnificent buildings akin to those of most Chinese dynasties were constructed. These included a Bright Hall (*mingtang* 明堂; supposedly the most glorious palace for ancient Chinese dynasties),[54] two different kinds of temples (one for Confucius, the other for the Tuoba's ancestors), and a new central palace, *taijdian* 太極殿.[55]

However, Pingcheng seemingly failed to be a suitable capital for the Northern Wei. The drawbacks of this capital were manifest. First, as more and more immigrants came to Pingcheng, this city suffered increasing food shortages, as Wang Zhongluo points out.[56] Since Pingcheng was located outside the main agricultural area, the North China Plain, historical records note that the Northern Wei had to import a massive amount of crops from that area to Pingcheng.[57] Secondly, as the headquarters of the Tuoba culture, the elites living in Pingcheng did not welcome the Chinese culture that Emperor Xiaowen was so fond of. He Dezhang explains that Emperor Xiaowen had to suspend his Sinophile policies in 491 due to fierce resistance from the

[51] *WS*, 103.2296.
[52] Emperor Xiaowen had ascended the throne in 471, when he was 4 years old. His grandmother Dowager Wenming actually possessed the real power until 490, when Emperor Xiaowen assumed rulership of the Northern Wei.
[53] *NQS*, 57.984.
[54] For the Northern Wei's Bright Hall, see Katherine R. Tsiang, "Changing Patterns of Divinity and Reform in the Late Northern Wei," *The Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 230.
[55] *WS*, 7.161.
[56] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 538. Also see *WS*, 110.2856.
[57] Ibid, 15.380.

Tuoba aristocracy in Pingcheng.[58] Frustrated by that failure, Emperor Xiaowen reportedly told a confidant in private:

> Our clan rose up from the north and then moved to Pingcheng. […] This area was suitable for operating a military campaign, not for civilized administration. It truly is a difficult task to change our (Tuoba) habits and customs here.
> 國家興自北土，徙居平城…此間用武之地，非可文治。移風易俗，信為甚難。[59]

Emperor Xiaowen consequently decided to transfer the capital. The first option was Yecheng 鄴城. In the Warring States period, this city had been expanded and had served as the secondary capital of the Kingdom of Wei. During the Han Dynasty, it had remained a regional capital. After the Han Dynasty collapsed, Yecheng began to stand out. Cao Cao selected this city as his major base, and his Cao Wei Dynasty established it as a secondary capital. Thereafter, both the Later Zhao and Former Yan chose Yecheng as their capital and continued to reinforce it, making it the most magnificent city in northern China. In fact, the Northern Wei had already twice considered making Yecheng its capital due to its beneficial conditions, such as a huge agricultural yield and advantageous defensive conditions.[60] Although these two attempts failed for various reasons, they demonstrate that Yecheng was considered an optimal alternative capital for the Northern Wei.

However, Emperor Xiaowen directly expressed his dislike of Yecheng.[61] He argued that two previous "barbarian" dynasties (the Later Zhao and Former Yan) that had established this city as their capital had been short-lived, making Yecheng an ominous capital. He refused to share a capital with those two "barbarian" dynasties, even if Yecheng possessed the most advantageous conditions.

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[58] He Dezhang, "Lun Beiwei Xiaowendi qiandu shijian 論北魏孝文帝遷都事件," *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Suitangshi ziliao* 魏晉南北朝隋唐史資料 7(1997): 72-83.
[59] *WS*, 19.464.
[60] Early in February 398, Tuoba Gui had planned to make Yecheng his capital. This plan failed since the northern steppe power, the Rouran and the Tiele, were the most serious enemies of the Northern Wei at that time. In 415, the Northern Wei officials considered transferring the capital to Yecheng again because Pingcheng suffered a serious drought and famine. This attempt also failed since Cui Hao 崔浩 (?-450), the son of Cui Xuanbo, convinced Emperor Mingyuan 明元帝 (r.409-423) that Pingcheng was a better strategic location in comparison with Yecheng. See *WS*, 2.31, 35.808.
[61] Le Shi 樂史, *Taiping yuanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 55.1134.

Luoyang was another option. This city had been in ruins since 311, when rebels had burned down this capital of the Western Jin.[62] Still, compared to other Chinese cities, Luoyang was a superior source of legitimacy. This was due, firstly, to the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven. Located in a fertile basin and surrounded by the Yellow River and the Luo River 洛河, this city had supposedly been built by the Duke of Zhou 周公 (in around the 11th century BCE) and served as a capital for the Western Zhou Dynasty 西周 (1046 BCE - 771 BCE). As archaeological discoveries reveal, the Western Zhou rulers described Luoyang as the center of "All Under Heaven" and they coined the word *zhongguo* 中國, or the central realm, to denote this city and its environs.[63] Although "the central realm" gradually came to be understood as denoting the geographical area now known as China, Luoyang was often viewed as the center of the central realm.[64] Thus establishing Luoyang as the capital could symbolize dominance over the central realm to some extent.[65] On the other hand, Luoyang had a long history of being a capital city, which imbued it with the rich potency of legitimacy, as Chen Yinque points out.[66] The Eastern Zhou had previously established this city as its capital.[67] A series of later dynasties – from the Eastern Han, the Cao Wei, to the Western Jin – all chose Luoyang as their capital.[68] In short, even though it was in ruins, Luoyang was seen as the symbolic center of the central realm, and it had been the capital of various earlier Chinese dynasties, making it an ideal choice for a dynasty eager to be seen as legitimate.

Secondly, Emperor Xiaowen liked the Luoyang option because, as the *Weishu* records, he once told a confidant: "Mountain Xiao and Hangu Pass [mountain and pass near Luoyang] are imperial residences, the Yellow River and the Luo River are royal quarters. I will thus operate a big movement and gloriously reside in the central realm" 崤函帝宅, 河洛王里, 因茲大舉, 光宅中原.[69] To achieve this goal without alerting staunch objectors in Pingcheng, Emperor Xiaowen allegedly has recourse to a

[62] *JS*, 5.121-122
[63] Li Liu and Xingcan Chen, *The Archaeology of China: From the Late Paleolithic to the Early Bronze Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 397.
[64] Chen Yinque, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao*, 234.
[65] For more detailed studies, see Li Dalong, "The Central Kingdom," 323-352.
[66] Chen Yinque, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao*, 174.
[67] Ye Xiaojun, *Zhongguo Ducheng*, 52-60.
[68] In fact, the Eastern Jin had planned to move its capital to Luoyang twice in order to promote this city's legitimacy. For a detailed study, see 2.3.3.
[69] *WS*, 19. 464-65. *Zhongyuan* 中原 is a synonym for *zhongguo*, the central realm, in an early Chinese context.

ruse. He announced a plan to conquer the Southern Qi in 493 since the ruler of that dynasty had died in that year. Since the Northern Wei army was not well-prepared, most officials and generals objected to the plan. Emperor Xiaowen nonetheless insisted and led most of his troops and officials southward from Pingcheng in September.[70] Then he intentionally delayed the march.[71] As historical records describe, when the large party arrived at Luoyang, they were suffering from the torturous march and implored Emperor Xiaowen to return to Pingcheng. The emperor objected since a return would indicate a failed march. Instead, he hinted to his officials about the transfer of the capital. In his speech, Emperor Xiaowen praised their Tuoba ancestors for their two southward migrations from the far north toward the central realm.[72] He then announced a similar migration and that he planned to transfer the capital to Luoyang. It is recorded in the *Weishu* that after one supporter stood up and echoed the emperor's idea, most of the officials agreed with their emperor's decision. Emperor Xiaowen thus issued the order to transfer his capital.[73]

This decision undoubtedly sparked serious objections from some Tuoba aristocrats. Emperor Xiaowen spent the whole of 494 traveling around his state convincing and comforting them. Some Tuoba reacted with fierce rejections. In January 497, Tuoba notables in Pingcheng secretly invited the crown prince, who firmly disagreed with his father's plan to change the capital, to return to Pingcheng, where they planned to support him as the new emperor. Emperor Xiaowen immediately suppressed this conspiracy and executed most of the Tuoba involved, including his crown prince.[74] Meanwhile, a new magnificent Luoyang was built.[75] On October 8 of 495, the Northern Wei relocated its central government and the residents of Pingcheng to Luoyang.[76]

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[70] Ibid., 7.172.
[71] Ibid., 7.172-72. Also see *ZZTJ*, 13.4337-40. During the march, Emperor Xiaowen visited various places of interest, sacrificed to ancient sages and deities, and talked to various local peoples.
[72] In their early period, the Tuoba tribe launched two southward migrations, which saw them migratig almost two thousand kilometers south to the frontier of the Western Jin. See Section 1.1.1.
[73] *WS*, 53.1183.
[74] Ibid., 14.361, 22. 588-89.
[75] For a detailed study of the layout of Luoyang, see Ping-ti Ho, "Lou-Yang, A.D. 495-534: A Study of Physical and Socioeconomic Planning of a Metropolitan Area," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 26(1966): 52-101.
[76] *WS*, 7.178. Luoyang served as the Northern Wei's capital until this dynasty collapsed in 534.

Historical records suggest that the Northern Wei people were proud of their new capital, and it also impressed politicians from the Southern Dynasties.[77] A southern general named Chen Qingzhi 陳慶之 (484-539) reportedly said:

> Since the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song dynasties, Luoyang has been described as a wasteland. We, the southern people, call places north of the Yangtze River "barbarous lands." Yesterday when I arrived in Luoyang, I started to understand that civilized gentries also reside in the central realm. Their rituals are so elaborate and the people are thriving to such an extent that my eyes failed to record it all and my mouth cannot fully describe.
> 自晉宋以來，號洛陽為荒土。此中謂長江以北，盡是夷狄。昨至洛陽，始知衣冠士族，並在中原。禮儀富盛，人物殷阜，目所不識，口不能傳。[78]

Luoyang's magnificence apparently changed Chen Qingzhi's previous view and caused him to agree that the Northern Wei were civilized and flourishing, and not a "barbarous" state, as he used to think. This vividly indicates that making Luoyang the capital was a powerful tool in bolstering the Northern Wei's legitimacy.

2.1.4 Chinese Cultural Conventions

Chinese dynasties often favored exporting Chinese culture, thereby expecting to extend their cultural influence and power. Non-Chinese dynasties also tended to adopt various Chinese cultural resources to make their rule acceptable to the Chinese.[79] The Northern Wei is just such a case. During the reign of the Emperor Xiaowen, the Northern Wei adopted various Chinese cultural practices to promote their dynasty as a

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[77] Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之, *Luoyang qielan ji jiaojian* 洛陽珈藍記校箋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 113.
[78] Ibid., 114.
[79] The Manchu Qing's adoption of Chinese cultural conventions has received the most scholarly attention. A famous debate took place between Evelyn Rawski and Ping-ti Ho. The former scholar questioned whether the Qing had Sinicized itself and fully adopted Chinese cultural conventions. See Evelyn Rawski, "Presidential Address: Reenvisioning the Qing: The Significance of the Qing Period in Chinese History," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55.4 (1996): 829-838. The latter scholar argues that the Qing Dynasty, like many other non-Chinese dynasties, willingly Sinicized itself. See Ping-ti Ho, "In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57.1(1998): 128-152.

Chinese-style one, which supported Emperor Xiaowen and his dynasty's legitimacy.[80] To illustrate this point, the focus of this section is on two special but rarely studied cases, namely of how Emperor Xiaowen enhanced his legitimacy by (1) observing the basic Chinese virtue of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), and (2) adopting a Chinese-style state sacrificial ceremony.

(1) As noted in the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (*Classic of Filial Piety*), Confucius says, "In human conduct there is nothing more important than family reverence" 人之行莫大於孝.[81] This "family reverence," a translation by Rosemont and Ames, more commonly referred to as filial piety, was a fundamental virtue in Confucianism and Chinese culture. As Alan K. L. Chan says, "it would not be an exaggeration to say that the concern with *xiao* pervades all aspects of Chinese culture, both past and present."[82] A significant aspect of practicing filial piety is observing a three-year mourning period after the death of one's parents and grandparents.[83] To demonstrate their deepest regard for their deceased parents and grandparents, woeful children wore rough mourning apparel, ate vegetarian diets, resigned from their occupations, and precluded any entertainment until the third year.[84] The underlying reason for this mourning practice, as Confucius is quoted as saying in the *Analects*, is that "a child ceases to be nursed by his parents only when he is three years old. Three years' mourning is observed throughout the Empire" 子生三年, 然後免於父母之懷. 夫三年之喪, 天下之通喪也. (*Analects* 17:21)[85] Therefore, every person should mourn their deceased parents and grandparents for three years out of respect for the invaluable care they received from them in the first three years of their own existence. Starting from the Western Han Dynasty, the three-year mourning period began to prevail among ordinary people.[86] However, it was a challenge for emperors to observe

[80] During the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, the Tuoba people were asked to adopt Chinese surnames, speak the Chinese language, wear Chinese clothes, intermarry with Chinese people, and follow Chinese customs and rites. See Section 1.1.2.
[81] Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 110.
[82] Alan Chan, Kam-leung, and Sor-hoon Tan, *Filial Piety in Chinese Thought and History* (London: Psychology Press, 2004), 1.
[83] For a similar study of the three-year mourning period in ancient China, see Norman Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11-34.
[84] Ding Linghua 丁凌華, *Zhongguo sangfu zhidu shi* 中國喪服制度史 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2000), 233-35. Some extremists would choose to live in a crude cabin near their parents' tombs during this period. Ibid., 243, 251.
[85] D. C. Lau, *The Analects*, 179.
[86] Ding Linghua, *Zhongguo sangfu*, 242-46.

the three-year mourning period since their states would have become unstable if their rulers had abandoned their responsibilities. Emperors of the Han Dynasty thus adopted a compromise. After a parent or grandparent of the emperor was buried, all the ordinary people wore mourning apparel for the first three days. The emperor and his officials observed a one-month mourning period.[87] Thereafter, the mourning period ended and society returned to normal.[88] However, after the Han Dynasty collapsed, this imperial manner of mourning was abandoned. Both the Cao Wei Dynasty and the Western Jin ended their imperial mourning periods after the burial day.[89]

The early Northern Wei emperors followed the mourning practice of the Western Jin Dynasty. Meanwhile, the Tuoba monarchs also maintained their Tuoba mourning customs, holding the ceremonies to pray for deities to the west and drive away evil to the north three months after the burial day.[90] However, in 490, when Dowager Wenming died, her grandson, Emperor Xiaowen, announced that he would observe the strict three-year mourning period. This decision aroused three kinds of objections among Tuoba officials, as the *Weishu* records.[91] (1) Some of them argued that the emperor's plan contradicted Tuoba customs. They also mentioned that Dowager Wenming herself, although being Chinese, had requested in her testament that everyone should follow the Tuoba mourning period. (2) Other Tuoba officials pointed out that none of the previous Chinese dynasties had adopted the three-year imperial mourning period. (3) The Chinese officials also rejected this plan.[92] Li Biao and Gao Lü, for example, indicated that any mourning period would be acceptable.[93] They claimed that only a few allegedly legendary rulers at the very beginning of Chinese civilization had observed the three-year mourning period. Even in the Han Dynasty, many emperors had failed to observe the one-month imperial mourning periods, yet were still viewed as legitimate by their people. They also mentioned that their country was far from at peace and people needed their emperor to return to rule as soon as possible.

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[87] According to Confucianism, the emperor was referred to as the parent of all humankind. Therefore, the emperor and his people should theoretically observe the same three-year mourning period if the old emperor, or a close relative of the emperor, passes away.
[88] Ding Linghua, *Zhongguo sangfu*, 238-41.
[89] *JS*, 20.613.
[90] *WS*, 108.2787.
[91] Ibid., 108.2778-80
[92] Ibid., 183.2780-87.
[93] Ibid., 183.2780-86.

Emperor Xiaowen, however, firmly insisted on his proposal, as the *Weishu* records. He declared, firstly, that a three-year mourning period was the only right way to express filial piety and convey his deepest respects to his deceased grandmother. He then argued that people gave high praise to legendary sage rulers who supposedly followed the three-year mourning custom, so why would his officials prevent him from following the virtuous example of legendary sage rulers.[94] In the end, Emperor Xiaowen proposed a compromise. His officials were asked to observe a three-month mourning period, while he himself observed a one-year mourning period. He then declared the abandonment of the former Tuoba mourning traditions.[95]

Emperor Xiaowen's deep regard for his grandmother is quite doubtful. Being an ambitious politician, Dowager Wenming allegedly killed the father of Emperor Xiaowen and established Emperor Xiaowen as a puppet emperor. Emperor Xiaowen reportedly had a miserable childhood under the strict control and frequent punishments of his grandmother.[96] Therefore, as a newly-enthroned emperor, Emperor Xiaowen intentionally presented himself as a paragon of Chinese virtue by insisting on a one-year mourning period, with the aim of improving his authority and legitimate status. The fact is that the Northern Wei was alone in adopting a one-year imperial mourning period. Even the contemporaneous Chinese dynasties in the south, as well as most subsequent Chinese dynasties, followed a one-month imperial mourning period.[97] Hence, Emperor Xiaowen distinguished himself as a more strict observer of the virtue of filial piety than any other monarchs in history.

Emperor Xiaowen also used other means to portray himself as a paragon of the virtue of filial piety. For instance, he promulgated the three-year mourning custom into law, requiring both Tuoba and Chinese to follow this rigorous Confucian mourning ritual.[98] Also, in order to allow the Tuoba to gain a better understanding of filial piety, Emperor Xiaowen commissioned a translation of the *Xiaojing* into the Xianbei language, which resulted in what was probably the first-ever translation of

[94] Ibid., 183.2786.
[95] Ibid., 183. 2783.
[96] Ibid., 7.186.
[97] Ding Linghua, *Zhongguo sangfu*, 245-246.
[98] The *Weishu* records that a Tuoba general was imprisoned for five years for missing one month of the three-year mourning period. This poor Tuoba general mistakenly included the leap month in his three-year mourning period for his deceased father, and thus came one month short of the mourning period required by Northern Wei law. See *WS*, 184.2796-98.

the *Xiaojing*.[99] Moreover, Emperor Xiaowen ordered the building of a Confucian temple in Luoyang in 489. This was, interestingly, the first time in Chinese history that a temple for Confucius was erected by the court in the capital city.[100] This action, as Holcombe says, "made the Xianbei-ruled Northern Wei Dynasty more Confucian than any previous Chinese dynasty had been."[101] To honor his observation of filial piety (*xiao* 孝), and his great achievements in cultured and civilized administration (*wen* 文), Emperor Xiaowen eventually received a posthumous name that combines both *xiao* and *wen*.[102]

As mentioned in the introduction, the ethnic criterion for legitimacy underpinned the Chinese monarch's adoption of Chinese culture, because it was a significant testimony to his *zhengtong* status. Even though Emperor Xiaowen was a Tuoba ruler, his observance of filial piety and support of Confucianism could still demonstrate that he was a sincere follower of Chinese culture, which definitely supported his legitimate status. Therefore, as subsequent chapters show, various pre-modern Chinese scholars, such as Wang Tong, Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao, highlighted Emperor Xiaowen's adoption of Chinese culture to confirm his legitimate status.

(2) Emperor Xiaowen also introduced another Chinese custom, namely the "southern" sacrificial ceremony to Heaven.

Following the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, the secular ruler receives the right to govern All Under Heaven from a sacred entity called Heaven. It was a custom in Chinese history that the ruler annually sacrificed to Heaven to ensure and manifest his inherited mandate from Heaven. Every first month of the lunar year, the ruler sacrificed a black ox and jade to Heaven at *yuanqiu* 圜丘, a round altar located on the southern outskirts of the capital.[103] The ruler conducted this sacrifice himself, burning the sacrificial objects and offering a cup of wine to Heaven. The memorial tablets of imperial ancestors also received the same sacrifices. This kind of sacrifice expressed what I call the cosmological criterion of legitimacy, which establishes a cosmological

[99] Wei Zheng 魏征 and others comp., *Suishu* 隋書 (History of the Sui Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 32.935.
[100] Prior to the Northern Wei, the only official Confucian temple had been built by the Han Dynasty and was situated in Confucius' hometown of Qufu 曲阜.
[101] Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 26.
[102] *WS*, 7.186.
[103] There is a high degree of symbolism at play here: Heaven was considered round in shape, and the South was most the honorable cardinal direction in pre-modern China.

link between Heaven and the monarch as the foundation of political legitimacy. The sacrifice to Heaven thus served as one the most significant imperial ceremonies in ancient China.

The Northern Wei had adopted this "southern" sacrificial ceremony as soon as they established their dynasty.[104] The Tuoba rulers also had an indigenous ceremony: the sacrifice to the Tuoba's Heaven on the western outskirts of the capital. As the *Weishu* describes it, the Tuoba ruler, his concubines, and six other Tuoba noble family members headed toward the western outskirts in their traditional Tuoba clothes every fourth month of every lunar year. On top of the altar, they erected seven wooden puppets, which represented the seven ancestors of the Tuoba tribe. A female shaman beat the drums while all the participants rode on horseback around the altar. The youths from the six noble families conducted this sacrifice, killing and burning one white calf, one sheep, and a yellow horse.[105] This "western" sacrifice dates back to the Tuoba Liwei period, when this Tuoba chieftain announced himself chieftain of the Tuoba tribe.[106] Thereafter, all Tuoba rulers observed this ceremony, including many emperors of the Northern Wei.

The "southern" and "western" sacrifices clearly had similar functions: to testify to the ruler's legitimacy. However, they differed not only in terms of their procedures, but also in the extent of Heaven's blessings. The emperor conducted the "southern" sacrifice by himself, symbolizing that he had obtained the sole legitimate power ordained by Heaven. In the "western" sacrifice, by contrast, only Tuoba nobles participated, which demonstrated that the Tuoba's Heaven granted its mandate to all of the Tuoba nobility. In other words, this manner of sacrifice indicated that the Tuoba leader shared that legitimacy with his Tuoba noblemen.

While both types of sacrifice were performed by the Northern Wei, they were treated differently. The *Weishu* records that only the first Tuoba emperor, Tuoba Gui, had attended the "southern" sacrifice in 399. Later Northern Wei emperors had perfunctorily asked their Chinese officials to officiate at this sacrifice on their behalf. By contrast, the Tuoba emperors had always been present at the "western" sacrifice.[107] This vividly indicates that the Northern Wei emperors had not sought legitimacy from

[104] *WS*, 108.2734.
[105] Ibid., 108.2736. For a more detailed study, see Kang Le, *Cong xijiao*, 168-175.
[106] *WS*, 1.3.
[107] Ibid., 184.2813.

the Chinese Heaven but treated the "southern" sacrifice as a kind of Chinese-style ornamentation.[108]

This changed when Emperor Xiaowen took over. He embraced the "southern" sacrifice step by step. In 486, he attended the "western" sacrifice but wore a Chinese imperial robe.[109] In 488, he ordered the rebuilding and extension of the *yuanqiu*, the altar for the Chinese "southern" sacrifice.[110] In the first month of 489, he attended and conducted his first "southern" sacrifice.[111] In 493, he refused to attend the Tuoba "western" sacrifice. Two years later, when he moved his capital to Luoyang, Emperor Xiaowen completely abolished this Tuoba sacrifice, as well as most other Tuoba state ceremonies.[112] This Tuoba emperor obviously felt that he did not need the legitimacy of the Tuoba Heaven anymore. He identified himself as a Chinese emperor, one who derived his legitimacy solely from the Chinese Heaven.

Emperor Xiaowen's wish to strengthen his power partially explains why he abandoned the traditional Tuoba state ceremonies. The "western" sacrifices indicated power-sharing between the Tuoba leader and the noblemen. It is predictable that the ambitious Emperor Xiaowen would favor the "southern" sacrificial ceremony more to highlight his supreme authority. Moreover, Emperor Xiaowen's final adoption of Chinese state ceremonies could have enabled him to validate himself as a true follower of Chinese culture, which, as with observing filial piety, could further support his legitimacy.

2.1.5 Diplomacy

The doctrine of All Under Heaven established the central realm as the supreme state compared with all the other states in All Under Heaven.[113] This doctrine could thus be seen to support the idea that a dynasty that occupied the central realm could manifest its legitimate status by asking other states to accept its supreme status. Following a

[108] A relevant figure shows that, up to that point, more than eighty percent of the middle and upper positions in the Northern Wei were occupied by the Tuoba people. Chinese officials were a minority; they mostly served as cultural consultants. See Kang Le, *Cong xijiao*, 67.
[109] *WS*, 181.2741.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid., 7.164. In June of that year, Emperor Xiao also attended the sacrificed to the Earth, another significant Chinese sacrifice ceremony. Ibid., 181.2741. The sacrifice to Heaven and Earth were the two most significant national sacrifices in relation to pre-modern Chinese politics.
[112] Ibid., 7.169, 184.2743. Also see Kang Le, *Cong xijiao*, 188.
[113] See the introduction.

chronological order, in this section the four stages in which the Northern Wei established its supreme status in the diplomatic field are distinguished.

(1) In its early period the Northern Wei Dynasty was weak and it therefore maintained relatively friendly relations with the Eastern Jin and the ensuing Liu Song.[114] It occasionally even sent troops to aid the Eastern Jin in combating the Later Qin, as the *Weishu* records.[115] Although both the Eastern Jin and Liu Song dynasties declared themselves to be the rulers of the central realm, the Northern Wei did not directly challenge that. However, these friendly relations would not last long, since the Northern Wei was gradually becoming more confident in its power.

(2) In 422, the Northern Wei broke the peace and entered into war with the Liu Song. Within a couple of years, the Northern Wei had conquered much territory north of the Huai River.[116] The Liu Song Dynasty established an alliance against the Northern Wei, which consisted of the Rouran, the Northern Liang 北凉 (397-439), the Northern Yan, Tuyuhun 吐谷渾 (313-663) and some other states.[117] This alliance launched several joint military attacks against the Northern Wei, but all failed.[118] The Northern Wei resorted to both diplomatic and military methods to destroy the alliance. The following paragraphs provide a glimpse of how the Northern Wei forced two members, the Rouran state and the Northern Liang, to eventually surrender to its rule.

According to the *Weishu*, the Rouran state was established by the Rouran tribe, which supposedly consisted of fugitive slaves of the Tuoba tribe who had been humble subjects of the Dai state.[119] However, after the Northern Wei was established and transferred its attention to northern China, the Rouran tribe rebelled and soon ruled over the steppes. In 402, the Rouran established their state and continually invaded Northern Wei territory thereafter.[120] The Northern Wei reacted with frequent attacks and brought the Rouran state to its knees in 431.[121] However, this peace lasted for only four years. The restored Rouran allied with the Liu Song and attacked the

[114] Ibid., 2.28. *ZZTJ*, 125. 3747. Various states existed in the contemporaneous central realm and some of them, such as the Later Yan, Later Qin, and Southern Yan 南燕 (398-410), were the common enemies of both the Northern Wei and its southern peers.
[115] *WS*, 2.35, 33.787-88.
[116] Ibid., 3.62-63.
[117] *SS*, 95.2337.
[118] *ZZTJ*, 125-3946. *SS*, 95.246.
[119] *WS*, 103,2289.
[120] Ibid., 103,2291-93.
[121] Ibid., 103. 2293. The Rouran also married one of their princesses to Emperor Taiwu to manifest their obeisance.

Northern Wei again in 435.[122] Angered by the perceived treachery of the Rouran state, the Northern Wei rebranded this state *Ruru* 蠕蠕, a word that describes the Rouran people as worms (*ru* 蠕).[123] Thereupon, the Northern Wei continually weakened the Rouran's power by launching periodic strikes, establishing frontier garrisons, building frontier walls, and settling nomadic people. At some point, the Rouran asked for peace, but the Northern Wei firmly rejected their request. Only in 478, when the Rouran agreed to serve as vassals and promised to pay regular tribute, did the Northern Wei cease the attacks and thereafter maintained peaceful relations with the Rouran state until it collapsed in the mid-sixth century CE.[124]

The Northern Liang, another ally of the Liu Song Dynasty, was not so fortunate. This northwestern state dominated a large part of what is now Northwest China in the early fifth century CE. It submitted to the Northern Wei in 435 after witnessing the unstoppable triumph of the Tuoba troops. To control the Northern Liang, Tuoba Tao not only appointed the King of Northern Liang as General of the Western Campaigns (*zhengxi da jiangjun* 征西大將軍) and as King of Liang 涼王,[125] but also asked the King of Liang to intermarry with the Tuoba royal family and send a prince to Pingcheng as a hostage.[126] However, the Northern Liang also subjected themselves to the Liu Song, even after they had submitted to the Northern Wei. They even secretly joined the anti-Northern Wei alliance and supported the Rouran state in its wars against the Northern Wei.[127] The Northern Liang's betrayal was a serious challenge to the Northern Wei's supreme status. In 439, Tuoba Tao announced twelve proofs of the Northern Liang's guilt, which principally centered on irreverence toward the Northern Wei. For example, the third one reads "although [the King of Northern Liang] had already accepted the title of nobility [from the Northern Wei], [he] additionally received an illegitimate official title [from the Liu Song Dynasty]" 既荷王爵又授偽官.[128] The Northern Wei thereupon sent its troops to the Northern Liang and soon conquered this vassal.

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[122] Ibid., 103.2294. One of the reasons is that the Northern Wei at that time strove to control inner Asia, an area within the sphere of influence of the Rouran state.
[123] Ibid., 103.2289
[124] Ibid., 103.2296.
[125] Ibid., 99.2205.
[126] Ibid. For hostages in ancient China, see Yang Lien-sheng, "Hostages in Chinese History," 507-521.
[127] *WS*, 102.2260.
[128] Ibid., 99.2207.

During the reign of Tuoba Tao, the Northern Wei not only defeated the allies of Liu Song, including the Rouran and Northern Liang mentioned above, but also launched a major counterattack against the Liu Song in 450. That attack, while ultimately failing, caused the Liu Song Dynasty considerable suffering. To reach an accord, the two dynasties recognized each other as equals, leading to decades of peace.[129]

(3) In the latter half of the fifth century CE, the Northern Wei treated the Liu Song and its successor, the Southern Qi, as equal states in diplomatic communications. The *Weishu* reports that the Northern Wei not only maintained a high frequency of diplomatic interactions with the south during this period, but also selected Chinese cultural elites as its diplomats, aiming to demonstrate that the Northern Wei was civilized and akin to a Chinese state.[130] The diplomatic interactions notwithstanding, the Northern Wei still harbored dreams of supremacy and continued to undermine its opponents' legitimacy in surreptitious ways, which resulted in the diplomatic tragedy described below.

After the Southern Qi replaced the Liu Song Dynasty, the Northern Wei sheltered diplomats of the Liu Song Dynasty. The *Weishu* notes that in 483, the Northern Wei held an official dinner and invited all the diplomats. Intentionally, the diplomat of Southern Qi was asked to sit below the diplomat of the Liu Song Dynasty. The Southern Qi diplomat reacted with fierce protest and refused to attend the dinner. This lesser seat, he argued, indicated that the Northern Wei viewed the Southern Qi as inferior to the Liu Song, even though the former had replaced the latter. Liu Chang 劉昶 (436-497), a refugee prince of the Liu Song who was appointed King of Song 宋王 by the Northern Wei, secretly hired an assassin to kill the Southern Qi diplomat.[131] To appease the Southern Qi, the Northern Wei executed the assassin and repatriated the Liu Song's diplomat.[132]

Meanwhile, the Northern Wei prevented its vassals from establishing diplomatic communications with the Southern Dynasties, which could have challenged its supreme status.[133] Take the Gaogouli 高句麗 (37 BCE-668 CE), the ancestor of

[129] Ibid., 4.105.
[130] *SS*, 9.2354, 108-111. *WS*, 48.1091
[131] *WS*, 59.1308.
[132] Ibid., 7.151.
[133] Fairbank makes a similar observation in relation to the imperial Chinese tributary system, saying that "if the rest of mankind did not acknowledge his rule, how long could he expect China to do so?

present-day Korea, as an example. This state was one of the most significant vassals of the Northern Wei.[134] In 435, the Gaogouli state asked to be a vassal of the Northern Wei and demonstrated its subjection by requesting Tuoba Tao to confer a title upon its ruler.[135] The Northern Wei obliged by providing each successive Gaogouli ruler with an official title, thereby highlighting that the Northern Wei was the legitimate overlord of the Gaogouli state. Of all the vassals of the Northern Wei, the Gaogouli paid tribute most frequently: a total of 96 times and normally twice a year.[136] However, this state's loyalty wavered. After becoming a vassal of the Northern Wei, it still maintained a minor degree of diplomatic communication with the Southern Dynasties and secretly sent envoys and tribute.[137] The Northern Wei thus kept a vigilant eye on this vassal. In the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, a local official intercepted some of the Gaogouli's envoys, who had been sent to pay tribute to the Southern Qi Dynasty. Emperor Xiaowen fiercely criticized Gaogouli for its betrayal and threatened it with a military response.[138] The ruler of Gaogouli apologized and ceased its relationship with the Southern Qi immediately.

(4) The peace between the north and south ended in the late fifth century CE. Emperor Xiaowen attempted to conquer the Southern Qi with a view to unifying the central realm and becoming the sole holder of the Mandate of Heaven. In 496, he accused the Southern Qi of being illegitimate and thereafter waged war against the south.[139] Later emperors of the Northern Wei also adopted a hostile attitude towards the Southern Dynasties until their dynasty collapsed.

This section reveals how the Northern Wei attempted to demonstrate its supreme status in the diplomatic field. In its early period, the Northern Wei maintained friendly relations with the Eastern Jin and the subsequent Liu Song. After consolidating its rule in northern China, the Northern Wei fiercely competed with the Liu Song for supreme status. In the latter half of the fifth century, the Northern Wei maintained peace with the Southern Dynasties. It treated its southern peers as equal

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Tribute (from vassals) had prestige value in the government of China, where prestige was an all-important tool of government." See Fairbank, John K. "Tributary Trade and China's Relations with the West," *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, 1.02 (1942): 135.

[134] *WS*, 100.2224.

[135] Ibid., 100.2214-15.

[136] Ibid., 100.2215.

[137] *SS*, 97.2392. Before the Northern Wei was established, the Gaogouli had agreed with the legitimate status of the Eastern Jin, accepting conferred titles from that dynasty.

[138] *WS*, 100.2216

[139] Ibid., 7.176.

states in the diplomatic field, but also employed diplomatic means (such as sheltering refugees of the Southern Dynasties) to undermine the Southern Dynasties' legitimacy and prevented its vassals from having contact with the south. Finally, Emperor Xiaowen resumed the war against the Southern Dynasties in order to unify the central realm.

2.2 Preserving Legitimacy: Practices of the Southern Dynasties

The Southern Dynasties followed one after another by succeeding their predecessors' rule. They thus focused on practices that would preserve their inherited legitimacy. This section comprises a discussion of how the Southern Dynasties preserved their legitimacy by means of four methods: (1) by subscribing to the practice of abdication, (2) by noting auspicious portents, (3) by reproducing the central realm, and (4) by gaining diplomatic support.

2.2.1 Abdication

Historians such as Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1814) identify two types of dynastic succession in Chinese history.[140] The first one was violent replacement, whereby the emerging dynasty conquered and replaced the previous one. The second was abdication, whereby the last monarch of the old dynasty gave up his throne and transferred it to the founder of the new dynasty. The latter type prevailed in medieval China. Dynasties such as the Cao Wei, Western Jin, Southern Dynasties, Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang, all followed the practice of abdication to establish their rules. Specifically, all dynasties in the Southern Dynasties period took certain steps to perform abdication and relied heavily on that practice to support their legitimacy. Therefore, in this section, I study one specific case of abdication in the Southern Dynasties and investigate how an abdication could legitimate a newly established dynasty.

The practice of abdication in China derives from ancient legends about two sage kings, Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, who supposedly selflessly transferred their rule to their most virtuous officials.[141] The legends describe both kings as first appointing their

[140] Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 143.
[141] *Shangshu Zhengyi*, 19-49, 50-84.

most virtuous and prominent officials, Shun and Yu 禹 respectively, as their assistants. In the years that followed, the two kings and others observed the performances of these assistants. Given that the two candidates manifested outstanding talent, the kings successfully convinced the people that they qualified to be kings. The reigning kings then resigned their kingships and transferred their thrones to their qualified successors. As Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, Allan, and Pines note, these legends were invented and circulated in the Warring States period.[142] Some texts of that period argue for the moral superiority of abdication and insist on its practice.[143] Other texts, however, questioned the abdication legends. According to Pines, "some, as Zhuangzi (莊子, d.c. 280 BCE), questioned the morality of abdication heroes and sought to undermine their position as infallible paragons. Others, such as Xunzi (荀子, c. 310 BCE-218 BCE) and especially his disciple, Han Feizi, opposed the doctrine of abdication primarily due to its negative impact on political stability and on the ruler's position."[144] These objections notwithstanding, at the end of the Western Han's reign, the usurper Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE-23 CE) successfully forced the incumbent ruler to abdicate in his favor.[145] Thereafter, Cao Pi 曹丕 (r. 220-226), the founder of the Cao Wei Dynasty (220-266), likewise forced an abdication in 220, which initiated a series of similar examples.[146] The Western Jin Dynasty and all the Southern Dynasties were established by means of forced abdications and they followed a common abdication

[142] Gu Jiegang considers the abdication legend to be a fabrication by Mohism in the Spring and Autumn period. See Gu Jiegang, "Shanrang chuanshuo qiyu mojia kao 禪讓傳說起于墨家考," in *Gushibian* 古史辨, ed. Lü Simian 呂思勉 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1941), 58-62. Sarah Allan provides a detailed study of the structure of the abdication legends. See Allan, *The Heir and the Sage*. Pines describes how thinkers in the pre-Qin period discussed the abdication legends. See Pines, "Disputers of Abdication: Zhanguo Egalitarianism and the Sovereign's Power," *T'oung Pao* 4-5 (2005): 243-300.

[143] One recently unearthed bamboo manuscript, "Tang Yu zhi dao" 唐虞之道, argues that abdication "benefits *tianxia*, not the king himself, and thus becomes the manifestation of supreme *ren* (benevolence)" 利天下而弗利也, 仁之至也. See Li Ling 李 零, *Guodian chujian jiaodu ji* 郭店楚簡校讀記 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2007), 192. Pines conducted an analysis of this bamboo manuscript; see Pines, "Disputers of Abdication," 257-263.

[144] Ibid., 282.

[145] Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 (History of Han Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 99.4065-99. Wang Mang thereafter established the short-lived Xin Dynasty 新朝 (9-23 CE).

[146] *SGZ*, 2.58-62. Cao Pi usurped the throne from Emperor Xian of the Eastern Han 漢獻帝 (r. 189-220). For further studies, see Knechtges, "The Rhetoric of Imperial Abdication," 3-35. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i Transcendent*, 162-169.

procedure.[147] The following section focuses on the actions of Xiao Daocheng, the founder of the Southern Qi, in order to illustrate this common abdication procedure.

When the royal family members of the Liu Song Dynasty became embroiled in continuous strife, Xiao Daocheng, a distinguished general, gradually gained prominence and secretly induced an imperial servant to kill Emperor Houfei 後廢帝 (r. 473-477) in August 477.[148] He then crowned a puppet emperor, Emperor Shun 順帝 (r. 477-479) and manipulated him into implementing four abdication procedures.[149]

(1) The first procedure was to eliminate potential dissenters. On August 9, Xiao Daocheng was given the title of Commandery Duke of Jinling (*jinling jungong* 競陵郡公) and Cavalry General-in-chief (*piaoji dajiangjun* 驃騎大將軍).[150] Two months later, he was appointed as the governor of three significant northern regions of the Liu Song Dynasty.[151] His opponents then rose up to prevent Xiao Daocheng's usurpation. In January 478, the governor of Jingzhou, accompanied by few court dignitaries, fought against Xiao Daocheng. The latter soon suppressed the uprising and executed the dissenters.[152]

(2) The second procedure was to grab political and military power. In March 478, Xiao Daocheng was appointed as Defender-in-chief (*taiwei* 太尉).[153] In April 479, the puppet emperor appointed Xiao Daocheng as Counselor-in-chief (*xiangguo* 相國) and Duke of Qi 齊公. Ten commanderies were given to Xiao Daocheng as fiefs.[154] The puppet emperor also conferred upon Xiao Daocheng the "nine most honored awards" (*jiuxi* 九錫), which are a royal carriage, cloth, a threshold, gate, bow and arrow, axe, three hundred guardsmen, kingly musical instruments, and wine.[155] Xiao Daocheng is said to have "modestly" rejected appointments and awards from his emperor. The puppet emperor insisted and issued a long edict to persuade him.[156] Xiao Daocheng then accepted these appointments and awards.

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[147] Zhao Yi also noted common procedures concerning the abdication. See Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 13.273.
[148] *NQS*, 1.7, 10.
[149] Ibid., 1.10-11.
[150] Ibid., 1.11.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid., 1.11-13.
[153] Ibid., 1.14.
[154] Ibid..
[155] The *jiuxi* was devised by Wang Mang and served as a crucial procedure for all abdication.
[156] *NQS*, 1.14-19.

(3) The third procedure was the direct practice of abdication. On May 8, Xiao Daocheng was promoted to the position of King of Qi 齊王 and given ten more fiefs, effectively making a large proportion of the Liu Song Dynasty his territory.[157] On May 21, Xiao Daocheng was entitled to conduct the whole series of imperial rituals, wearing imperial clothing, and possessing other imperial instruments.[158] Xiao Daocheng then possessed all that was required to be an emperor, except the title.

On May 26, the puppet emperor issued three edicts to effect the abdication. The first informed his people of his decision to abdicate.[159] The second edict appointed Xiao Daocheng as the new emperor.[160] The last was "the imperial seal letter" (*xishu* 璽書), in which the puppet emperor informed Xiao Daocheng of the transfer of the jade seal (*yuxi* 玉璽), the symbol of imperial power in ancient China.[161] These edicts have similar contents. First, the edicts admitted that the Liu Song Dynasty had lost its mandate. Next, the edicts reiterated the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven and argued that only the most virtuous and capable persons would receive it. Thirdly, the edicts cited abdication legends, as well as abdications in history, "proving" that this practice was the rightful method of transferring dynastic power. Finally, the edicts declared the abdication and argued that Xiao Daocheng was the new legitimate recipient of the mandate because of his great merits and virtues.

Xiao Daocheng firmly rejected the abdication until waves of officials came to persuade him to accept. The imperial astronomer sent the last persuasion and pointed out that various auspicious portents had predicted the enthronement of Xiao Daocheng, who then agreed to the abdication and readied himself to ascend the throne.[162]

On May 29, Xiao Daocheng held his inauguration ceremony in the southern countryside. He sacrificed to Heaven and recited his inauguration speech.[163] This speech reiterated and praised the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven and the abdication legend. It then cited the dynastic phase theory and announced that the Water Phase (of the Liu Song) had become faint and the Liu Song Dynasty had lost its

[157] Ibid., 1.19.
[158] Ibid., 1.19.
[159] Ibid., 1.19-20.
[160] Ibid., 1.20-21.
[161] Ibid., 1.21-23.
[162] Ibid., 1.23.
[163] Ibid., 2.31. This speech was written in an antique style, not a contemporary writing style and, in my view, imitates the inauguration speech of the *Book of Documents*.

mandate. Xiao Daocheng then underlined his own merits and virtues, demonstrating that he was the new legitimate emperor. He also made it clear that his enthronement was supported by his officials, his people and various auspicious portents from Heaven. His speech ended with an oath to Heaven that he would not betray his people's trust or disappoint their expectations. After the inauguration, Xiao Daocheng issued his first edict to inform all his subjects of his enthronement. This edict declared a national amnesty and presented "Establishing the Beginning" (*Jianyuan* 建元) as the title of his reign, in order to indicate the beginning of the Southern Qi Dynasty.[164]

(4) The last procedure of abdication was to choose so-called "Two Post-Kings" (*er wang hou* 二王后).[165] Xiao Daocheng appointed the abdicated puppet emperor as King of Ruyin 汝陰王, and the royal descendent of the Eastern Jin Dynasty (the predecessor of the Liu Song Dynasty) as King of Lingling 零陵王, and entitled them to preserve their limited royal rituals and status.[166] These appointments aimed to exhibit the great morality of Xiao Daocheng, as well as the historical link between the Southern Qi and its previous dynasties. With this procedure, the abdication was completed.

The above description of the founding of the Southern Qi corresponds, by and large, to Lance Eccles's findings on the establishment of the Liang.[167] From our overview, it is possible to arrive at a general idea of abdication practices in the Southern Dynasties. The following steps were usually followed: The usurper first obtained military power and established a puppet emperor. Thereafter, he gradually increased his influence and kept a vigilant eye on potential opponents. After defeating any opposition, the usurper grasped all military and political power, and promoted himself to the position of duke and later king. The puppet emperor then "voluntarily" abdicated and "sincerely" persuaded the usurper to ascend the throne. The usurper

[164] Ibid., 2.32.

[165] For more detailed studies about this institution, see Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1988), 74.2029. This institution was allegedly established by these sage rulers in the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors period (around the 20th century BCE).

[166] *NQS*, 2.32. The Liu Song Dynasty also followed this convention and appointed the abdicated emperor of the Eastern Jin and his successors as King of Lingling.

[167] Eccles, "The Seizure of the Mandate," 169-178. This paper offers us six procedures of abdication in establishing the Liang Dynasty, which are quite similar to what was mentioned in this section. The first step is to deprive the last emperor of previous dynasty of the imperial title. The second is to obtain the title of prince, thereby having the access to the throne. The third step is to dispose of all other potential competitors. The fourth step is the feigned reluctance to accept the throne. The fifth step is to ascend the throne. The last one is to bestow posthumous imperial titles on the parents of the new emperor, thus ensuring the full legitimacy of the succession. By taking these six steps, Xiao Yan established his new dynasty, the Liang Dynasty.

"modestly" refused several times before finally "reluctantly" accepting the throne. The aforementioned steps recurred repeatedly in most cases of abdication in medieval Chinese history.[168]

Two factors could account for the popularity of using the abdication method to acquire imperial power. First, from the perspective of what I call the moral criterion of legitimacy in the introduction, which stresses a strong relation between a monarch's moral character and his political legitimacy, the practice of abdication serves to highlight virtuous behavior. The last ruler of the old dynasty "selflessly" abdicated after he admitting to his loss of the mandate, while the founder of the new dynasty, or the usurper, "humbly" ascended the throne because of his superior morality. This practice resulted in a peaceful regime change and directly supported the usurper's authority. This explains why the founders of the Southern Dynasties employed the abdication method, rather than establishing their rule through violent conquest.

Secondly, the abdication fits in with the historical criterion of legitimacy, in which a dynasty's right to rule derives from its historical link with preceding dynasties. The process of abdication ensured that the Southern Dynasties could draw upon the legitimacy of their predecessors. Following this process, the Cao Wei Dynasty succeeded the Han Dynasty, which was seen as a great and legitimate Chinese dynasty. Thereafter, both the Western Jin Dynasty and all Southern Dynasties continued to practice this abdication procedure without interruption, thus securing legitimacy for each consecutive dynasty. This largely accounts for why the Southern Dynasties, even though they failed to take back northern China and were less successful in political and military activities than the Northern Wei, were nonetheless certain of their legitimacy.

However, the abdication method also has two crucial weaknesses. Firstly, its frequent and careless application weakened its credibility. Members of both the Western Jin and the Liu Song dynasties took a few decades to engage in serious preparation to execute their abdications. Other Southern Dynasties (Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen), however, came to view abdication as an easy method, so they took less time to prepare. In fact, these dynasties took less than two years to prepare, eventually causing them lose their power more easily. Secondly, the original abdication legend highlights the selflessness of the sage king and the virtues and

[168] Similar procedures could be seen in the establishment of the Cao Wei Dynasty, the Western Jin, the Southern Dynasties, the Northern Qi, the Northern Zhou, the Sui and Tang Dynasties.

talents of the successors. The abdication of the Southern Dynasties, however, highlighted the incompetence of the active ruler and feigned the modesty of the usurper. If the abdicated emperor was allegedly incompetent and illegitimate, what gave him the right to transfer the Mandate of Heaven to others? The abdication hence gradually failed to demonstrate that the usurpation was a "virtuous" and legitimate dynastic transfer. The above two limitations reduced the legitimate status of the Southern Dynasties. The usurpers in fact fully appreciated this problem and introduced some more persuasive and convincing evidence to legitimate their rule, as discussed in the following sections.

2.2.2 Auspicious Portents

Auspicious portents in ancient China were seen as a visible testimony to political legitimacy.[169] They are again related to the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven. To prove that they qualified to be recipients of the mandate, Chinese rulers not only demonstrated their virtuous behavior and great merits but also referred to auspicious portents. As the Han Dynasty thinker Dong Zhongshu pointed out, Heaven manifested its support of the monarch's rule through various auspicious cosmic phenomena.[170] Auspicious portents are therefore also related to the cosmological criterion of legitimacy outlined in the introduction, in terms of which a cosmological link between Heaven and the secular regime was seen as a foundation of legitimacy. Although various scholars questioned the credibility of auspicious omens in relation to legitimacy throughout Chinese history,[171] Chinese dynasties continued to place great emphasis on recording auspicious portents, especially the Southern Dynasties, which noted down many more auspicious portents than the Northern Wei and most other dynasties.[172] This section focuses on auspicious portents in the Liu Song Dynasty that are recorded in the *Songshu* and investigate how this dynasty cited such portents to enhance its legitimacy.

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[169] Beck also provides a study of auspicious portents in the Han Dynasty. See Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han*, 156-164. The Cao Wei Dynasty also introduced similar portents to support their legitimacy. See Goodman, *Ts' ao P'i Transcendent*, 133-138.

[170] Su Yu 蘇輿, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 100.

[171] Liu Pujiang investigated the Song's scholars' questions about the auspicious omens. See Liu Pujiang, "The End of the Five Virtues Theory: Changes of traditional political culture in China since the Song Dynasty," *Frontiers of History in China* 2 (2007): 514-25.

[172] The Northern Wei also recorded down some similar auspicious portents to support their legitimacy, see *WS*, 112.2927-2967.

It is somewhat difficult to categorize the auspicious portents recorded by the Liu Song Dynasty, given that the *Songshu* does not provide a classification. Fortunately, historians during the Tang Dynasty period (618-907) provided a four-level classification to note the auspicious portents: (1) astronomical and natural phenomena, (2) beasts, (3) birds, and (4) plants.[173] This classification also fits the Liu Song case and is therefore used in the subsequent discussion.

(1) The highest group of auspicious portents consisted of two sub-types: astronomical phenomena and natural phenomena.

Ancient Chinese astronomers believed that a comet passing over the Supreme Palace constellation (*taiwei* 太微) indicated the appearance of a new legitimate emperor or dynasty.[174] Similarly, the conjunction of four stars – Jupiter (*suixing* 歲星), Mars (*yinhuo* 熒惑), Saturn (*tianxing* 填星) and Venus (*taibaixing* 太白星) – in the night sky signified the same thing.[175] The appearance of Venus in the daytime also indicated a dynastic change.[176] In 420, the official astronomer of the Eastern Jin Dynasty reported the appearance of all three kinds of astronomically auspicious portents and succeeded in persuading Liu Yu to ascend the throne.[177]

Auspicious natural phenomena include, for instance, the Yellow River and Ji River 濟河 suddenly clearing, and the appearance of sweet dew (*ganlu* 甘露) on leaves. The Yellow River and the Ji River were two of the four most significant rivers in early ancient China (the other two being the Yangtze River and the Huai River).[178] These two muddy rivers often flooded the North China Plain in summer. Ancient and early Chinese people suffered much from these two hazardous rivers and thus cherished the belief that these rivers would turn clear when a sage and ideal monarch appeared.[179] From the Eastern Han Dynasty, the clearing of the Yellow River became a significant auspicious portent. The Liu Song Dynasty also noted this portent three

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[173] Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and others comp., *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (History of Tang Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 46.1194.
[174] *SS*, 27.785.
[175] Ibid., 25.735-36.
[176] Ibid., 27.784.
[177] Ibid., 27.784-86.
[178] In the early Southern Song Dynasty, the Yellow River ran into the course of the Ji River, making the latter disappear.
[179] For more detailed studies of this prophecy, see Wang Xinguang 王星光 and Peng Yong 彭勇, "Lishi shiqi de huanghe qing xianxiang chutan 歷史時期的黃河清現象初探," *Shixue yuekan* 9 (2002): 29-35.

times during the reign of Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowu.[180] As for the appearance of sweet dew,[181] the *Songshu* explains that it appears only when Heaven is moved by the great virtue of the ruler.[182] Clearly, this portent indicated the existence of an immensely virtuous ruler. It is little wonder then that the Liu Song carefully noted more than 80 appearances of sweet dew.[183]

(2) The second group consisted of the appearance of various animals that we could call legendary, such as a dragon (*long* 龍), or animals that are real but rare, such as a white tiger or a white deer.

The dragon was the totem of Chinese civilization. This legendary animal was seen as the leader of all the animals and thus served as the symbol of the ruler in Chinese history. Noting the appearance of dragons was also a popular means of legitimating the establishment of a dynasty. In practice, around the time in which a dynasty was established, a dragon of a specific color – which happened to be the color corresponding to the dynastic phase of that dynasty – was said to appear. In January 420, the appearance of four black dragons was reported (the Liu Song Dynasty adopted the Water Phase with the corresponding color black).[184] Soon after that, the newborn Liu Song Dynasty announced this portent to legitimate its establishment.[185] The appearance of dragons could also serve to strengthen the emperors' authority and legitimacy even after the founding of the dynasty. The dragons in these cases were not limited to specific colors. The *Songshu* records the appearances of four black and three yellow dragons during the reigns of Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowu of the Liu Song Dynasty.[186]

The appearance of rare animals, which often had abnormal white or red coloring, was more common than the appearance of legendary ones.[187] The white tiger was seen as a benevolent and magical beast. As the *Songshu* explains, the white tiger forsakes its cruel nature and becomes so virtuous that it no longer kills and eats other animals. The *Songshu* continues by saying that only when a virtuous monarch is in

[180] *SS*, 29.872.
[181] Ibid. 28.813-17. The Western and Eastern Han Dynasties in total recorded this portent 13 times and the Western and Eastern Jin Dynasties recorded it 45 times in total.
[182] Ibid., 28.813.
[183] Ibid., 28.817-23.
[184] Ibid., 27.785.
[185] Ibid., 28. 799-800.
[186] Ibid., 28.800.
[187] Most of these animals were white, which indicate albino varieties.

power does the similarly virtuous white tiger appear.[188] In all, the Liu Song Dynasty noted six appearances of white tigers.[189] Some other rare animals were also viewed as auspicious, according to the *Songshu*: the white elephant (two appearances in the Liu Song Dynasty) emerged when the monarch lived a moderate life;[190] the white hare (15 appearances) appeared when the ruler expresses his sincere filial piety to his elders;[191] the white wapiti (24 appearances in the Liu Song Dynasty) emerged when the monarch ensured the wellbeing of his people;[192] the white musk deer (25 appearances) materialized when the monarch justly practiced the law.[193]

(3) The third group of favorable portents is the appearance of auspicious birds, either legendary, such as a phoenix (*fenghuang* 鳳凰), or rare, such as abnormally colored (white and red) birds.

The phoenix played a similar role in ancient Chinese civilization to the dragon. The *Songshu* states that the phoenix can "understand all things, know the merit of Heaven, characterize all forms, comprehend the royal way" 究萬物, 通天祉, 象百狀, 達王道.[194] The appearance of a phoenix, like a dragon, indicated the existence of a sage and ideal monarch, and it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that a phoenix is said to have appeared in 420, the year in which Liu Yu ascended the throne.[195] Two other phoenix appearances were reported, in the reigns of Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowu.[196]

In most cases, the rare but auspicious birds had a close relationship with a rightful ruler. The appearance of auspicious birds indicated that the ruler governed virtuously and rightfully. The white crow (12 appearances in the Liu Song Dynasty) emerged when "the true king solemnly sacrifices [to his ancestors] in the ancestral temple" 王者宗廟肅敬則至.[197] The white sparrow (46 appearances) appeared when "the true king justly grants his official a noble title and salary" 王者爵祿均則至.[198] The green crow (two appearances) similarly appeared when the true king treats his

[188] *SS*, 28.807.
[189] Ibid., 28.808-09.
[190] Ibid., 28.802
[191] Ibid., 29.838-39.
[192] Ibid., 28.803.
[193] Ibid., 28.809.
[194] Ibid., 28.793.
[195] Ibid., 28.795.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid, 29.841-43.
[198] Ibid., 29.843-47.

people mercifully.[199] In some cases, certain kinds of birds were seen as auspicious because they allegedly appeared in the times of ancient sage kings. If they reappeared in later periods, people believed that this indicated that their rulers were as virtuous as the ancient sage kings. The red sparrow supposedly appeared in the reign of King Wen of Zhou 周文王 (11th century BCE) and the Liu Song Dynasty recorded two appearances.[200] The red crow had supposedly carried an ear of millet to King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (11th century BCE) and it reappeared twice in the Liu Song Dynasty.[201] The white turtle dove allegedly appeared in the reign of King Tang of the Shang Dynasty 商湯王 (around 1675-1646 BCE), and it also reappeared twice.[202] Each time the white turtle dove appeared, waves of officials submitted praise-filled papers, as well as long exquisite poems, to express their admiration for the emperor. In these writings it was argued that Heaven was impressed with their emperor's virtue and thus white turtle doves came. In addition to the abovementioned birds, the *Songshu* also records the appearances of white pheasants (nine times) and white magpies (three times), without any explanation of why these birds were considered auspicious

(4) The last group of portents consists of the appearance of various auspicious plants. In my view, two of them, *jiahe* 嘉禾 and *mulianli* 木連理, possessed immense significance.

Jiahe was an auspicious kind of millet, in which each stalk had more than one ear. Traditional China was an agricultural society and the auspicious portents of millet – one of the most important cereals at that time – received the most attention. The *Songshu* asserts that the auspicious millet emerges only when a sage ruler diffuses his great virtue and significantly benefits his people.[203] The *Songshu* recorded this auspicious portent 40 times, principally during the reign of Emperor Wen of the Liu Song Dynasty.[204] Since 445, increasing amounts of auspicious millet had emerged, which greatly delighted the emperor, and he consequently declared a national amnesty.[205] On August the 8th 447, Mei Daonian 梅道念 (5th century), "the Director of Imperial Garden" (*yuanchen* 園丞), reported that auspicious millet appeared in the

[199] Ibid., 28.813.
[200] Ibid., 28.812.
[201] Ibid., 29.839.
[202] Ibid., 29.848.
[203] Ibid., 29.827.
[204] Ibid., 29.828-33.
[205] Ibid., 29.829. The edict for the national amnesty from Emperor Wen of the Liu Song still exists. See Xu Jingzong 許敬宗, *Wenguan cilin* 文館詞林 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 309.

Hulin Garden 華林園.[206] Two confidants of the emperor, Liu Yigong 劉義恭 (413-465) and Shen Yanzhi 沈演之 (397- 449), submitted exquisite prose to the court, which proclaimed that their emperor's great virtue was the cause of the appearance of auspicious millet.[207]

Mulianli describes two (or more) branches from two adjacent trees tangling and uniting into one branch. The *Songshu* argues that this portent appears only when the monarch is capable of uniting the "eight directions" (*bafang* 八方, i.e. the whole world) by his virtue.[208] The Liu Song Dynasty recorded more than 50 appearances of this portent.[209]

The *Songshu* also records other propitious plants, such as the lotus (two lotus blooms on one stalk, 21 appearances) and auspicious melons (one vine yields more than one melon, three appearances).[210]

In short, the manifold omens mentioned in this section served as important sources of legitimacy for the Liu Song Dynasty, as well as other Southern Dynasties. Some portents, such as the appearances of a dragon or sweet dew, directly indicated that the reigning ruler was legitimate. Others, such as the appearance of various white animals and birds, confirmed the ruler's virtue, thereby indirectly supporting his legitimacy. That is why the Liu Song Dynasty carefully recorded the witness, date, and location of these appearances, as the auspicious millet case indicates. Nevertheless, auspicious portents were still insufficient to prove the Southern Dynasties as the legitimate ruler of the central realm. One urgent issue for them was to secure and repair their lost geographical legitimacy, which is the focus of the next section.

2.2.3 Capital City and "Immigrant Commanderies"

According to the doctrine of All Under Heaven, the central realm is the center of the world, as well as the cradle of Chinese civilization. Occupation of the central realm thus served as a significant criterion to judge legitimacy, as mentioned in the

[206] *SS*, 29.829.
[207] Ibid., 29.829-830. Liu Yigong served as "Defender-in-chief" (*taiwei* 太尉) while Shen Yanzhi served as "Capital Commandant" (*zhonglingjun* 中領軍).
[208] Ibid., 29.853.
[209] Ibid., 29.857-60.
[210] Ibid., 29.83-35.

introduction. This eventually became, to some extent, a *sine qua non* for Chinese dynasties.

Being constrained in the southern half of what is now China, an area that in those days was to some extent still considered "barbaric,"[211] the Southern Dynasties failed to meet the geographical criterion of legitimacy. While many of these dynasties launched waves of military campaigns against their powerful northern opponents, all were unsuccessful. Therefore, the Southern Dynasties made use of factors other than the occupation of the central realm to supplement their geographical legitimacy. In this section two major relevant factors are investigated: (1) the new capital Jiankang, and (2) the creation of "immigrant commanderies."

(1) The Eastern Jin and subsequent Southern Dynasties defined themselves as the successors of the Western Jin. Apparently, this idea could be supported by the fact that they inhabited the same capital, namely Luoyang, as the Western Jin. Although Luoyang was primarily occupied by various "barbarian" dynasties after the Western Jin collapsed, many elites of the Eastern Jin still viewed this city as the rightful capital and they planned to transfer their capital city there. In 362, Huan Wen, a powerful general of the Eastern Jin, occupied Luoyang and eagerly suggested that the Eastern Jin transfer its capital to that city.[212] This idea was rejected, however, since one official, Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314-371), stressed that Luoyang was surrounded by a great number of "barbarians" and was in ruins.[213] Something similar happened in 417 when another general, Liu Yu, reoccupied Luoyang and also suggested a transfer of the capital.[214] This proposal also came to nothing because Liu Yu soon returned to Jiankang and devoted all his attention to his planned usurpation. Soon after that, the Northern Wei occupied Luoyang and finally made this city their capital at the end of the fifth century, which meant that the Southern Dynasties forever lost the opportunity to make this city their capital.[215] The above two cases vividly indicate that Luoyang was viewed as the rightful capital city, even by the Southern Dynasties.

In addition to the two above proposals to reoccupy Luoyang, the Eastern Jin and the subsequent Southern Dynasties validated their geographical legitimacy by

[211] As will be described in Section 3.1.1, Wei Shou suggested that some Chinese people in his day even viewed southern China as a "barbarian" area.
[212] *JS*, 98.2572-74.
[213] Ibid., 56.1546-47. Sun Chuo suggested a delayed transfer until the Eastern Jin had totally defeated these nearby northern "barbarians" and restored the central realm. His suggestion was implemented.
[214] *SS*, 46.1292.
[215] *WS*, 31.736.

alluding to an ancient prophecy to demonstrate that their new capital, Jiankang, was a suitable capital city. A series of events that happened in 329 provides some clues.

In 329, the Eastern Jin suppressed a rebellion launched by an ambitious general, Su Jun 蘇峻 (?-328).[216] In the course of this rebellion the capital, Jiankang, was destroyed and officials then discussed founding a new capital in Yuzhang 豫章 (present-day Nanchang 南昌) or Kuaiji 會稽 (present-day Suzhou 蘇州).[217] "The Minister over the Masses" (*situ* 司徒), Wang Dao 王導 (276-339), objected to this idea, however, and insisted on retaining Jiankang as the capital. His most important argument was a saying of the time that Jiankang was "the residence of emperors" (*dili* 帝里).[218] Wang Dao's idea prevailed and Jiankang remained the capital for all later Southern Dynasties. This begs an interesting question: what made Jiankang acceptable as the capital for the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties?

The *Jinshu* 晉書 (History of the Jin Dynasty) offers us some answers. When arguing for the valid status of Emperor Yuan 元帝 (r. 318-323), the first emperor of the Eastern Jin, the *Jinshu* introduced an ancient prophecy concerning Jiankang. The *Jinshu* states that during the Qin Dynasty a prophet observed the geomantic omen of Jinling 金陵 (the original name of Jiankang) and prophesized that "after five hundred years, Jinling will have the 'air' (*qi* 氣) of the Son of Heaven." 五百年後金陵有天子氣.[219] This prophecy directly predicted that a legitimate monarch would appear in Jinling five centuries later. The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty disliked this prophecy and, to invalidate it, changed the name of Jinling to Moling 秣陵 and ordered the digging of the northern hill of Jinling to destroy its geomantic shape.[220] In 229 CE (that is, 450 years after the Qin Dynasty was established), the Sun Wu Dynasty 孫吳 (229–280) was founded. This dynasty chose Moling (which was soon renamed Jianye 建業) as its capital to fulfill that prophecy and thereby support its

[216] *JS*, 100.2628-31.
[217] Ibid., 65.1751.
[218] The official history of the Sun Wu also notes the same saying. See *SGZ*, 53.1246. Wang Dao also mentioned that both Sun Quan 孫權 (182-252) and Liu Bei 劉備 (161-223), the founders of the Sun Wu Dynasty (229-280) and the Shu Han Dynasty (221-263) respectively, agreed with that saying.
[219] *JS*, 6.157. The *Shiji* records another slightly different version, which only says the *qi* of Son of Heaven appeared in Southeast China. The *Shiji* also mentions that the First Emperor disliked this prophecy and avoided coming to that area. Since the founder of the Western Han Dynasty, Liu Bang 劉邦, or Emperor Gaozu of Han (202-195 BCE), was born in Southeast China, people in the Western Han period cited the former prophecy to prove that their ruler was the Son of Heaven. See *Shiji*,8.238.
[220] *JS*, 6.157.

legitimacy.[221] In 317, the Eastern Jin was founded and made the same city its capital (the Western Jin had changed the name Jianye to Jiankang four years earlier).[222] Similarly to the Sun Wu Dynasty, the Eastern Jin also cited that same antique prophecy to support its legitimacy. As the *Jinshu* describes, the Eastern Jin officials argued that their emperor was the truly legitimate one since their dynasty was established just 538 years after the Qin Dynasty was founded, which corresponded more closely – in comparison to the Sun Wu Dynasty – to the prophecy.[223] The abovementioned Wang Dao also referred to that prophecy in his attempt to validate Jiankang as the rightful capital. In other words, although Jiankang had less merit in terms of providing legitimacy than Luoyang, the ancient prophecy gave this city some legitimacy. Sharing a similar view, Lewis argues that Jiankang was "bereft of the classical authority of the northern capitals" and "turned to the marginal arts of geomancy and the reading of *qi*, and drew its sacred power entirely from the surrounding landscape."[224] That is why Jiankang remained the capital for all ensuing Southern Dynasties and why they reiterated that prophecy to "prove" the validity of their rulers, who resided in the "imperial residence" of Jiankang.

(2) The Southern Dynasties also enhanced their geographical legitimacy by establishing massive "immigrant commanderies" (*qiaojun* 僑郡) to represent their symbolic occupation of the whole central realm. Some clues about the function of the immigrant commanderies can be found in the *Weishu*. As its records, Vice Director (*zhongshu shilang* 中書侍郎) Han Xianzong 韓顯宗 (466-499), a confidant of Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei, once told his emperor that:

> Ever since the illegitimate Southern Dynasties [started to] continually succeed one another, they annexed the area north of the Huai River and wanted to arrogate the name of *zhonghua*. [These dynasties] induced our frontier people

[221] *SGZ*, 53.1246. Jianye 建業 literally means "to establish one's work," indicating the establishment of a rightful rule.
[222] In 282, the Western Jin renamed this city Jianye 建鄴. In 313, since Ye 鄴 became a taboo word (the name of the emperor of the time had a "Ye" in it), this city was renamed Jiankang. See *JS*, 15.460. This name was retained throughout the Southern Dynasties period. For a thorough study of the practice of tabooing names in Chinese history, see Piotr Adamek, *A Good Son is Sad If He Hears the Name of His Father: The Tabooing of Names in China as a Way of Implementing Social Values* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2015). The "Chronological Index of Taboo Names of Emperors and Other Famous Persons" in Adamek's work notes that "Ye" was a taboo word in the Eastern Jin period.
[223] *JS*, 6.157.
[224] Lewis, *China Between Empires*, 26.

[to move southwards], and set up commanderies and districts in the style of the central realm in their places [with the same name]. After our glorious winds blew south, [the Southern Dynasties] still kept [these place names] without changing. There are a great number of places [commanderies and districts] that shared the same name.

自南偽相承，竊有淮北，欲擅中華之稱。且以招誘邊民，故僑置中州郡縣。自皇風南被，仍而不改。凡有重名，其數甚眾。[225]

Han Xianzong noted three striking features of the immigrant commanderies. Firstly, they adopted the name of the original commanderies in the North China Plain.[226] This is remarkable because, even though dynasties came and went, a large number of the lower level administrative units in Chinese history usually preserved their geographical boundaries and names. However, in the Period of Disunion, a great deal of similarly named provinces (*zhou* 州), commanderies (*jun* 郡) or districts (*xian* 縣) appeared in the south of China. That is to say, many of the administrative units not only existed in their regular location, the North China Plain, but also had a "replica" in the south. For instance, Wei Commandery 魏郡 was a historical commandery situated in northern China. The Eastern Jin created a new Wei Commandery, which was located close to Jiankang.[227] In fact, more than one-third of all commanderies and districts in the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Liu Song Dynasty had "prototypes" on northern Chinese soil, as present-day scholar Hu Axiang 胡阿祥 points out.[228]

Secondly, the purpose of establishing immigrant commanderies was to borrow geographical legitimacy, or, in Han Xianzong's words, the Southern Dynasties "wanted to arrogate the name of *zhonghua*." Originally, there had been practical reasons for the creation of immigrant commanderies. From the late Western Jin Dynasty, waves of Chinese refugees fled to southern China as "barbarian" troops

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[225] *WS*, 60.1342. *Zhongzhou* 中州 is a synonym for the central realm in Chinese history.

[226] In some cases, the Southern Dynasties added adjectives such as "south" 南 to distinguish the immigrant provinces from their "prototypes." For instance, there had been a Xu Province 徐州 in the central realm for centuries. The Liu Song Dynasty, however, established the immigrant South Xu Province 南徐州 near their capital Jiankang. See Hu Axiang, "Liuchao jiangyu yu zhengqu shulun 六朝疆域與政區述論," *Nanjing ligong daxue xuebao* 南京理工大學學報 16 (2003): 14.

[227] *SS*, 35.1029.

[228] Hu Axiang, "Liuchao jiangyu," 12-14. Similar studies see Jing Youquan 景有泉, "Dongjin Nanbeichao shiqi qiaozhou junxian de shezhi jiqi lishi zuoyong 東晉南朝時期僑州郡縣的設置及其歷史作用," *Dongbei shida xuebao* 東北師大學報 2(1987): 37-42.

wreaked havoc on northern China. In many cases, people from a town or village would gather together to support each other during the long journey to the south, leaving their empty hometowns behind. The Eastern Jin Dynasty described refugees from the north as immigrants (*qiaoren* 僑人) and settled them in corresponding immigrant commanderies (or districts), each named after the immigrants' hometown. The first immigrant district was established in 329.[229] Thereafter, an increasing number emerged.[230] In time, the Southern Dynasties gradually copied most of the commanderies of northern China in the south of China. The Eastern Jin Dynasty had 23 immigrant provinces and 253 immigrant commanderies in 418. In the Liang Dynasty, these figures had increased to 109 and 405 respectively, indicating that many of the later immigrant commanderies did not serve to settle immigrants, since Northern China at that time remained relatively peaceful.[231] The real purpose rested upon the fact that the Southern Dynasties intentionally established immigrant commanderies to create a symbolic central realm – practically occupying southern China's territory and symbolically dominating northern China's territory, thereby demonstrating their geographical legitimacy.

The third feature of immigrant commanderies was that they initially harbored exiles from northern China. It was well known in ancient China, and it is explicitly mentioned in the *Songshu*, that a virtuous and legitimate dynasty would attract people from elsewhere, whereas tyrannical dynasties would force their subjects to flee.[232] The coming of northern people would hence indicate that the Southern Dynasties were more virtuous and legitimate than the Northern Wei.

From the late Eastern Jin Dynasty, people with immigrant status gradually turned into ordinary citizens, and immigrant commanderies turned into normal towns. However, the names of these commanderies were largely preserved as a kind of placebo for the Southern dynasties as part of their pursuit of geographical legitimacy.

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[229] Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin nanbeichao shi*, 324.
[230] *SS*, 11.205. The *Songshu* claims that both the government and immigrants hoped to return to their homelands. One of the purposes of establishing the immigrant commanderies, it states, was to express the Southern Dynasties' aspiration to reoccupy the central realm.
[231] Hu Axiang, "Liuchao Jiangyu," 14.
[232] *SS*, 95.2338-39.

2.2.4 Diplomacy

Like the Northern Wei, the Southern Dynasties also attempted to advance their supreme status in the diplomatic field. In this section, four periods in which the Southern Dynasties applied distinct methods to demonstrate their supreme status are distinguished.

(1) The Eastern Jin received their supreme status directly from the Western Jin. On the eve of the Western Jin's collapse, the last ruler, Emperor Min 晉湣帝 (r. 313-316), issued an edict granting the throne to his second cousin, Sima Rui.[233] As the historical records show, most of the remaining power holders of the Western Jin Dynasty declared their support for this edict.[234] Therefore, Sima Rui ascended the throne in Jiankang and became the first emperor of the Eastern Jin. As the successor of the Western Jin, the Eastern Jin maintained its supreme status in the diplomatic field, which can be demonstrated from two perspectives. Firstly, most of the northern "barbarian" dynasties viewed the Eastern Jin Dynasty as superior and rightful rulers. Many of them, such as the Former Yan and the Former Liang, served as nominal vassals of the Eastern Jin. Even the mighty states that occupied northern China hesitated to challenge the Eastern Jin's supreme status. For example, when Fu Jian 苻堅 (338-385), the ruler of the Former Qin (350-394), was in the process of planning to conquer the Eastern Jin Dynasty (after he had annexed northern China), his brother Fu Rong 苻融 (?-383), who disagreed with this campaign, according to the *Jinshu* supposedly said:

> (Our) state and families consist of barbarian clans and the legitimacy does not belong to [our] people. Jiangdong [i.e. the Eastern Jin], although it is hanging by a thread [i.e. became weak], is still blessed by Heaven and thus cannot be conquered.
> 且國家，戎族也，正朔會不歸人。江東雖不絕如綖，然天之所相，終不可滅。[235]

[233] *JS*, 6.143-44.
[234] Ibid., 6.145-48.
[235] Ibid., 114.2935.

Secondly, the Eastern Jin firmly protected its supreme status and adamantly refused to treat any other state as equal. For example, the Later Zhao (319-352), which temporarily ruled most areas of northern China, once sent an envoy to the Eastern Jin expecting to formulate an equal diplomatic relationship. To protect its supreme status, the Eastern Jin burned the diplomatic gifts and expelled the envoy.[236]

(2) In the second stage, the Liu Song Dynasty encountered a powerful challenger to its supreme status, the Northern Wei. This non-Chinese dynasty was more ambitious than the previous "barbarian" states. In pursuit of supreme status, the Northern Wei directly competed with the Southern Dynasties in the diplomatic field and increased its advantage by means of its military superiority. The following diplomatic dispute, in my view, signals the beginning of this competition.

Qiuchi 仇池 (385-442) was a small mountainous northwestern non-Chinese state and it had served as a wavering vassal state to both the Northern Wei and the Liu Song Dynasty.[237] To win over this vassal, the Northern Wei applied various diplomatic means, such as granting the Qiuchi king an official title, greatly rewarding their tribute, arranging intermarriages with the Qiuchi ruling house, and asking the Qiuchi state to send its princes as hostages.[238] This wavering vassal gradually turned to the Northern Wei and launched a substantial military assault on the Liu Song Dynasty in 433.[239] To win over this state, the *Songshu* records that the Liu Song Dynasty "generously" forgave Qiuchi's invasion after it withdrew its troops and submitted a "sincere" apology.[240] However, when the Qiuchi boldly launched another invasion in 442, the Liu Song reacted with a rapid and powerful counterattack and soon occupied all Qiuchi land.[241] The Liu Song Dynasty clearly acknowledged that Qiuchi was also the vassal of the Northern Wei, but it still reacted with a well-prepared counterattack,

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[236] Ibid., 7.177. Another reason for that fierce reaction might be the fact that Shi Le significantly contributed to the collapse of the Western Jin. David Honey shows that Shi Le cited prophetic sayings to enhance his legitimacy. See David B. Honey, "Lineage as Legitimation in the Rise of Liu Yüan and Shih Le," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110.4 (1990): 616-621.

[237] For a further study of the Qiuchi state, see Xu Rihui 徐日輝, *Qinzhou shidi* 秦州史地 (Xi'an: Shanxi renmin meishu chubanshe, 1994), 177-241. Hu Xiaopeng 胡小鵬, "Qiuchi dizu yangshi zhengquan qiantan 仇池氐族楊氏政權淺探," *Xibei daxue xuebao* 西北師大學報 3(1987): 88-92.

[238] *WS*, 101.2230.

[239] *SS*, 98.2406-07. The Northern Wei possibly offered some secret support. The *Weishu* notes that the Qiuchi had sent the spoils of seventy hundred imprisoned families to the Northern Wei. It then records that the Northern Wei soon promoted the ruler of Qiuchi to King of Nanqin 南秦王. See *WS*, 4.83, 101.2230.

[240] *SS*, 98.2407.

[241] Ibid., 98.2408-09.

which clearly served as a warning to the Northern Wei for luring the Liu Song's vassal.

The Northern Wei quickly intervened and sent a fierce diplomatic protest to the Liu Song Dynasty.[242] In this protest it was pointed out that Qiuchi was a loyal vassal of the Northern Wei, and criticized the Liu Song Dynasty's impudent invasion of its vassal. It said the Liu Song Dynasty's actions had already challenged the Northern Wei's supreme status and ended with a commitment to revive the Qiuchi.[243] The Liu Song Dynasty promptly sent a strongly worded reply.[244] It stressed that Qiuchi had long served as a vassal of the Eastern Jin as well as the Liu Song Dynasty, not of the Northern Wei.[245] It furthermore argued the Northern Wei had also illegally invaded vassal states of the Liu Song, such as the Northern Yan and Northern Liang, without any advance negotiations.

This diplomatic dispute was subsequently resolved on the battlefield. Being ill-prepared for a massive military confrontation, both sides restricted operations to within the Qiuchi area. The militarily superior Northern Wei defeated the Liu Song army and occupied the northern half of the Qiuchi's land. Thereafter, both sides established a series of puppet states to rule this area.

This diplomatic dispute was a result of various declarations of supreme status, with both the Northern Wei and the Liu Song Dynasty striving to gain the support of each other's vassals so as to manifest their supreme status and further support their legitimacy. This led them to turn a diplomatic dispute into a military confrontation.

The competition for legitimacy intensified thereafter and the Liu Song Dynasty employed various methods to win over vassals of the Northern Wei.

Take the Gaogouli as an example. Similarly to the Northern Wei, the Liu Song offered every Gaogouli ruler an official title. It is remarkable that the Liu Song and all later Southern Dynasties adopted a policy that later scholars would refer to as "empty appointments" (*xufeng* 虛封), which entitled these vassals to rule some territory of the Northern Wei.[246] For example, Pingzhou 平州 and Yingzhou 營州, two frontier provinces of the Northern Wei, were situated close to the Gaogouli area. In 430 and

[242] Ibid., 95.2334-36.
[243] Ibid., 95.2336.
[244] Ibid..
[245] Ibid. 95.2337.
[246] Further studies see Hu Axiang, "Weijin nanbeichao zhi yaoling yu xufeng shulun 魏晉南北朝之遙領與虛封述論," *Nanjing shida xuebao* 南京師大學報 5(2011): 47-53.

433, the Liu Song appointed the ruler of Gaogouli to administer these two provinces.[247] From the Liu Song's perspective, the appointment was valid since this dynasty had declared itself the legitimate ruler of the central realm. However, the Northern Wei firmly dominated Pingzhou and Yingzhou, effectively rendering the appointments made by the Liu Song invalid. Although the Gaogouli could not fight the Northern Wei for these lands as the Liu Song Dynasty possibly expected, it was still satisfied with that kind of appointment, as the historical records indicate. Therefore, the Gaogouli, allegedly the most loyal vassal of the Northern Wei, maintained diplomatic interaction with the Liu Song Dynasty and other Southern Dynasties.[248]

The competition for supreme status reached new heights in the mid-fifth century CE, when both the Northern Wei and the Liu Song Dynasty launched waves of attacks against each other in the hope of unifying the central realm. In the early period, the Liu Song successfully formed an anti-Northern Wei alliance, which included the Rouran, the Northern Yan, and some vassals of the Northern Wei, Gaogouli, Tuyuhun, and the Later Liang.[249] However, the Northern Wei destroyed this alliance (it defeated the Rouran and the Tuyuhun, suppressed the Gaogouli and occupied all other members' lands). The Liu Song Dynasty also suffered a catastrophic defeat in 450. Thereafter, the two sides declared peace, which lasted for nearly half a century.[250]

(3) The peace between the Liu Song and Northern Wei marks the beginning of the third stage. The basic consensus for this peaceful stage rested upon the mutual affirmation of each other's supreme status to some extent and a tacit admission of the equal status of the other.[251] A relevant diplomatic dispute in the early Southern Qi Dynasty vividly demonstrates this situation.

In 489, the Northern Wei invited Southern Qi envoys to attend an official banquet. The Northern Wei officials seated the envoys from both the Southern Qi and

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[247] Ibid., 97.2392.
[248] Jiang Weigong 姜維公, "Nanchao yu Beichao dui Gaogouli zhengce de bijiao yanjiu 南朝與北朝對高句麗政策的比較研究," *Zhongguo bianjiang shidi Yanjiu* 中國邊疆史地研究 4(2014):14-22.
[249] *SS*, 95.2337.
[250] *WS*, 4.105.
[251] Similar situations also occurred in later periods. Whether the Northern Song and Liao Dynasty, or the Southern Song and Jin dynasties, or the PRC and ROC of the last half-century, all declared their legitimate right to rule the central realm (or China) but meanwhile tacitly admitted that the other dynasty had some kind of partial legitimacy. David Curtis Wright notes that a similar situation existed between the Northern Song and the Liao Dynasty. See David Curtis Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity in Eleventh-Century China: Sung's Foreign Relations with Khitan Liao* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7-38.

the Gaogouli at the first table, with the former seated at the front. However, the envoys from the Southern Qi strongly protested this arrangement. As they pointed out:

> We carried the mission from our great state and came to visit your state. The only counterpart [of our state] is your Wei state. All these barbarians have no right to sit close to us. What is more, the small Mo state from an eastern barbarous land [i.e. the Gaogouli state] has subjected itself to our state. How dare its envoys sit next to us [at the same table]?!
> 我等銜命上華，來造卿國。所為抗敵，在乎一魏。自餘外夷，理不得望我鑣塵。況東夷小貊，臣屬朝廷，今日乃敢與我躡踵！[252]

The Southern Qi envoys continued that they always offered the first and sole position to the Northern Wei envoys, indicating that no other state was comparable to the Northern Wei except the Southern Qi itself.[253] There are no further records of this diplomatic dispute, but the above episode suggests that the Southern Qi admitted that the Northern Wei were their equals and no longer an inferior "barbarian" state.

(4) The peaceful age ended at the end of the fifth century. This time, the Northern Wei took the initiative. Emperor Xiaowen attacked the Southern Qi soon after he transferred the capital to Luoyang. The Southern Qi and ensuing Liang Dynasty withstood these attacks over the next few decades. There was little diplomatic contact between the north and south. Only in the Eastern Wei period did the north and south cease the war and engage in diplomatic relations. However, the north soon recovered and restarted its unification campaign. Finally, in 589, the last southern dynasty was conquered by the Sui Dynasty, which unified China and ended the Period of Division.

In short, this section comprised a description of how the Southern Dynasties attempted to maintain their supreme status in the diplomatic field in different periods. In the first period, the Eastern Jin's supreme status was accepted by most contemporaneous states. In the second period, the Liu Song Dynasty had to compete with the Northern Wei for the supreme status. The Liu Song Dynasty not only employed means such as offering official titles and the "empty appointments" to win over its vassals, but also formed an anti-Northern Wei alliance to fight against its

[252] *NQS*, 39.1009.
[253] Ibid., 39.1010.

northern peer. In the third period, the Liu Song and the Southern Qi strove to maintain a partial supreme status since they acknowledged the equal rank of the Northern Wei. Finally, from the end of the fifth century, the Southern Qi and the Liang were forced to engage in war with the Northern Wei until their northern peer collapsed in 535.

2.3 Conclusion

The "contest for legitimacy" between the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties was rather complex, as this chapter demonstrates. It seems that the two regimes approached the issue of their legitimacy in differing ways. The Northern Wei gradually established its legitimacy from scratch, while the Southern Dynasties strove to preserve their decaying legitimacy. Thus, which side was indeed the qualified legitimate ruler of the central realm?

The Northern Wei had few means of supporting its legitimacy claims in its early period. To legitimize its establishment, this dynasty tried to highlight its close historical connection with the Cao Wei. Both the new dynastic name of Wei and the dynastic phase of Earth, which relate to the historical criterion of legitimacy, were used to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Cao Wei. In its middle period especially during the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, the Northern Wei enhanced their legitimacy in various ways. This dynasty adopted the new dynastic phase of Metal, transferred its capital to Luoyang, and appealed to the virtue of filial piety and adopted Chinese-style state ceremonies. With reference to historical, geographical and ethnic legitimacy criteria, the above practices demonstrated the Northern Wei's historical link to the Western Jin, symbolized this dynasty's occupation of the central realm, and highlighted this dynasty's adoption of Chinese culture, which apparently improved the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Besides, the Northern Wei also showed itself to be the legitimate ruler of the central realm by establishing its supreme status in the diplomatic field. Nevertheless, this dynasty failed to attain full legitimacy. Until it collapsed in the mid-sixth century, this dynasty could not unite the central realm or defeat the challenger to its legitimate status.

The Eastern Jin and subsequent Southern Dynasties inherited several means of substantiating their legitimacy from their predecessors. However, their relatively weak power continued to undermine their legitimate status. To preserve their legitimacy, these dynasties used abdication methods with complex procedures to establish their

rulership, which not only met the moral criterion of legitimacy by highlighting the great virtue of the founders of these dynasties, but also the historical criterion by expressing these dynasties' close historical links with their predecessors. The Southern Dynasties also noted diverse auspicious portents to signify their blessing from Heaven, which was in accordance with the cosmological criterion. Moreover, the Southern Dynasties cited the prophecy related to their capital, Jiankang, and established immigrant commanderies to manifest their possession of the central realm, in order to enhance their legitimacy in relation to the geographical criterion of legitimacy. Finally, the Southern Dynasties also competed with the Northern Wei for supreme status in the diplomatic field. However, the Southern Dynasties also failed to attain full legitimacy. These dynasties could not halt the rise of the Northern Wei and were finally conquered by the successor of the Northern Wei, the Sui.

Apparently, both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties failed to become *primus inter pares* and attain full legitimacy. There therefore seems to be no answer to the question of which side was truly legitimate. However, it seems that most dynasties after the Period of Disunion officially accepted the Northern Wei's legitimacy. As indicated above, the selection of an official dynastic phase could tell us how a later dynasty determined its legitimate predecessor. The permutations of official dynastic phases in Chinese history proceeded in the following two sequences:

Chart 2. Two Permutations of Official Dynastic Phases in Chinese History

1	Qin (Water) →Han (Fire)[254] → Cao Wei (Earth) → Jin (Metal) → Liu Song (Water) → Southern Qi and Liang (Wood) → Chen (Fire)[255]
2	Northern Wei (Water) → Northern Zhou (Wood) → Sui (Fire) → Tang (Earth)[256] → Five Dynasties (Mental—Water—Wood) → Song (Fire)[257]

[254] The Han Dynasty adopted three dynastic phases: the Water Phase in the reign of Emperor Gaozu, the Earth Phase in the reign of Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 141-87 BCE) and the Fire Phase from Emperor Guangwu 漢光武帝 (r. 25-57).

[255] No dynasties claimed succession in the subsequent dynastic phase from the Chen Dynasty.

[256] The Tang Dynasty had adopted three dynastic phases: Earth in the reign of Emperor Gaozu 唐高祖 (r. 618-626), Fire in the reign of Empress Wu 武皇后 (r. 690-705), and Earth from the Emperor Zhongzong 唐中宗 (r. 684, 705-710).

[257] Dynasties after the Song seldom assigned themselves an official dynastic phase. See Liu Pujiang, "The End of the Five Virtues," 513-54.

The first sequence begins with the Qin and ends with the Chen Dynasty, the last southern dynasty. The Northern Wei initiated the second sequence, which was succeeded by virtually all later Chinese dynasties. In other words, most Chinese dynasties after the Northern Wei derived their dynastic phases from it, which indicates their support for the Northern Wei, rather than the Southern Dynasties.

Interestingly, scholars throughout Chinese history have diverse views on this "contest for legitimacy." In the following three chapters, scholars' relevant ideas will be closely examined and the complexity of traditional Chinese opinions about legitimacy will be unveiled.

Chapter 3. Early Views on the Legitimacy of the Northern Wei

By investigating the specific legitimation practices undertaken by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, the previous chapter provided a preliminary study of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. This chapter and the next two chapters comprise a study of influential and representative views of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute held by scholars at various times in Chinese history. Specifically, the focus of this chapter is on five early scholars who were active either during the Period of Disunion or in the centuries that followed it. Two sets of historians in this period, Wei Shou and his southern peers Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian, debated about whether the Northern Wei or the Southern Dynasties were the legitimate rulers of the central realm. The question that will be addressed is: Why did they share similar views on legitimacy but yet come to different conclusions? The Tang scholars Li Yanshou and Huangfu Shi relied on factors such as the occupation of the central realm, the duration of reign, and the adoption of Confucianism to discuss the legitimacy dispute. Why does the former one support the legitimate status of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, while the latter accepts only the Southern Dynasties' legitimacy? These questions are answered in this chapter by investigating pre-Song scholars' discussions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.

3.1 Views in the Period of Disunion

The Northern Wei was one of the first non-Chinese dynasties in China's history that maintained a relatively successful and lengthy reign, and challenged its Chinese peers' legitimate status in a direct and fundamental way. In terms of the ethnic criterion of legitimacy, a legitimate ruler of the central realm is defined by his adherence to Chinese culture or virtues. Therefore, in discussing the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, historians in the Period of Disunion, Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Xiao Zixian, draw a connection between "being Chinese" and being the legitimate ruler of the central realm, although they come to drastically different conclusions. Wei Shou rejected the rightful status of the Southern Dynasties by denouncing them as the

"Insular Barbarians" (*daoyi* 島夷). Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian criticized the Northern Wei's legitimacy by describing that dynasty as "Plaited Barbarians" (*suolu* 索虜). These historians also stressed that their own dynasties were Chinese. In the following section the relevant views on these two groups of historians are examined.

3.1.1 Wei Shou

Wei Shou was an eminent scholar who was active from the late Northern Wei period to the end of the Northern Qi Dynasty. Due to his precocity, the Northern Wei court bestowed on Wei Shou the title of "Erudite of the National University" (*taixue boshi* 太學博士) in his youth.[1] He also maintained a high official position in the Northern Qi Dynasty.[2] Wei Shou's views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei can be ascertained from the *Weishu*, a book compiled under his editorship. In 551, he was appointed by the Northern Qi court to compose this official history of the Northern Wei.[3] In the autumn of 555, Wei Shou submitted the 130 volumes of the *Weishu* to the court.[4] This history was accepted as a success and is now included in the Twenty-Four Histories, the corpus of official histories of imperial China.

One major purpose of compiling the *Weishu* was to highlight the Northern Wei's legitimacy, a fact accounted for by the following two factors. On the one hand, as editor-in-chief of the *Weishu*, Wei Shou manifestly supported the Northern Wei's legitimacy since he had long served that dynasty. On the other hand, the compilation of the *Weishu* had significant meaning for the Northern Qi. In the traditional Chinese context, the compilation of an official history by a successive dynasty had two major aims, namely to present a historical summary of the preceding dynasty, and, more

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[1] Li Baiyao 李百藥 comp., *Beiqi Shu* 北齊書 (History of the Northern Qi Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972), 37.483.

[2] Ibid., 37.483-87. Wei Shou played a significant role in establishing the Northern Qi. In 550, the last emperor of the Eastern Wei abdicated his throne and transferred it to Gao Yang 高洋 (550-559), the first emperor of the Northern Qi. Wei Shou had strongly suggested to Gao Yang that he should usurp the throne, and he actually drafted all the abdication edicts.

[3] Ibid., 37.487. Wei Shou personally possessed an immense amount of historical material. The Northern Wei had left a considerable number of official annals. Some historians prior to Wei Shou also compiled various histories of the Northern Wei. See Holmgren, *Annals of Tai*, 14-18. Meanwhile, Wei Shou received significant support from the Northern Qi court. Emperor Wenxuan 文宣 (550-559) promised absolute support, as well as no intervention in Wei Shou's work. He also assigned some assistants to aid Wei Shou. Concerning the historical resources of the *Weishu*, see James R. Ware, "Notes on the History of the Weishu," Journal of the American Oriental Society 52.01(1932): 35-45.

[4] Li Baiyao, *Beiqi Shu*, 37.488. The *Weishu* encountered a great deal of criticism after it was released. Further studies see Zhou Yiliang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, 236-272. Ware, "Notes on the History," 35-45.

significantly, to indicate that the subsequent dynasty had inherited legitimacy from its predecessor. Richard Davis explains that "for an upstart regime anxious about its own legitimacy, the writing of history presented an ideal opportunity to illustrate the former dynasty's loss of popular support, to justify its overthrow, and to demonstrate a genuine transfer of heaven's mandate."[5] The Northern Qi was at that time competing with the Western Wei, which was a continuation of the Northern Wei in exile, to be seen as the rightful successors of the Northern Wei.[6] The compilation of the *Weishu* formed an important part of this task, and it therefore not only highlights the legitimacy of the Northern Wei but also describes the Northern Wei as the predecessor of the Northern Qi.

Rather than focusing on how the *Weishu* supported the Northern Qi's legitimacy, however, the emphasis in this section is on how this history supported the Northern Wei's legitimacy. In general, the author of the *Weishu* accused the Southern Dynasties of being "barbarians" while highlighting that the Northern Wei was a Chinese dynasty.

(1) Upon initial consideration, it would seem strange to call the Southern Dynasties "barbarian," because the ethnically Chinese elite of the Western Jin, which had been exiled from northern China, dominated these dynasties. So how did Wei Shou arrive at the idea that the Southern Dynasties were "barbarian"?

In the *Weishu*, Wei Shou uses the term "Insular Barbarians" to refer to the Southern Dynasties and their rulers.[7] This name possibly derives from the *Book of Documents*, in which the term is used to denote ancient ethnically non-Chinese "barbarians" who resided on islands in the southeastern Chinese seas.[8] Wei Shou provides three reasons for which this label would suit the Southern Dynasties and their rulers. Firstly, he points out that many people in his day viewed southern China as an area that was far from the central realm and too primeval for humankind to live in.[9] Southern China in Wei Shou's eyes belonged to the "barbarian" lands. Secondly,

[5] Richard Davis, "Historiography as Politics," 42.
[6] The Northern Wei was finally divided into two courts, the Eastern Wei and the Western Wei. The former was succeeded by the Northern Qi while the latter was replaced by the Northern Zhou. It is remarkable that the *Weishu* records the emperors of both the Northern Wei and the Eastern Wei, but no Western Wei rulers, which suggests that the historiographical writers viewed the Eastern Wei and its successor, the Northern Qi, but not the Western Wei or the Northern Zhou, as the legitimate successors of the Northern Wei.
[7] *WS*, 96.2092.
[8] *Shangshu zhengyi*, 146.
[9] *WS*, 96.2092.

Wei Shou mentions a popular view that was held in northern China, namely that the local people in southern China were uncivilized beasts and were consequently derided as "raccoon dogs" (*hezi* 貉子).[10] Finally, Wei Shou records various cases in his *Weishu* to demonstrate that the southern rulers were brutal and licentious, even though many cases were based, in part, on demonstrably exaggerated or forged political rumors, as various pre-modern studies indicated.[11] An immoral ruler definitely fails to be a legitimate holder of the Mandate of Heaven, according to the moral criterion of legitimacy. Wei Shou further argues that point, stressing that the southern rulers were "barbarous" in a political sense due to their immoral behavior.[12] In short, the Southern Dynasties were located in "barbarian" regions, consisted of "barbarian" people, and were dominated by "barbaric" rulers. Since southern China was also where ancient "Insular Barbarians" were thought to have lived, Wei Shou thus reintroduces this age-old term to denote the Southern Dynasties.

Furthermore, Wei Shou denigrates the Southern Dynasties by equating them with other non-Chinese states. To achieve that goal, he mixes the records of the Southern Dynasties with those of other non-Chinese states. For instance, he includes the Eastern Jin and another contemporaneous state, the Chenghan state 成漢國 (303-349, a non-Chinese state that occupied the Sichuan 四川 area in that era), in one volume. Similarly, the Northern Yan 北燕 (407-439) (i.e. the Later Yan in exile, a Xianbei state) and the Liu Song Dynasty are included in the same volume. As discussed in Chapter 2, an abdication ensured a continuous lineage in which the Western Jin transferred its rule to the Southern Dynasties. Wei Shou demolishes that lineage in the *Weishu* and does not mention the succession relation between the Western Jin and the Southern Dynasties. He points out that both the non-Chinese states and the Southern Dynasties are illegitimate since they had "barbarous" rulers and governed "barbarian" territories.[13]

(2) Given that the Northern Wei rulers were Tuoba people, and hence "barbarian" in the view of early Chinese people, their non-Chinese ethnicity posed a challenge to their image as Chinese rulers, and hence to their political authority. The

[10] Ibid., 96.2093. This kind of idea could have prevailed in the Northern Dynasties period. Yang Xuanzhi, for instance, expresses a similar view. See Yang Xuanzhi, *Luoyang qielan ji*, 113.
[11] Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 240-241. Liu Zhiji 劉知幾, *Shitong* 史通 (Chongqing: *Chongqing renmin chubanshe*, 1990), 287.
[12] *WS*, 95.2042.
[13] Ibid., 95.2042, 97.2153.

ethnic criterion of legitimacy could invalidate the Tuoba ruler's qualification to be the legitimate ruler of the central realm. To solve this problem, the writer of the *Weishu* introduces various methods to prove that the Northern Wei and its ruler are "Chinese," thereby supporting this dynasty's legitimacy.

In the *Weishu* the Northern Wei is depicted as a common Chinese style dynasty. According to its description, the Northern Wei adopted Chinese politics and culture; their rulers were virtuous and capable; their officials were diligent and talented; their people were prosperous and civilized; their dynasty ruled over most areas of All Under Heaven; and all other states humbly paid their tribute to this powerful central realm.[14] As Holcombe points out, "The *Weishu* for the most part avoids representing the Northern Wei too openly as a 'non-Chinese' state, and it often provides Chinese-style names for Xianbei people, rather than using their older polysyllabic Xianbei language names. With this adroit sleight of hand, the non-Chinese Xianbei were made to appear essentially Chinese – on paper."[15] This image is somewhat idealized and contradicts historical reality. As described in Section 2.1.4, the Northern Wei had preserved many Tuoba political and cultural practices before Emperor Xiaowen introduced Chinese cultural conventions, and the next section offers similar evidence from the Southern Dynasties' historians. Therefore, the impression of a common Chinese style Northern Wei could be a creation of the *Weishu*.

The *Weishu* depicts the Tuoba rulers as the direct offspring of the Yellow Emperor, the legendary ruler celebrated as the founder of Chinese civilization and Chinese people. This history begins with a genealogical lineage of the Tuoba rulers. The first recorded one is Chang Yi, the youngest son of the Yellow Emperor. Omitting a few generations, the next Tuoba ruler is Shijun 始均, who is described as an official under two legendary sage kings, Yao (trad. 2356-2255 BCE) and Shun (trad. ca. 2294-2184 BCE), and was appointed "Ancestor of Agriculture" (*tianzu* 田祖) for his great accomplishments.[16] After the third recorded Tuoba ancestor, Mao 毛, the *Weishu* provides a continuous lineage of Tuoba rulers until the Northern Wei. Apparently, this lineage not only demonstrates that the Tuoba rulers are the direct

[14] Compared with the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu*, the *Weishu* has more biographies of those who were famous for their Confucian academic achievements (volume 84), achievements in literature (volume 85), or various Confucian virtues (volume 86, 87 and 92). This fact could also indicate Wei Shou's efforts to describe the Northern Wei as a civilized dynasty.
[15] Holcombe, "The Xianbei in Chinese History," 3.
[16] *WS*, 1.1.

descendants of the Yellow Emperor, but also shows a close relation between the ancient Tuoba rulers and the three legendary "founding fathers" of Chinese civilization: the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun. It thus promotes the idea that the Tuoba rulers could be viewed as authentic Chinese. To underscore this lineage, the *Weishu* also mentions that the Tuoba emperors had sacrificed to the Yellow Emperor, as well as to Yao and Shun, several times.[17] Although the aforementioned lineage, as many current scholars such as Holmgren and Yao Dali 姚大力 point out, was mostly invented by Chinese consultants in the early Northern Wei period, Wei Shou accepts it and uses this lineage to depict the Northern Wei's Tuoba rulers as Chinese.[18]

In addition to the genealogical lineage, the *Weishu* also indicates that the Northern Wei rulers' adoption of Chinese culture supports their political legitimacy.[19] It is interesting to see that the *Weishu* labels the Tufa 禿髮 people, a branch of the Tuoba people who moved to the northwest of China during Tuoba Liwei's period, as "barbarians."[20] Although sharing the same (invented) genealogy as the Tuoba, the Tufa people also descended from the Yellow Emperor, but became "barbarians" since they lived in "barbarian" lands and failed to adopt Chinese culture.[21] For similar reasons, Wei Shou also describes many other Tuoba relatives, such as the Murong and Tiefu peoples, as "barbarians."[22]

In short, Wei Shou insists on the Northern Wei's legitimate status and provides a "restored" image in the *Weishu*. In that image, the Southern Dynasties are "barbarian" because they occupy "barbarous" territory and both their population and their rulers are "barbaric" people, whereas the Tuoba Wei are "Chinese" because their rulers fully adopted Chinese culture and are the direct descendant of Chinese ancient ancestors.

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[17] Ibid., 108. 2733-40. Kang Le, *Cong xijiao*, 179.
[18] Current scholars have discovered that this lineage was mostly invented by Chinese consultants in the early Northern Wei period, not by Wei Shou. See Holmgren, *Annals of Tai*, 12-18, 102. Yao Dali 姚大力, "Lun Tuoba xianbeibu de zaoqi lishi 論拓跋鮮卑部的早期歷史," *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報 2 (2005): 19-27.
[19] The *Weishu* makes a general evaluation of each Northern Wei emperor. Virtually all of these evaluations highlight the Tuoba rulers' virtuous personalities and cultural achievements. See *WS*, 4.109, 5.123, 6.132, 7.187, 8.215. Scholars have also discovered that Wei Shou intentionally omitted examples of the vicious or brutal behavior of these Northern Wei rulers. See Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 13.263-64.
[20] *WS*, 99.2200.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 95.2041-43. For the familial connections between the Tuoba people, the Murong people and the Tiefu people, see Klein, "The Contributions of Xianbei States," 68-70.

3.1.2 Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian

Shen Yue was born to an eminent family of the Liu Song Dynasty.[23] Because of his great talent, Shen Yue once served as "Chancellor [literally: Libationer] of the National University" (*guozi jijiu* 國子祭酒) in the Southern Qi Dynasty.[24] Xiao Zixian was the grandson of Xiao Daocheng, the founder of the Southern Qi Dynasty.[25] When he was 13, the Liang Dynasty replaced the Southern Qi. However, Xiao Zixian maintained his nobility and served in various high-ranking positions.[26]

In 487 and 514 respectively, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian were appointed to compile the official histories of the Liu Song and the Southern Qi Dynasty.[27] Both historians discuss the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties in their histories, the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu*, which were eventually included in the Twenty-Four Histories.[28]

Similarly to the *Weishu*, one crucial purpose of the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* was to support the legitimacy of the dynasties under whose regimes these works were compiled. The Southern Qi and the Liang intended to prove themselves as rightful dynasties, since both had established their rules through usurpation, and were both fiercely competing with the Northern Wei for legitimacy. These dynasties therefore expected the compilation of their predecessors' histories to highlight their inherited legitimacy. Moreover, both Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian had long served their dynasties and would thus willingly predispose their histories to directly support their dynasties' legitimacy. In discussing the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, both Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian highlight the "barbarian" nature of the Northern Wei on one hand and the Chinese ethnicity of the Southern Dynasties' rulers on the other.

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[23] *LS*, 13.232-33.

[24] Ibid., 13.233. Like Wei Shou, Shen Yue provided considerable support in the establishment of the Liang Dynasty. The *Liangshu* records that Shen Yue had strenuously attempted to persuade Xiao Yan, the founder of the Liang Dynasty, to usurp the throne. Shen Yue also drafted most of the edicts related to the abdication that established the Liang Dynasty. That is why he maintained his prominent position until he died in 513.

[25] *LS*, 35.511.

[26] Ibid., 35.511-12. Xiao Zixian served as the "Chancellor of National University" in 506 and as the "Minister of Personnel" (*libu shangshu* 吏部尚書) in 507.

[27] *SS*. 100.2466. *LS*, 35.511.

[28] Similarly to the compilation of the *Weishu*, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian greatly benefited from surviving historical material in their period, such as the official historical annals of the previous dynasties and histories written by previous historians. See *SS*, 100.2467-68, *LS*, 13.234, 35.512, Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 9.188.

(1) To undermine the Northern Wei's legitimacy, the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* both depict that dynasty as "barbaric," with the aim of exposing the Tuoba monarchs as primitives and the Northern Wei as a non-Chinese state.[29]

It is notable that the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* both attribute a rare origin to the Tuoba, because both argue that the Tuoba are a hybrid mixture of Xiongnu and Chinese. They argue that Li Ling 李陵 (?-74 BCE), a Western Han general, surrendered to the Xiongnu state and became the first ancestor of the Tuoba people.[30] As described in the *Nan Qi shu*, the name "Tuoba" was derived from Li Ling's Xiongnu wife – the Xiongnu people received their names from their mothers, not their fathers, as in Chinese culture.[31]

This hybrid origin, whether true or not, seemingly improves the Tuoba people's ethnic status since it demonstrates their semi-Chinese origin.[32] However, the truth is that the aim of asserting this hybrid origin was rather to define them as "barbarian." By introducing this Tuoba origin, Shen Yue suggests that the Tuoba were the direct successors of the Xiongnu, the most powerful and famous "barbarians" prior to the Period of Disunion.[33] In its final judgment of the Northern Wei, the *Songshu* equates the Northern Wei with the Xiongnu and argues that the Xiongnu remain the most serious adversaries of all Chinese dynasties to date.[34] Xiao Zixian presents similar ideas in his *Nan Qi shu*.[35] The *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* clearly emphasize the perpetual confrontation between "barbarian" clans, such as the Xiongnu and the

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[29] The practice of identifying opposing rulers as "barbarian" so as to undermine their legitimacy is older than the Northern Wei case. During the Warring States period, for instance, the Kingdom of Qin 秦國 (770-221 BCE) was located on the western edge of the central realm, but was still firmly part of China's culture. Once the Qin's influence began to grow, other kingdoms started referring to it as a kingdom that "has customs in common with the Rong 戎 and Di 狄 [alien tribesmen]; a state with the heart of a tiger or wolf." See Pines, "Reassessing Textual Sources for Pre-Qin Imperial History," in *Sinologi Mira k iubileiu Stanislava Kuczery: Sobranie Trudov*, eds. Sergej Dmitriev and Maxim Korolkov (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniia RAN, 2013), 257.

[30] *SS*, 95.2321. *NQS*, 57.983.

[31] *NQS*, 57.993.

[32] Present-day scholars do not support this hybrid origin. It does not fit with the historical records, which indicate that most of Li Ling's children were executed soon after he died. In the ensuing period, there is no record of Li Ling's steppe descendants. In addition, no other similar descriptions of this hybrid origin have been found among extant early medieval Chinese writings beyond the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu*. The Tuoba people themselves also did not mention Li Ling at all. Therefore, many scholars suspect this version to have been invented by Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian. See Wen Haiqing 溫海清, "Beiwei, Beizhou, Tang shiqi zhuizu liling xianxiang shulun 北魏、北周、唐時期追祖李陵現象述論," *Minzu yanjiu* 民族研究 3 (2007): 73-80.

[33] *SS*, 95.2358.

[34] Ibid., 95.2358-59. Zhao Yi asserts that Shen Yue forged many records to prove that the Tuoba rulers were "barbarous." See Zhao Yi, *Nianershi zhaji*, 9.185-186.

[35] *NQS*, 57.999-1001.

Tuoba, on the one side, and Chinese dynasties on the other. The hybrid Tuoba origin, therefore, serves to define the Tuoba Wei as "barbarians" in contrast to the Chinese dynasties, which include the Southern Dynasties that they themselves served.

For similar reasons, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian both refer to the Tuoba and the Northern Wei as "Plaited Barbarians" (*suolu* 索虜).[36] The word *suo* 索 means "plait," although the reality is that the Tuoba had abandoned the plaited hairstyles many years previously.[37] The word *lu* 虜 originally meant "to capture" and was often used to denote barbarians in the Chinese context.[38] Note that, in most cases, the pre-modern Chinese called other peoples by their autonyms.[39] So why did Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian go against that custom and introduce the neologism "plaited barbarians"? The main reason perhaps, is that this new name could trivialize the Tuoba as "barbarians," as in the case of attributing a hybrid Tuoba origin to them.

The distinct plaited hairstyle was a major component of the stereotype of a "barbarian" in traditional Chinese contexts.[40] In the *Analects*, Confucius claims that, had it not been for the great efforts of Guan Zhong 管仲 (725-645 BCE) in defeating barbarians, "we might well be wearing our hair down and folding our robes to the left." 吾其被髮左衽矣 (*Analects*, 14:17).[41] This oft-quoted sentence renders a non-Chinese hairstyle (unbound or plaited) and an equally non-Chinese clothing style two crucial components of the "barbarian" stereotype. The unusual hairstyle hence served as a collective indicator of all "barbarians," and not of a specific non-Chinese tribe. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the *Nan Qi shu* also cites Confucius' saying to describe the Tuoba people as having unbound hairstyles, even though the Tuoba people actually had plaited hairstyles. Apparently, both the unbound and plaited hairstyles represented the same stereotypical image of "barbarians" in Xiao Zixian's

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[36] . For the study of the Tuoba people, see Li Zhimin 李志敏. "Suotou wei jibian qie kunfashi shuo bianwu 索頭為既辮且髡髮式說辨誤," *Minzu yanjiu* 4 (2005): 50-56.

[37] *SS*, 95.2321. *NQS*, 57.983.

[38] *Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字 explains that *lu* 虜 is "to capture." See Duan Yucai 段玉裁, *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 316. During the Western Jin Dynasty, *lu* had already been frequently used to refer to "barbarains." For instance, the Western Jin scholar Jiang Tong 江統 (?-310) labeled "barbarians" *lu* in his famous "Xirong lun" 遷戎論 (Discourse of Migrating Barbarians). See *JS*, 56. 1529-1535.

[39] As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Western Jin described the Tuoba as the "Xianbei tribe of Liwei 鮮卑力微." It is highly possible that the early Tuoba people used this name.

[40] Abramson provides a detailed study of how the different hairstyles and clothes of non-Chinese people were used to formulate the "barbarians" stereotype in the Tang Dynasty. See Marc Samuel Abramson, "Deep Eyes and High Noses: Constructing Ethnicity in Tang China (618--907)" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2001), 245-291.

[41] D. C. Lau, *The Analects,* 196.

view. Therefore, both Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian mention one component of the "barbarian" stereotype, the plait, to describe the Tuoba people and the Northern Wei, which aims to belittle the Tuoba as belonging to the larger pool of "barbarians."[42]

The *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* also depict the Northern Wei as non-Chinese and strange, which is quite opposite to the Northern Wei's image in the *Weishu* as a "normal" Chinese state. For example, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian mention the Northern Wei rulers by replacing their Tuoba names with Chinese words. They name Emperor Yuan (Tuoba Si 拓跋嗣) "Mumo" 木末 and Emperor Taiwu (Tuoba Tao 拓跋燾) "Foli" 佛狸.[43] Similarly, the *Nan Qi shu* specifically note many official Tuoba titles used by the Northern Wei. As it notes, Northern Wei noblemen were called *yangzhen* 羊真 (the normal term was *guiren* 貴人 in Chinese), ministers were called *siqindihe* 俟勤地何 (normal term: *shangshu* 尚書), and regional governors were called *modi* 莫堤 (normal term: *cishi* 刺史).[44] To Chinese ears, these Tuoba titles were meaningless and must have sounded bizarre.[45]

All the aforementioned descriptions convey a clear image of the "barbarian" Northern Wei. In this image, the Tuoba people are the successors of the Xiongnu people; their state, the Northern Wei, is an alien one with a barbarous culture and strange names and titles. This image apparently indicates the Northern Wei's failure to meet the ethnic criterion of legitimacy.

(2) In their histories Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian also underline that the Southern Dynasties' rulers are authentic Chinese.

In order to express the Chinese-ness of the rulers of the Southern Dynasties even more, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian placed considerable emphasis on the noble blood of these rulers.

The noble blood of a ruler could greatly enhance his claim legitimacy. Compared with the *Weishu*, which traces the lineage of the Tuoba rulers to the Yellow Emperor, neither the *Songshu* nor *Nan Qi shu* introduces any legendary ancestors to

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[42] *NQS*, 57.983

[43] Ibid. Many present-day scholars study the Northern Wei by investigating the Tuoba language names recorded in the *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu*. See Yao Weiyuan 姚薇元, "Songshu suoluzhuan Nan Qi shu weiluzhuan beiren xingming kaozheng 宋書索虜傳南齊書魏虜傳北人姓名考證," *Qinghua daxue xuebao* 清華大學學報 8.2(1933): 1-39. Luo Xin goes further and by saying that he suspects that Foli, the Tuoba name of Tuoba Gui, means "wolf" in the Xianbei language. See Luo Xin, "Beiwei Taiwudi de Xianbei benming 北魏太武帝的鮮卑本名," *Minzu yanjiu* 4(2006): 71-74.

[44] *NQS*, 57.985.

[45] Ibid., 57.985, 991.

establish their rulers' authority. Rather, the two above histories, especially the *Songshu*, depict the noblemen of the Han Dynasty as the ancestors of the Liu Song rulers. The *Songshu* provides a detailed lineage to demonstrate that Liu Yu, the founder of the Liu Song Dynasty, is a direct descendant of the royal Liu house of the Han Dynasty.[46] The Han Dynasty was viewed as one of the most glorious dynasties in Chinese history because its rulers were supposedly powerful and their dynasty lasted for four centuries. This lineage thus directly supports the Liu Song Dynasty's legitimacy claim. The *Songshu* further indicates that although the Han Dynasty had collapsed, the people still cherished a deep yearning for it.[47] Since Liu Yu is a descendant of the Han Dynasty rulers, the Liu Song Dynasty is the renascent Han Dynasty, according to Shen Yue, who strives to impute the legitimacy of the Han Dynasty to the Liu Song Dynasty, which would mean it is endorsed by the historical criterion of legitimacy.

For a similar reason, tracing its links to the Han Dynasty also provides the Southern Qi with legitimacy. The *Nan Qi shu* argues that the founder of the Southern Qi, Xiao Daocheng, was a descendant of Xiao He 蕭何 (257-193 BCE), a distinguished prime minister under the Han Dynasty.[48] These two lineages of southern rulers thus suggest that they are the direct descendants of this nobleman of the great Han Dynasty.[49]

Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian also provide a detailed description of the abdication procedures that generated the Liu Song Dynasty and the Southern Qi dynasties.[50] The abdications, with reference to the historical criterion of legitimacy, display the transfer of legitimacy between dynasties that shared historical links. The *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu* thus suggest that the Southern Dynasties inherited the legitimacy of previous Chinese dynasties, such as the Western Jin, the Cao Wei and the Han Dynasty.

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[46] *SS*, 1.1.
[47] Ibid. 3. 60.
[48] *NQS*, 1.1.
[49] Wei Shou questions the authenticity of the royal family lineages of the Liu Song and the Southern Qi dynasties. He accuses Liu Yu of changing his surname from Xiang 項 to Liu 劉 in order to pretend to have a close relation with the Han royal house. Wei Shou also argues that Xiao Daocheng, rather than being a descendent of Xiao He, is of the Chu people 楚人, a clan of southern "barbarians" in Wei Shou's eyes. See *WS*, 97.2129, 98.2161. Chen Yinque suggests that the *Chu* people were viewed as a clan of a lower civilizational level than Chinese people. See Chen Yinque, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao*, 160-180.
[50] *SS*, 3.61. *NQS*, 2.39.

In short, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian formulate two images in their histories. Their descriptions of the Northern Wei, such as their claims about its Xiongnu origin, the label of "plaited barbarians," and various other factors, reinforce the image of a "barbarian" Northern Wei. By contrast, their depictions of the Southern Dynasties, such as their noble lineages and abdications, present the Southern Dynasties as epitomes of Chinese-ness. These two images lead to an obvious answer to the debate about the Northern Wei's legitimacy: from a southern point of view, the Northern Wei Dynasty is as illegitimate as any other "barbarian" power, whereas the Southern Dynasties are legitimate, as previous Chinese dynasties were.

3.2 Views in the Tang Dynasty

Rather than focusing mainly on ethnic factors when discussing the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, as historians in the Period of Disunion did, two Tang's scholars, Li Yanshou and Huangfu Shi, provide us some new perspectives on legitimacy. To highlight the Tang Dynasty's legitimacy, Li Yanshou accepts the legitimate status of both the Northern Wei and the Southern dynasties. To investigate the origin of the Tang Dynasty's legitimacy, Huangfu Shi insists on the legitimate status of the Southern Dynasties by stressing their adherence to Confucian principles. In this section we shall examine how the above two scholars proved their ideas and why they arrived at contradictory conclusions.

3.2.1 Li Yanshou

Li Yanshou was an outstanding historian of the early Tang Dynasty.[51] However, there is no record of the date of his birth or death. All we know is that he held various posts at the imperial court during the reign of Emperor Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626-649).[52] From 643 onwards, Li Yanshou spent sixteen years writing his two histories, the *Beishi* 北史 (History of the Northern Dynasties) and *Nanshi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties), which were submitted to the Tang court in 659 and ultimately

[51] Li Yanshou also participated in the compilation of various official histories, such as the *Suishu* 隋書 (History of the Sui Dynasty) and the *Jinshu*. See Liu Xu 劉昫 and others comp. *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Old History of the Tang Dynasty) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 73.2600.

[52] Li Yanshou once served as the "Seals Secretary in the Chancellery" (*fuxilang* 符璽郎) and the "Assistant Magistrate of Censorate" (*yushitai zhubu* 御史台主簿). Ibid., 73.2600-01.

included in the Twenty-Four Histories.[53] It is in these two histories that Li Yanshou discusses the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. Li Yanshou's relevant ideas can be divided into three parts. He suggests that (1) both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties are legitimate, (2) albeit that the former is somewhat more legitimate than the latter, (3) and both sides left legitimacy resources to the Tang Dynasty.

(1) In the postscript to the *Beishi*, Li Yanshou mentions that his father, Li Dashi 李大師 (570–628), claimed that it was ridiculous for historians in the Period of Disunion to define the Northern Dynasties and the Southern Dynasties as "Insular Barbarians" and "Plaited Barbarians."[54] Li Yanshou agrees with his father's view and asserts that both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties were legitimate Chinese dynasties.[55] The ethnic factor obviously is no longer significant in Li Yanshou's discussion of legitimacy.

Li Yanshou offers various standards by which to judge legitimacy in both the *Beishi* and *Nanshi*. His standards are revealed by his discussion of the "illegitimate" (*jianwei* 僭偽, which literally means "usurped" and "false') states. Li Yanshou defines all the so-called Sixteen Kingdoms as illegitimate since they failed to possess the Mandate of Heaven and did not have the correct dynastic phases. Moreover, these dynasties controlled merely a small part of the central realm, and lasted for short periods.[56] Therefore, it is clear that for him a legitimate dynasty is one that possessed the Mandate of Heaven, dominated a large part of China, and survived for a long period.[57] Li Yanshou points out that because the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties matched his standards of legitimacy, both were legitimate.[58]

Based on his views of legitimacy, Li Yanshou provides two successions of legitimate dynasties during the Period of Disunion. In the *Beishi* he describes the

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[53] Li Yanshou 李延壽, *Beishi* 北史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 100.3343-54.
[54] Li Yanshou, *Beishi*, 100.3343. Li Dashi died soon after he started writing his history, which portrays both sides as legitimate. His son, Li Yanshou, continued in his father's footsteps and finished that task.
[55] Ibid., 1.1-2. Li Yanshou, *Nanshi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 1.1. Li Yanshou accepts descriptions by the dynasties themselves, in which they argue that their rulers have pure Chinese origins. In fact, Li Yanshou virtually copies relevant descriptions from the *Weishu*, *Songshu* and *Nan Qi shu*, with few changes.
[56] Ibid., 93.3062-63, 93.3062-85, 100.3343. It should be stated that Li Yanshou does not label the Sixteen Kingdoms as "barbarians" although most of them were ruled by non-Chinese people. Li Yanshou points out that these kingdoms share a similarity with Chinese dynasties since they were all situated inside the central realm and strove for the Mandate of Heaven.
[57] Ibid., 93.3062-63.
[58] Ibid.

northern succession, which includes the Northern Wei and its various successors, including the Northern Zhou, Northern Qi, and Sui dynasties.[59] The *Nanshi* depicts the southern succession and includes four Southern Dynasties: the Liu Song Dynasty and its three sequential successors.[60] In both successions, the originators (the Northern Wei and the Liu Song Dynasty respectively) transferred their legitimacy, as well as the means to demonstrate this, to their successors by abdication.[61]

Chart 3. The Succession of Legitimate Dynasties in the *Beishi* and the *Nanshi*

The *Beishi*	The Northern Wei→ Northern Qi → Northern Zhou → Sui
The *Nanshi*	The Liu Song → Southern Qi → Liang → Chen

(2) Li Yanshou uses two subtle means to demonstrate his favor of the Northern Wei and its successors. The first is to record northern reign titles in the *Nanshi*. Chinese historians traditionally recorded dates according to the reign title of rulers. For example, they would record that in the ninth year of the Kaihuang 開皇 reign period (581-600) of Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty 隋文帝 (r. 581-604), the Sui conquered the Chen Dynasty (591). However, when the central realm was ruled by more than one dynasty at the same time, each dynasty put forward the titles of their own reigns to demonstrate their legitimate status, rendering the dates refusing. Later historians usually referred to earlier eras by the reign titles of the dynasties they considered legitimate. Since Li Yanshou insists that both the northern and southern dynasties are legitimate, he adopts the reign titles of their rulers in the *Beishi* and the *Nanshi* separately. Remarkably, when a northern ruler adopted a new reign title, Li Yanshou records that title in both the *Beishi* and the *Nanshi*, but he does not do the

[59] Ibid., volume 1-12.
[60] Li Yanshou, *Nanshi*, volume 1-10.
[61] Following Li Yanshou's concept of two successions, today's scholars of Chinese history use the term "Southern and Northern Dynasties" (*nanbeichao* 南北朝) to denote the China of the fourth to sixth centuries. This period began with the establishment of the Liu Song Dynasty in 420 and ended in 589 when the Chen Dynasty was united with the Sui Dynasty. Those ruling powers of northern China, the Northern Wei and its various successors, the Northern Qi, the Northern Zhou and Sui, are called the Northern Dynasties. The ruling powers of southern China, the Liu Song, the Southern Qi, the Liang and the Chen Dynasties are known as the Southern Dynasties.

same when southern rulers changed their reign titles.[62] In other words, in the *Beishi* he records only the reign titles of the Northern Dynasties while in the *Nanshi* he records the reign titles of both the Southern and Northern Dynasties. Li Yanshou thereby shows a slight preference for the Northern Dynasties' legitimate status.

The second method is the use of various synonyms to record historical events. For example, *beng* 崩, which literally means the collapse of a mountain, was often used to denote the demise of emperors in the traditional Chinese context.[63] The inferior word referring to the death of a person was *cu* 殂.[64] As with the different recordings of reign titles, Li Yanshou records the deaths of the northern rulers as *beng* in both the *Beishi* and *Nanshi*, but he records the deaths of the southern rulers as *beng* in the *Nanshi* and as *cu* in the *Beishi*.[65] Similarly, Li Yanshou uses the words *tao* 討 or *fa* 伐, which refer to a righteous military campaign, to denote military campaigns launched by the Northern Dynasties against the Southern Dynasties. However, similar attacks by the south are referred to as *qin* 侵 and *lüe* 略, which mean "invasion."[66] In sum, Li Yanshou views both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties as legitimate, but when making a comparison between the two, he clearly favors the north.

(3) To some extent, it was difficult for the Tang Dynasty to figure out its predecessor. On the one hand, the Northern Wei offered the Tang direct support for its legitimacy since the last emperor of the Sui Dynasty had transferred his throne to Li Yuan 李淵 (566-635), the founder of the Tang Dynasty.[67] However, the Northern Wei could have been an insufficient forerunner of the Tang Dynasty since it was a non-Chinese ruled dynasty that did not have a direct relationship with any other previous dynasty. The Tang Dynasty could thus have been seen as the successor of a non-Chinese dynasty without any historical link to the great Chinese dynasties prior to its period. On the other hand, the Southern Dynasties possessed what the Tang Dynasty desired, an inherited rulership dating back to all previous great Chinese dynasties.

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[62] He Dezhang, "Nanbei shi zhi zhengtong guan 南北史之正統觀," *Shixueshi yanjiu* 4 (2002):76-78. Similar view see Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛, *Shiqishi shangque* 十七史商榷 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2005), 55.515.
[63] *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, ed. Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 5.159.
[64] Ibid., 288.
[65] He Dezhang, "Nanbei Shi," 77.
[66] Wang Mingsheng, *Shiqishi shangque*, 515.
[67] *Jiu Tangshu*, 1.5-6.

Moreover, they had firmly preserved Chinese culture and dominated southern China, which was also dominated by the Tang Dynasty. However, the Southern Dynasties were weaker than their northern peers and previous Chinese dynasties, and the Tang had few historical links to these dynasties.

Li Yanshou's conception provided a possible solution to the aforementioned dilemma.[68] First, he argued that both the northern and southern dynasties were far from being "barbarian" or "illegitimate." Next, Li Yanshou's notion of two successions of legitimate dynasties indicated that the Tang Dynasty inherited legitimacy from both sets of dynasties. The northern succession provided the Tang Dynasty with the inherited throne of and dominance over northern China, while the southern succession provided it with Chinese culture, a direct historical link with previous great Chinese dynasties, and supremacy over southern China. In other words, the Tang Dynasty was a superior dynasty compared to the preceding northern and southern dynasties. To support that idea, Li Yanshou even included the Sui Dynasty in the northern succession, even though this dynasty actually conquered the southern Chen Dynasty and dominated the entire central realm. In other words, Li Yanshou suggested that rather than being the successor of the Sui Dynasty, the Tang Dynasty was a fully-fledged legitimate Chinese dynasty by being the recipient of the legitimacy of all dynasties in the Northern and Southern Dynasties period.

In short, rather than maintaining a dichotomy between "barbarian" and "Chinese," Li Yanshou discusses legitimacy by referring to factors such as the possession of the Mandate of Heaven, the occupation of the central realm, and a long period of rule. He accepts the legitimate status of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, although favoring the former one. Li Yanshou's views ultimately serve to highlight the Tang Dynasty as the successor of both the Northern and Southern Dynasties.

3.2.2 Huangfu Shi

Huangfu Shi was born in 777. He became a "Presented Scholar" (*jinshi* 進士) in 806 and once served as "Vice director of Ministry of Works" (*gongbu langzhong* 工部郎中). Historical records show that he was a disciple of Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824), the

[68] Liu Pujiang, "Nanbeichao de yichan," 127-152. Notably, in the early Tang Dynasty, the court ordered historians to compile six authorized histories of its various previous dynasties. This massive compilation could indicate this dynasty's hope of inheriting the legitimacy of its various predecessors.

most famous Confucian of the Tang Dynasty.[69] Among his surviving works, a short essay named "Dong-Jin Yuan-Wei zhengrun lun" 東晉元魏正閏論 (Discourse about the Legitimacy and Illegitimacy of the Eastern Jin and the Yuan [i.e. Northern] Wei Dynasty) is often mentioned by later scholars when discussing the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.[70] The focus of this essay is a specific issue: whether the Eastern Jin or the Northern Wei is legitimate. Huangfu Shi argues that the former is legitimate while the latter is not.

Huangfu Shi first distinguishes four ways to establish a dynasty: (1) by virtuous abdication (e.g. the legendary sage kings); (2) by taking rightful opportunity (e.g. the Shang and Zhou Dynasty); (3) by violent military power (e.g. the Qin Dynasty); (4) by righteous replacement (e.g. the Han Dynasty). These four ways, Huangfu Shi stresses, ensure that the succession of legitimate dynasties progresses sequentially and uninterruptedly throughout Chinese history. He then points out that the Northern Wei failed to establish its power through any of these four means. Huangfu Shi then points out that rather than the Northern Wei, the Eastern Jin is the heir of the succession of legitimate dynasties, since that dynasty could be shown to be the continuation of the Western Jin. The Western Jin belongs to the legitimate line of succession because it inherited the throne through the Cao Wei monarch's abdication.[71]

To further elucidate his ideas, Huangfu Shi mentions two potential refutations of his conclusion. The first one concerns the definition of the central realm. One could argue that the Northern Wei was legitimate since it occupied the central realm.[72] Huangfu Shi replies with a new view on the central realm.

> The central realms are what they are because of ritual and righteousness; the barbarians are what they are because they lack of ritual and righteousness. How could (their distinctions) be tied to the land?[73]
> 所以爲中國者，以禮義也；所謂夷狄者，無禮義也。豈繫於地哉？

[69] Ouyang Xiu, *Xin Tangshu Xin*, 176.5267.
[70] Huangfu Shi's essay is included in Rao's book. See Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 86. Yang Shaoyun does a detailed study on Huangfu's essay, see Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 149-154.
[71] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 86.
[72] Ibid.
[73] This translation is from Yang's version. See Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 151.

The central realm has no fixed territory. Rather, any place where people cherish "ritual" and "righteousness," two crucial components of Confucianism, can be seen as the central realm.[74] "Barbarian area" refers to a place where people forsake ritual and righteousness. Huangfu Shi stresses that, given that the Eastern Jin in his view firmly preserved Confucian codes, southern China, which was controlled by this dynasty, should be seen as the central realm.[75] By contrast, in his view the Northern Wei had brutally ruled its people and failed to follow Confucian principles. Although this dynasty occupied the Chinese heartland, the North China Plain, its territory could not be viewed as the central realm.[76] Although Emperor Xiaowen had launched various reforms to adopt Chinese cultural conventions, Huangfu Shi argues that these attempts came too late and ultimately failed.

The second refutation focuses on the succession of legitimate dynasties. Opponents could argue that the Northern Wei was followed by the Northern Zhou, which in turn was followed by the Sui, and further by the Tang.[77] This suggests that the Tang Dynasty inherited its legitimacy from the Northern Wei. Therefore, to deny the Northern Wei's legitimacy could in turn place the legitimacy of the Tang Dynasty in danger. Huangfu Shi replies with a new succession of legitimate dynasties, arguing that the legitimate throne was transferred from the Eastern Jin to the Liang Dynasty through the Liu Song and the Southern Qi Dynasty. Thereafter, the Northern Zhou held that throne from 555 by conquering the Liang Dynasty.[78] The Sui Dynasty received its legitimate rule from the Northern Zhou and transferred it to the Tang Dynasty. Huangfu Shi stresses that his succession ensures that the Tang Dynasty inherited its legitimacy, which is ultimately from the Eastern Jin, and hence from all the great Chinese dynasties prior to the Eastern Jin.[79]

Chart 4. Huangfu Shi's Version of the Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

Ways of Establishment	Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

[74] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 86.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Huangfu Shi also points out that while Emperor Xiaowen had embraced Chinese cultural conventions, his dynasty soon collapsed, causing the Northern Wei's territory to ultimately fail to become the central realm. Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid. As many scholars note, Huangfu Shi actually made a serious mistake here. The Liang Dynasty was conquered by the Western Wei Dynasty, not the Northern Zhou.
[79] Ibid.

Abdication	Yao→ Shun→ Xia Dynasty
Rightful Opportunity	Xia→ Shang→ Zhou
Military Power	Zhou→ Qin
Righteous Replacement	Qin→ Han
Abdication	Han→ Cao Wei→ Western Jin→ Eastern Jin→ Liu Song → Southern Qi→ Liang
Righteous Replacement	Liang→ Northern Zhou
Abdication	Northern Zhou→ Sui→ Tang

As with previous scholars, Huangfu Shi uses the criterion of adherence to Confucian culture to support his view of legitimacy. On the one hand, he defines the central realm, the supposed territory of the legitimate dynasty in the traditional Chinese context, not geographically but culturally. This idea could have originated with his tutor, Han Yu, who considered Confucian moral principles the essence of Chinese and "represented Chinese acts of immorality as tantamount to barbarization."[80] Although Han Yu did not directly discuss the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, Huangfu Shi apparently subscribes to his mentor's idea and applies faithfulness to Confucian culture as a crucial factor in defining the central realm and legitimacy. On the other hand, he indicates that the presence or absence of Confucian culture distinguishes legitimate and illegitimate rule. For instance, Huangfu Shi asserts that the brutal rule and absence of Confucian principles meant the Northern Wei failed to be legitimate.[81] His version of the legitimate dynasties excludes the Chen Dynasty but includes the Northern Zhou. The reasons for that could be that the Chen Dynasty was reportedly far weaker and more fatuous than previous Southern Dynasties, while the Northern Zhou served as the predecessor of the Tang Dynasty and this dynasty's rulers were famous for their adoption Confucian culture.[82]

In conclusion, positing adherence to Confucian culture as the crucial factor of legitimacy, Huangfu Shi argues that the Eastern Jin, rather than the Northern Wei, is

[80] Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," xii.
[81] Huangfu Shi actually does not mention the link between the Northern Wei's illegitimate status and this dynasty's non-Chinese rulers, although he agrees with Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian and accuses the Tuoba people of being the successors of the Xiongnu people.
[82] The Northern Zhou had actually launched a Buddhist and Daoist persecution in 574, but firmly supported the Confucianism throughout their reign.

legitimate. His version of the succession of legitimate dynasties means that the Tang Dynasty should derive its legitimate status from the Eastern Jin, not the Northern Wei.

3.3 Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was on early discussions of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. During the Period of Disunion, Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Xiao Zixian shared a similar view on legitimacy – legitimate rule is defined as a Chinese-ruled state that inherits Chinese culture and occupies the central realm. However, due to their differing political allegiances, these scholars had distinct answers to the question of the Northern Wei's legitimacy. The northern historian Wei Shou portrayed the Southern Dynasties as "insular barbarians" due to their "barbarous" territory and rulers. He described the Northern Wei as "Chinese" due to the Tuoba rulers' adoption of Chinese culture and their Chinese lineage. The southern historians Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian stressed that the Northern Wei were "plaited barbarians" due to their rulers' Xiongnu origin and that dynasty's non-Chinese culture. They described the Southern Dynasties as Chinese by stressing their rulers' noble blood. Apparently, the ethnic criterion of legitimacy was more favored during the Period of Disunion.

During the Tang period, scholars' views on legitimacy were more diverse. Li Yanshou suggested that the Tang Dynasty inherited its legitimacy from both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, since they had both acquired equal legitimate status by occupying the central realm and surviving for a long time. Huangfu Shi argued that the Tang Dynasty received its legitimacy from the Eastern Jin and its successors rather than the Northern Wei due to their adoption of Confucian principles. Apparently, the ethnic criterion for legitimacy was no longer popular. Rather, criteria such as the geographical and moral ones were appealed to in relevant discussions. Both Li Yanshou and Huangfu Shi defined a legitimate dynasty by its possession of the central realm. The latter historian further argued that adherence to the Confucian moral principles of "ritual" and "righteousness" also made the central realm a legitimating rule.

Chapter 4. Wang Tong's Views on the Legitimacy of the Northern Wei

Wang Tong was a thinker of the Sui Dynasty whose views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei were frequently mentioned by later scholars, especially those in the Song Dynasty. This is why I discuss his thoughts in this chapter, after having discussed the views of Tang Dynasty scholars in the previous chapter.[1] As Warner points out, Wang Tong is a controversial scholar, and a great number of literati throughout history have questioned the authenticity of the writings ascribed to him.[2] Because of his significance and the fierce controversy that surrounds him, this chapter focuses on two topics related to Wang Tong: (1) his life and texts; (2) his ideas regarding the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. An attempt will be made to answer the questions of why and how Wang Tong supported the Northern Wei's political legitimacy and what made his views popular in later periods.

4.1 Wang Tong's Life and Texts

Wang Tong was a rather mysterious person, because not many records of his life can be found in historiographical writings.[3] According to recent studies, he was born to an old family in about 584.[4] Wang Tong was reportedly highly intelligent in his youth. In 601, at the age of eighteen, he acquired the degree of "Cultivated Talent" (*xiucai* 秀

[1] For further discussion on Wang Tong's influence in the Song Dynasty, see Section 5.1.1. Since the late Song Dynasty, however, scholars have not placed much emphasis on Wang Tong's views for various reasons. See Guo Tian 郭畑, "Songru duiyu Wang Tong xujing de butong pingjia jiqi yuanyin 宋儒對於王通續經的不同評價及其原因," *Henan shifan daxue xuebao* 河南師範大學學報 38.04 (2011): 230-234.

[2] Warner, *Transmitting Authority: Wang Tong (ca. 584–617) and the Zhongshuo in Medieval China's Manuscript Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1-3.

[3] The following description of Wang Tong depends mainly on three related studies. The first is "Wenzhongzi shijia 文中子世家" (Hereditary House of Master Wenzhong), which was written by one of Wang Tong's disciples, Du Yan 杜淹 (?-628). This article contains the most original description of Wang Tong's profile and his family history, and concludes with an appendix to the *Zhongshuo*. See Zhang Pei, *Zhongshu jiaozhu*, 265-69. The second source is *Wenzhongzi kaolun* 文中子考論, a monograph that offers a comprehensive study of Wang Tong. See Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*. Ding Xiang Warner wrote the only English monograph about Wang Tong and his texts. See Warner, *Transmitting Authority*.
For the reasons for the absence of any mention of Wang Tong in the historical records, see Deng Xiaojun 鄧小軍, "Suishu buzai Wang Tong kao 隋書不載王通考," *Sichuan daxue xuebao* 四川師範大學學報 3(1994):77-83.

[4] Chinese historians like to trace their origins to a noble or successful ancestor. Wang Tong's family likewise traced its origins to a royal prince of the Western Zhou Dynasty. For a study of Wang Tong's famous ancestors, see Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 14-21, 21-33.

才) and was appointed as "Revenue Manager of the Shu Region" (*shuzhou sihu* 蜀州司戶).[5] He soon resigned from that position for unknown reasons and devoted the rest of his life to teaching and writing. From 605 to 614, Wang Tong composed his *Xu Liujing* 續六經 (Continuation of the Six Classics), but only one of them, the *Yuanjing*, survived.[6] Wang Tong died in 617 when he was only thirty-three.[7] His disciples selected the term *wenzhong* 文中 (which literally means "Culture abiding within") from the canonical *I Ching* as Wang Tong's posthumous title.[8] Later scholars therefore often referred to Wang Tong as Wenzhongzi 文中子 (Master Wenzhong).

Present-day scholars principally rely on two major surviving texts when studying Wang Tong's thought, namely *Zhongshuo* 中說 (Discourse on the Mean) and *Yuanjing* 元經 (The Primal Classic). However, the authenticity of the extant editions of these two texts is questionable.[9]

The *Zhongshuo* is the foremost resource for the study of Wang Tong. This book is a collection of conversations between Wang Tong and his students and it contains many dialogues relevant to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. After Wang Tong died, his son edited the original edition of the *Zhongshuo* based on conversations recorded by Wang Tong's disciples and his family.[10] A few Tang scholars cited excerpts from the *Zhongshuo* in their writings, indicating that they had read it.[11] In about the mid-11th century, two Northern Song scholars, Ruan Yi and Gong Dingchen 龔鼎臣 (1010-1086), published updated editions of the *Zhongshuo* with annotations.[12]

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[5] Ibid., 59-63.
[6] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 3.
[7] It is recorded that when he heard that Li Yuan, the founder of the Tang Dynasty, had revolted against the Sui Dynasty, he sighed, "People have already suffered from the political disorder for a long time. Heaven is about to begin the age of Yao and Shu. I cannot participate in it. What a destiny!" 生民厭亂久矣, 天其或者將啟堯、舜之運,吾不與焉,命也! Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 1.10-11
[8] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 138.
[9] Various modern editions of the *Zhongshuo* exist. In the following discussion, the edition of Zhang Pei 張沛, one of the best annotations of the *Zhongshuo* as far I can see, is sourced. No present-day editions of the *Yuanjing* exist. The version in the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 from the *Zhongguo jiben gujiku* 中國基本古籍庫 (Database of Chinese Classical Ancient Books) was used as reference for this dissertation.
[10] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 33-38. An article named "Wangshi jiashu zalu" 王氏家書雜錄 is included in the appendix of the *Zhongshuo*. This article describes the production of the *Zhongshuo*. See Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 281-282.
[11] Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 106-115.
[12] Ibid., 119-122. There is no record of the publication date of these editions. Ruan Yi, as historical material indicates, lived during the first half of the 11th century. Gong Dingchen lived in the same period. Therefore, I suspect that their editions of the *Zhongshuo* must have been published in the mid-11th century. Warner offers descriptions of Ruan Yi's life. See Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 206-207.

Only Ruan Yi's *Zhongshuo* survives.[13] The *Yuanjing*, the only surviving book of Wang Tong's *Xu Liujing*, is a treatise supposedly written by Wang Tong which records the history of the Period of Disunion.[14] This text probably existed during the Tang Dynasty, as Tang scholars mention it in their works.[15] As with the *Zhongshuo*, Ruan Yi and Gong Dingchen published editions of the *Yuanjing*.[16] Ruan Yi's edition finally prevailed.

In short, Ruan Yi left us the only extant editions of the *Zhongshuo* and the *Yuanjing*. However, his edition's portrayal of Wang Tong is implausible.[17] As Warner points out, "There is, to begin with, the discrepancy between its representation of Wang Tong's lengthy roster of famous disciples and network of admirers among the court elite, on the one hand, and on the other hand the conspicuous absence of any mention of him in contemporary official records or in the writings of these ostensible pupils and admirers."[18] That caused scholars throughout history to doubt the authenticity of Ruan Yi's editions, some of whom even suspect Ruan Yi of creating both texts from scratch.[19] Today's scholars still have different views on the authenticity of Ruan Yi's editions. Li Xiaocheng, for instance, argues that most parts of Ruan Yi's *Zhongshuo* are authentic replicas of the original versions, whereas a considerable part of Ruan Yi's *Yuanjing* is probably fabricated.[20] Wechsler suspects that the extant edition of the *Yuanjing* was forged by Ruan Yi. Nevertheless, he points out that although Ruan Yi could have interpolated his ideas into the *Zhongshuo*, this book still "remains relatively dependable as the basic source" for Wang Tong's thought.[21] Warner shares a similar view. She suggests that extant editions of the *Zhongshuo* and the *Yuanjing* reflect "a gradual process of accumulative editorial

[13] Ibid., 8. According to Warner, "all extant editions [of the *Zhongshuo*] – those printed in the Song, the later facsimiles of Song editions, and redactions based on lost Song editions – derive from Ruan Yi's alone."
[14] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 5.149
[15] Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 144-150.
[16] Ibid., 172.
[17] Ruan Yi's *Zhongshuo* provides a roster of Wang Tong's disciples and friends that is demonstrably inauthentic. Many disciples in this roster became the minister in the early Tang Dynasty. However, it is surprising to see that few of them mentioned their tutor Wang Tong.
[18] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 4. A great number of scholars in the Song Dynasty believed that Ruan Yi or Wang Tong's later generations forged that roster and network of admirers in order to improve Wang Tong's status. For a detailed study, see Howard J. Wechsler, "The Confucian Teacher Wang T'ung 王通 (584?-617) One Thousand Years of Controversy," *T'oung Pao* 63 (1977): 225-272. Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 68-93.
[19] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 1-2, 47. Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 145.
[20] Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 144-150.
[21] Wechsler, "The Confucian Teacher," 258.

interventions," suggesting that Ruan Yi's editions are not authentic copies of the original versions.[22]

Nevertheless, the authenticity of Ruan Yi's editions does not matter greatly in relation to the study of Wang Tong's thoughts concerning the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. The main reason is that Ruan Yi's editions present a unified and consistent ideology of Wang Tong that distinguishes Wang Tong's unique concept of political legitimacy from the ideas of most other scholars.[23] In addition, from the 11th century onwards, all scholars have relied on Ruan Yi's editions to study Wang Tong. Whether or not Ruan Yi's editions can be plausibly ascribed to Wang Tong, scholars in history were greatly influenced by "his" views on legitimacy in general and the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in particular. Therefore in this dissertation the name "Wang Tong" is used when referring to the protagonist of the *Zhongshuo* and the alleged author of the *Yuanjing*, even though these two texts cannot be attributed to him in their entirety. For the same reason, the *Zhongshuo* and the *Yuanjing* are taken as valuable sources concerning the ideas of "Wang Tong," even though parts of them may be problematic.

4.2 Wang Tong's Views on the Legitimacy of the Northern Wei

The Sui Dynasty united the central realm in 589, ending the more than three-century-long Period of Disunion. The Northern Wei legitimacy dispute was still quite important in Wang Tong's day since it was closely related to the legitimacy status of the Sui Dynasty, the successor of the Northern Wei.[24] Wang Tong's underlying concern was how to demonstrate the Sui Dynasty's legitimacy on the grounds of previous dynasties in the Period of Disunion.

Wang Tong discusses the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute from three perspectives. He investigates factors that relate to the dynasty's political legitimacy. He also discusses two significant questions relevant to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute and advances a complex succession of rightful dynasties to describe the transfer of legitimacy during the Period of Disunion.

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[22] Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 17. Warner also argues that "the *Zhongshuo* remained fluid throughout the first four centuries of its transmission, and that Ruan Yi was hardly the first individual, or the last, to evince a strong personal investment in the maintenance of Wang Tong's legacy." See Warner, *Transmitting Authority*, 48.

[23] We could find that Ruan Yi's editions of the *Zhongshuo* and the *Yuanjing* have a considerable number of similar sentences or descriptions. See Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 155-162, 166-172.

[24] Liu Pujiang, "Nanbeichao de yichan," 146.

4.2.1 Evidence of Legitimacy

The *Zhongshuo* offers four pieces of evidence to demonstrate the legitimacy of the Northern Wei: (1) sacrifices to Heaven, (2) possession of the central realm, (3) protection of people, and (4) adoption of "the way of the virtuous kings." In response to a disciple's question about why the Northern Wei is legitimate, Wang Tong replies:

> In an age of upheaval and division, when the masses suffer, whom should we turn to? [Whoever] sacrifices to Heaven and Earth and shelters the people, [he] is our lord. What else would we call someone who inhabits the realm of the former kings,[25] inherits the ways of the former kings, and parents the people of the former kings?
>
> 亂離斯瘼，吾誰適歸？天地有奉，生民有庇，即吾君也。且居先王之國，受先王之道，子先王之民矣， 謂之何哉？[26]

The above quotation contains four aspects that enable one to discern Wang Tong's views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei.

(1) The quotation mentions the Northern Wei's sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. Serving as a significant legitimation method in Chinese history, the sacrifice to Heaven and Earth meets the cosmological criterion of legitimacy, because there is a link between a monarch's sacrifice and his reception of legitimacy from Heaven. As described in Chapter 2, the Northern Wei had indeed offered regular sacrifices to Heaven and Earth. The *Zhongshuo* introduces this evidence to support the Northern Wei's legitimate status.

(2) The quotation states that the Northern Wei had sheltered its people. Following the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven, Heaven is viewed as the parent of all humanity.[27] The monarch, or the secular agent of Heaven, should thus ensure his

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[25] In a Confucian context, the *xianwang* 先王 refers to legendary sage kings who practiced ideal politics. See Xinzhong Yao, *The Encyclopedia of Confucianism* (London: Routledge, 2013), 674-675.
[26] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 7.181.
[27] Since Heaven serves as the supposed parent of all humanity, a peaceful and prosperous life for the common people is one of the predominant concerns of Heaven. The *Shangshu* 尚書 says "Heaven and earth is the parent of all creature." 惟天地萬物父母. It continues that "Heaven compassionates the people. What the people desire, Heaven will be found to give effect to." 天矜於民, 民之所欲, 天必從之. See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3: The Shoo king, or, The book of historical documents* (London: Trübner & Co., 1865) 2, 283, 288.

mandate by cultivating his virtue and devoting himself to the wellbeing of his people. The sheltering of people is indeed the kind of rightful behavior that serves to advance the common people's wellbeing. In the period before the Northern Wei, people suffered considerably from wars and upheavals, and the most urgent wish for them, as mentioned at the beginning of the quotation, was to live a peaceful life. After the Northern Wei occupied northern China, it restored social order and brought peace to its people. The *Zhongshuo* hence introduces this evidence to support the Northern Wei's legitimacy.

(3) The quotation mentions the Northern Wei's occupation of the former rightful kings' domain, or the central realm, which, with reference to the geographical criterion of legitimacy, directly supports this dynasty's legitimacy. Further discussions of this evidence can be found at the end of this section, where Wang Tong's answer to the question of whether the Northern Wei had dominated the central realm is discussed.

(4) The quotation describes the Northern Wei's adoption of the ways of the former kings, which is to say the political principles of the legendary sage kings. In the *Zhongshuo*, Wang Tong also introduces the term of *wangdao* 王道 (the way of the king) to denote the ways of the former kings. He further explains the ways of the former kings as being in accord with Confucian political principles, such as practicing Confucian rites, and the maintenance of a benevolent and virtuous rule.[28] These Confucian political principles allegedly contributed to the ideal politics of the legendary sage kings. Historical records reveal that the Northern Wei had learned various Chinese-style policies from previous dynasties, which greatly benefited its people.[29]

4.2.2 Two Questions Regarding the Northern Wei's Legitimacy

In addition to the four pieces of evidence, Wang Tong also discusses two issues that challenged the Northern Wei's legitimacy: (1) whether the "barbarian" background of

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Confucianism shares a similar idea. Mencius, for instance, states that the rightful monarch has a duty to offer the people basic welfare, such as a peaceful and prosperous life, *Mencius*, trans. Lau, D. C. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1992), 5-6.

[28] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 2.57. 3.70.

[29] See Section 2.1.4. Furthermore, as noted in the *Weishu*, Tuoba rulers such as the Emperor Xiaowen, the Emperor Xuanwu 宣武帝 (r. 499-515), and the Emperor Xiaojing 孝靜帝 (r. 534-550), reportedly favored Confucianism. See *WS*, 7.186-187, 8.215, 12.313.

the Northern Wei invalidated this dynasty's legitimacy, and (2) whether it dominated the central realm. Wang Tong answers both questions in favor of the Northern Wei.

(1) Flourishing in the Period of Disunion, the ethnic legitimacy criterion defines a Chinese ruler who abides by Chinese culture as the eligible holder of the Mandate of Heaven. Wei Shou, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian, as noted in the previous chapter, generally agreed on a corresponding relation between a Chinese-ruled state and political legitimacy. However, the *Zhongshuo* disagrees with that idea. It argues that ethnicity, whether Chinese or barbarian, has no role to play in judging political legitimacy. Although he supports the Northern Wei's legitimacy, Wang Tong does not portray the Tuoba ruler as "Chinese," as Wei Shou does. He actually acknowledges that the Northern Wei's rulers were "barbarians."[30] However, Wang Tong argues that many rulers of the southern dynasties became "barbarians" when they displayed a lack of virtues. As the *Zhongshuo* notes, "[because of the lack of] virtue of [rulers of] the Southern Qi Dynasty, Liang Dynasty, and Chen Dynasty, [I] criticized them as 'barbarians.'" 齊、梁、陳之德, 斥之於四夷也.[31]

A conversation recorded in the *Zhongshuo* provides us with more clues.[32] It says that when Wang Tong explained to his disciples why the Northern Wei Dynasty was legitimate, he let out a heavy sigh. His disciples were confused by their master's behavior. One of them, Wang Ning 王凝 (who was Wang Tong's younger brother), told the others that what the master lamented was the transfer of the Mandate of Heaven. As Wang Ning explained, the Confucian canonical *Book of Documents* has a sentence which says "the Mandate of Heaven does not constantly reside in any certain regime; it only goes to those who possess virtue." 天命不於常, 惟歸有德.[33] He then concluded with a rhetorical question: since people greatly benefited from the virtuous rule of the "barbarian" Northern Wei, why would Heaven not grant the Mandate to that dynasty?[34] According to the text, Wang Tong pointed out that Wang Ning's answer had demonstrated his full understanding of the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven: to pursue it, rulers should adopt a virtuous rule. Whether they were ethnically

[30] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 1.14.
[31] Ibid., 5.149.
[32] Ibid., 1.14.
[33] Ibid. Actually the extant *Book of Documents* does not include this sentence, although it does state, "(Heaven's) appointments are not unchanging," 惟命不於常; "Heaven graciously distinguishes the virtuous," 天命有德. See James Legge, *The Chinese Classics, part 2*, 397, 74.
[34] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo yizhu*, 1.14.

Chinese or non-Chinese, rulers become illegitimate once they failed to adopt the moral rule. This idea is clearly in accord with the logic of the moral criterion of legitimacy, namely that the monarch's moral character and conduct make his rule legitimate.

(2) The second issue is whether the Northern Wei dominated the central realm. What defines the central realm is an important issue since dominance over the central realm, according to the doctrine of All Under Heaven and the geographical criterion, renders a dynasty legitimate.[35] The *Zhongshuo* seems to convey a mixed attitude to the central realm, arguing that the central realm refers to a geographical area occupied by the great dynasties of Chinese history, and the place that adopted the Confucian culture and political principles. The following conversation from the *Zhongshuo* provides clear indications of this.

> Dong Chang said: "How great is the central realm! [This is] where the five emperors and three kings established their rule, and where robes, caps, rituals, and righteousness emerged. Therefore, the sages admire it. When the central realm is united, the sage would illuminate this unity. When the center realm has two regions, would the sage eliminate this situation?" The master replied, "Right! No others but the central realm is sure to be the model."
> 董常曰: "大哉，中國! 五帝、三王所自立也，衣冠禮義所自出也。故聖賢景慕焉。中國有一，聖賢明之。中國有並，聖賢除之邪？" 子曰: "噫! 非中國不敢以訓。"[36]

Wang Tong agrees with his student's view of the central realm, which indicates two of its attributes. Firstly, it is a geographical location, namely the place where the ancient sage kings established their rule. Secondly, it is the place where Confucian principles – represented by the robes, caps, rituals, and righteousness – emerged and flourished. Apparently, the central realm is a mixed notion with geographical and cultural

[35] In the present day, the term denoting the central realm, the *zhongguo* 中國, refers to the nation of China, a political entity within a certain territory. Nevertheless, as mentioned in the introduction, the *zhongguo* in the context of ancient China was not used to refer to any specific ruling regime or state. In this dissertation various synonyms for the central realm are mentioned, such as *Zhonghua* 中華, *Zhongzhou* 中州, and *Zhongyuan* 中原, which, similarly to the central realm, refer to the place where Chinese people lived and Chines culture prevailed. For terms relating to the central realm in a traditional China's context, see Li Dalong, "The Central Kingdom," 323-352.
[36] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 7.180-181.

meanings. This is quite similar to Huangfu Shi, who describes the place where people cherish "ritual" and "righteousness" as the central realm.

Wang Tong introduces his views on the central realm to explain why the Northern Wei gradually became legitimate. The *Zhongshuo* firstly grants legitimate status to the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song Dynasty, not the Northern Wei, during the same period (396-479).[37] It further explains that the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song dynasties were more qualified rulers of the central realm since they cherished the desire to reoccupy northern China, provided their people with a peaceful and flourishing life, and firmly adopted Confucian principles.[38] By contrast, the Northern Wei during that period occupied only parts of northern China and it was far from a fully-fledged Chinese-style state.

However, the situation changed after the collapse of the Liu Song Dynasty in 479. The *Zhongshuo* labels the subsequent southern dynasties, the Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen, illegitimate and argues that these dynasties failed to possess the central realm since they lost the territory in northern China, abandoned the desire to reunite the central realm, and were ruled by fatuous rulers who abandoned Confucian principles.[39] By contrast, as the *Zhongshuo* points out, after Emperor Xiaowen ascended the throne in 490, the Northern Wei had occupied northern China and adopted Confucian principles. This dynasty thus became the new ruler of the central realm. To echo that conclusion, the *Zhongshuo* says that:

> because of their [lack of] virtue, I criticized the Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen as 'barbarians.' [This critique aims to] illuminate the replacement of [the ruler of] the central realm, a replacement which is accomplished by the endeavors of [the ruler of] the Taihe reign [477 to 499, the reign title of Emperor Xiaowen]."
> 齊、梁、陳之德，斥之於四夷也。以明中國之有代，太和之力也。[40]

Apparently, Wang Tong argues that from the Taihe reign onwards, the Northern Wei in his view became the legitimate rulers of the central realm.[41]

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[37] Ibid., 7.183.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 7.183-184.
[40] Ibid., 5.149.
[41] It should be noted that the *Zhongshuo* also posits the superior legitimate status of the Zhou and Han dynasties compared to the Northern Wei and any other dynasties. The *Zhongshuo* records that Wang Tong suggested to Emperor Wen of the Sui Dynasty that he name the Han Dynasty, rather than the

4.2.3 Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

To describe the transfer of legitimacy during the Period of Disunion, Wang Tong puts forward his version of the succession of legitimate dynasties, which is recorded in both the *Zhongshuo* and the *Yuanjing*.[42] This succession depicts not only the gradual loss of legitimacy of the Southern Dynasties but also the progressive development of the Northern Wei's legitimacy.

Chart 5. Wang Tong's Version of the Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

Period	Legitimate	Semi-legitimate	Illegitimate
290-396	Western Jin, Eastern Jin		Sixteen Kingdoms
397-497	Eastern Jin, Liu Song	Northern Wei	Sixteen Kingdoms
479-588	Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui		Southern Qi, Liang, Chen, Northern Qi

Wang Tong clearly considers six dynasties to be legitimate (Western Jin, Eastern Jin, Liu Song, Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui), and his succession defines all other dynasties as illegitimate (Sixteen Kingdoms, Southern Qi, Liang, Chen, and Northern Qi). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the use of reign titles is a crucial sign that reveals a historian's attitude toward political disputes. In the following paragraphs the stages of Wang Tong's succession are described in relation to the reign titles used in the *Yuanjing*.

The first stage began in 290, when Emperor Hui 晉惠帝 (r. 290-307), the famously insane Emperor of the Western Jin Dynasty, ascended the throne. It ends in 396 when the Tuoba people occupied the northern part of the Northern China Plain, and soon after established their Northern Wei Dynasty. In this stage, the *Yuanjing* adopts the reign titles of only the Western and Eastern Jin to record dates, and it refers

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Northern Wei, as his dynasty's rightful predecessor and the provider of the dynastic phase. Ibid., 10.257-58.

[42] Ibid., 7.183-184. There is still no present-day edition of the *Yuanjing*. This dissertation will adopt the version in the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 from the *Zhongguo jiben guji ku* 中國基本古籍庫 [Database of Chinese Classic Ancient Books], http://server.wenzibase.com/.

to the rulers of these dynasties as "emperors" (*di* 帝), the supreme political title in Chinese history and a clear indication of legitimacy.[43] The Western Jin was widely acknowledged as a great dynasty and it dominated the central realm. The Eastern Jin, as discussed in the previous section, was viewed as legitimate in the *Zhongshuo* since this dynasty had firmly dominated southern China, cherished a desire to unite the central realm, and took care of its people.

The second stage begins in 397 and ends in 479, the year in which the Liu Song Dynasty collapsed and abdicated its rule to the Southern Qi Dynasty.[44] For this period, the *Yuanjing* adopts a dual system of reign titles. It uses the reign titles of the Eastern Jin and Liu Song Dynasty to record the date in most cases. However, when the Northern Wei adopted a new reign title, the *Yuanjing* also notes that title after the southern reign title. For example, in 397, Emperor An of the Eastern Jin 晉安帝 (r. 382-419) adopted the reign title Longan 隆安 (397-401), while Emperor Daowu of the Northern Wei 魏道武帝 (r. 386-409) adopted the reign title Huangshi 皇始. The *Yuanjing*, therefore, records that year as "the first year of the Longan reign period of the Emperor An" 安帝隆安元年, followed by a note that this is "the first year of the Huangshi reign period of the Emperor Daowu of the Northern Wei" 魏道武帝皇始元年.[45] The dual recorded reign titles echoes the assessment in the *Zhongshuo*, in which superior legitimacy is assigned to the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song Dynasty compared with the Northern Wei. Moreover, the *Yuanjing* refers to the rulers of the Eastern Jin, Liu Song, and Northern Wei as "emperor," and hence it appears that its compilers considered all three dynasties legitimate.[46]

The third stage begins in 479 and ends in 588, when the Chen Dynasty was conquered by the Sui Dynasty.[47] During this period, the *Yuanjing* has only the reign titles of the Northern Wei and its descendants (Northern Zhou and Sui).[48] It also refers to the northern rulers as "emperors."[49] By contrast, the *Yuanjing* not only abandons the reign titles of contemporaneous Southern Dynasties but also explicitly denotes

[43] Wang Tong, *Yuanjing*, volume 1-6.
[44] Ibid., volume 7-8.
[45] Ibid., 74. Once the Northern Wei changed its reign title, the *Yuanjing* notes that new title after the Southern Dynasties. In other times during this stage, the *Yuanjing* records only the Southern Dynasties' reign titles.
[46] Ibid., 74.
[47] Wang Tong, *Yuanjing*, volume 9.
[48] Ibid., 102.
[49] Ibid., 102, 104-106.

them as "illegitimate." In the words of the *Yuanjing*, the Southern Qi was "false" (*wei* 偽), and the Liang and Chen were "usurped" (*jian* 僭).[50] The *Yuanjing* compilers evidently saw only the Northern Wei as legitimate. As mentioned in the previous section, the *Zhongshuo* displays the same view, namely that the Northern Wei is legitimate during this period due to its possession of the central realm and adoption of Confucian political principles.

In short, Wang Tong advances a three-stage succession of legitimate dynasties to cover China's history from the third to the sixth century. During the first stage (290 to 396), the Western Jin and its successor, the Eastern Jin, possessed the status of legitimacy. In the second stage (396 to 479), the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song Dynasty had superior legitimacy, while the Northern Wei had inferior status. In the final stage (479-588), only the Northern Wei and its descendants held exclusive legitimacy, while all contemporaneous Southern Dynasties (Southern Qi, Liang, Chen), were illegitimate. Wang Tong finally builds the Sui Dynasty's legitimacy on the grounds of two kinds of dynasties: the Chinese dynasty of the Western Jin and its successful successors, the Eastern Jin and the Liu Song, and the "barbarian" Northern Wei and its successors.

The succession of legitimate dynasties in the *Yuanjing* has an interesting ending, which reveals Wang Tong's complex feelings about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.[51] Rather than following historical reality and noting that the Chen Dynasty was conquered by the Sui Dynasty, the *Yuanjing* says that "the Liu Song, the Southern Qi, the Liang, and the Chen Dynasty perished [in 479]" 晉、宋、齊、梁、陳亡.[52] The *Zhongshuo* notes a conversation which could provide us with some clues.

> Shu Tian asked: "The Jin and the Liu Song had perished a long time ago. [The *Yuanjing*] lists their names here [when the Chen Dynasty ended]. What does this mean?" The Master replied: "[The Eastern Jin] is the old residence of China's civilization; the gentleman did not wish it to perish prematurely. The Liu Song Dynasty had the merit of restoring the Jin Dynasty as well as the desire to reoccupy the central realm. [The gentleman] also did not want this dynasty to

[50] Ibid., 102,103,105
[51] Wang Tong composed the first nine volumes of the *Yuanjing*, ending in the year the Chen Dynasty died out. His discipline Xue Shou continued to write the tenth volume of the *Yuanjing*, which records the historical period before the Tang Dynasty briefly united China.
[52] Wang Tong, *Yuanjing*, 106.

perish prematurely [....]" Shu Tian asked: "Master, could I ask what your ambition is?" Master replied with tears, "I can forget the wish of the master of Tongchuan.[53] To record that five Southern Dynasties perished at the same time, [is] to mourn the total depravity of the ways of the former sage kings [by these Southern Dynasties]. Therefore the gentleman exaggerates his words in order to highlight the collapse [of these southern dynasties...]."

叔恬曰："晉、宋亡國久矣，今具之，何謂也？"子曰："衣冠文物之舊，君子不欲其先亡。宋嘗有樹晉之功，有複中國之志，亦不欲其先亡也.…"叔恬曰："敢問其志。"文中子泫然而興曰："銅川府君之志也，通不敢廢。書五國並時而亡，蓋傷先王之道盡墜。故君子大其言，極其敗..."[54]

Of course, the Southern Dynasties did not perish at the same time. The reason for that kind of expression derives from Wang Tong's deep sympathy for the Southern Dynasties. Being a Chinese scholar, Wang Tong had a natural proclivity toward the southern Chinese dynasties. This could be manifested in two ways. The first is the use of *wang* 亡 (perish) to denote the end of the Southern Dynasties. In the context of ancient Chinese historiography, *wang* means that a state ceased to exist, not through external military attacks, abdication, or other extraordinary circumstances, but by collapsing or destroying by itself.[55] By writing that all Southern Dynasties had perished, not by military conquest (as happened to the Liang and Chen dynasties), or through abdication (as with the Eastern Jin, Liu Song, and Southern Qi dynasties), the *Yuanjing* clearly reveals a sympathy for the Southern Dynasties. The second way is to record that the Southern Dynasties perished at the same time. This serves to indicate that five southern Chinese dynasties, whether legitimate or illegitimate, still existed after they really perished. Only when the Chen Dynasty ended, does the *Yuanjing* add the record of these previous dynasties' ending, highlighting Wang Tong's sorrow about the southern Chinese dynasties' ultimate loss of Confucian political principles and the Mandate of Heaven.

[53] Honorific name of Wang Tong's father.
[54] Zhang Pei, *Zhongshuo jiaozhu*, 7.183-185.
[55] *Chunqiu Gongyangzhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳注疏, ed. Li Xueqin (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1999), 241.

4.3 Conclusion

Wang Tong plays a significant role in the intellectual history of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. His views bridge relevant scholarly considerations before and after the 11th century in three ways.

First, Wang Tong points out two indications of the Northern Wei's legitimacy, namely sacrifice to Heaven and occupation of the central realm, which were popular ways of understanding legitimacy during the Period of Disunion and the Early Tang period. Wei Shou and Li Yanshou, for instance, understood legitimacy in relation to the aforementioned two criteria. Wang Tong also suggests the new criterion of the adoption of Confucian political principles. The mid-Tang scholar Huangfu Shi has a similar view. In fact, from the Song Dynasty onward, Confucianism gradually became the most influential ideology in discussions about *zhengtong*.

Next, the two questions Wang Tong focused on were previously hardly mentioned, as most scholars, such as Wei Shou, Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian, shared the view that Chinese ethnicity and the occupation of the central realm were the two crucial proofs of legitimacy. Wang Tong rejects and reassesses that conception. He not only argues that the right moral rule could legitimize the ethnically non-Chinese Northern Wei but also interprets dominance of the central realm as the occupation of the central realm, as well as stressing the preservation of Confucian political principles. These two ideas became increasingly influential from the Song Dynasty onwards, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

Finally, Wang Tong's version of the succession of legitimate dynasties is a transitional one in history. On the one hand, prior to the Song Dynasty, the idea prevailing idea that the succession of legitimate dynasties was continuous. Similar to Gao Lü and Huangfu Shi, Wang Tong's version described that the Mandate of Heaven was inherited consecutively by dynasties in history. On the other hand, Wang Tong suggested a dual linear succession, which had not been seen prior to his period. The Tang scholar Li Yanshou developed that kind of succession and argued that two parallel successions existed during the Period of Disunion. Nevertheless, both kinds of succession, the continuous and dual one, were entirely denied by scholars from the Song Dynasty onwards.

Chapter 5. Later Views on the Legitimacy of the Northern Wei

The discussion about the Northern Wei's legitimacy did not fade with time and, indeed, continued to receive much attention from the Song Dynasty onwards. In this chapter five groups of scholars who can be seen as representative due to their innovative or influential ideas regarding the dispute are identified. First three groups of Song Dynasty scholars will be discussed: advocates of the Northern Wei's legitimacy (Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao), opponents of its legitimacy (Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang), and an opponent of the legitimacy of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties (Zheng Sixiao). Two groups of scholars subsequent to the Song Dynasty will also be examined: those who objected to the Northern Wei's legitimacy on the grounds of Neo-Confucianism (Fang Xiaoru), and those who deconstructed the term *zhengtong* and objected to the legitimacy of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties (Wang Fuzhi and Liang Qichao). The questions to be addressed are as follows: What are these scholars' distinct views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei? What motivates their views? Why do their views vary from one to another?

5.1 Views in the Song Dynasty

The late tenth century witnessed the rise of what is often seen as a civilized and prosperous Chinese power, the Northern Song Dynasty. As McNeill asserts, during the Song Dynasty "China swiftly became by far the richest, most skilled, and most populous country on earth."[1] Although this dynasty suffered increasingly severe military threats from northern non-Chinese dynasties—the Khitan Liao and Tangut Western Xia Dynasty 西夏 (1038-1227)—and failed to take the northern frontier of China from the Khitan people, it claimed its legitimate rulership over the central

[1] William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 50. Note that both Northern Song and Southern Song were simply called Song. Later scholars added the prefix "Northern" to refer to the first period of the Song, from 959, when the dynasty was established, to 1126 when it lost its capital city Kaifeng 開封 and fled to southern China. The prefix "Southern" was added to refer to the second period of the Song, from 1126, when the Song Dynasty in exile established itself in its capital Lin'an (present-day Hangzhou), to 1279, when the Yuan Dynasty conquered the Song Dynasty.

realm.[2] Apparently, both the Liao and Western Xia were not willing to accept the Northern Song's supreme status. This somewhat resembles the Northern Wei situation, which also resulted in a "contest" for legitimate status, or *zhengtong*, between non-Chinese and Chinese dynasties. In my view, this partially explains why Northern Song scholars were interested in the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. In this section, two groups of Northern Song scholars who provided influential views concerning the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties will be discussed.

In 1127, the Northern Song was toppled by the Jurchen Jin Dynasty.[3] The exiled Song court re-established its rule in the south of China. Compared with its northern peers, the Southern Song was a much weaker military power. It continued to identify itself as the legitimate continuation of the Northern Song, although it had lost northern China and was forced to treat the Jin as equal.[4] The Jin and subsequent Mongolian Yuan rapidly occupied many areas of the central realm and adopted various legitimization methods, as Hok-lam Chan, Rogers and Herbert Franke point out, to prove themselves the legitimate rulers of the central realm.[5] As the situation with the non-Chinese Jurchen and Mongolians in the north and the Chinese Song in the south resembled the earlier situation of the non-Chinese Northern Wei and the Chinese Southern Dynasties, scholars in the Southern Song court also paid attention to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.[6] One typical representative, Zheng Sixiao, who indirectly supported his dynasty's legitimacy by denying the legitimate status of the Northern Wei, will also be studied.

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[2] Concerning the general discussion about the relations between the Northern Song and its northern peers, see Twitchett and Fairbank eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 5, The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907-1279* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 14, 20-28. In fact, the Northern Song officially admitted the Liao Dynasty to be an equal regime, or at least a similarly legitimate dynasty. This is quite similar to the situation between the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, as discussed in Chapter 2.

[3] Twitchett and Fairbank eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 5,* 644-50.

[4] Ibid., 650-652. 677-84.

[5] On how the Jin and Yuan dynasties legitimated their rule, see Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*; Franke, *From Tribal Chieftain*.

[6] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 44-49.

5.1.1 The Northern Wei is Legitimate

During the Northern Song, scholars paid much attention to Wang Tong.[7] Several of them shared his interest in the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao, for instance, furthered Wang Tong's views in discussing legitimacy.

5.1.1.1 Zhang Fangping

Zhang Fangping was a high-ranking official in the early Northern Song court who once served as a "Participant in Determining Governmental Matters" (*canzhi zhengshi* 參知政事), the dynasty's approximation of a vice-prime minister.[8] He left an essay entitled "Nanbei zhengrun lun" 南北正閏論 (Discourse on the Legitimacy or Illegitimacy of the Northern and Southern Dynasties).[9] In it, he discusses the question of why the Northern Wei was legitimate while the Southern Dynasties were not, and investigates how the Northern Wei established their legitimacy.

The essay begins with the assumption that the Northern Wei, rather than the Eastern Jin, was a legitimate dynasty.[10] Zhang mentions that some Northern Song thinkers might disagree with that assumption, since they viewed the Eastern Jin Dynasty as the successor of the supposedly legitimate Western Jin, while the Northern Wei, in their view, was a "barbarian" dynasty with no convincing evidence of its legitimacy.

To defend his assumption, Zhang Fangping argues that the Eastern Jin could not have been the legitimate successors of the Western Jin.[11] He mentions that in Chinese history, a number of rulers, such King Pan'geng 盤庚 of the Shang Dynasty (around 1300 BCE) and King Ping of the Zhou Dynasty 周平王 (r. 770-720 BCE), had transferred their capital cities to prolong or ensure their dominance.[12] In those cases, the transfer of capital cities did not indicate the establishment of a different dynasty and scholars in later periods still viewed King Pan'geng and King Ping as the legitimate successors of their ancestors' dynasties. Shen Yue and Huangfu Shi, for

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[7] Li Xiaocheng, *Wenzhongzi*, 4-9.
[8] The *Songshi* 宋史 (History of the Song Dynasty) includes a biography of Zhang Fangping, see Tuotuo 脫脫 et al. comps., *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 318.10353-59.
[9] This essay is included in Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 91-92.
[10] Ibid., 91.
[11] Ibid.
[12] King Pan'geng transferred the capital from Yan 奄 (near present-day Qufu 曲阜) to Yin 殷 (near present-day Anyang 安陽). King Ping moved the capital from Gaojing 鎬京 (near present-day Xi'an 西安) to Luoyi 雒邑 (now known as Luoyang 洛陽).

instance, had a similar view and depicted the Eastern Jin as the continuation of the Western Jin, albeit with a different capital. Zhang Fangping rejects this view, arguing that the Eastern Jin was a different case. The Eastern Jin, although being of the same royal family as the Western Jin, had lost the central realm as well as the Mandate of Heaven, which meant that this dynasty had failed to be the legitimate successor of the Western Jin.[13] Zhang continues by insisting that the Eastern Jin could not transfer non-existent legitimacy to the subsequent Southern Dynasties, each of which lasted only a short period and failed to acquire legitimate status.

Next, Zhang Fangping stresses that the non-Chinese ethnicity of Northern Wei rulers did not make their dynasty illegitimate. He makes an analogy, saying that two ancient kings, Yu of the Xia Dynasty and King Wen of the Western Zhou, are considered to have been two ideal rulers due to their great virtues, even though they supposedly came from "barbarian" tribes (*dongyi* 東夷 and *xiqiang* 西羌, respectively). [14] Zhang argues that this also applies to the Tuoba rulers of the Northern Wei. To support that argument, he cites four pieces of evidence of the Northern Wei's legitimacy, which derive from Wang Tong (sacrificing to Heaven, caring for the people, occupying the central realm, and adopting Confucian political principles).[15] Zhang argues that the Northern Wei's rulers were the same as King Yu and King Wen, and they should therefore be viewed as rightful due to their great merits and adoption of Confucian principles, regardless of their background.

The second part of Zhang Fangping's essay counters another refutation of the Northern Wei's legitimacy. The argument was that the predecessor of the Northern Wei, the Kingdom of Dai 代國 (315-376), did not possess the Mandate of Heaven, since this kingdom was subject to the Western Jin and did not occupy the central realm.[16] Lacking political legitimacy, the Kingdom of Dai would be unable to provide legitimacy to its successor, the Northern Wei.[17] To counter this refutation, Zhang Fangping suggests that, rather than receiving its predecessor's legitimacy, the Northern Wei gradually attained its legitimacy through different endeavors: it received the Mandate of Heaven when it occupied northern China, attained full legitimacy

[13] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 91.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Early in 315, the Western Jin Dynasty granted the Tuoba ruler the title of King of Dai, initiating the Kingdom of Dai. This Kingdom finally grew into the Northern Wei Dynasty. See *WS*, 1.7-9.
[17] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo Shixue*, 91.

when Emperor Xiaowen was enthroned, and maintained its exclusive legitimate status until it collapsed.[18] This argument is similar to what we saw in Wang Tong's *Yuanjing*.

Zhang Fangping continues by saying that the Northern Wei's dynastic phase correctly succeeded that of the Western Jin Dynasty, indicating that the Northern Wei inherited legitimacy from the Western Jin. One of the most questionable points with respect to this theme, as Zhang's essay indicates, is that the Western Jin could not be seen as the predecessors of the Northern Wei's dynastic phase, since the Tuoba Wei established itself a half century after the Western Jin collapsed. Zhang gets around this by mentioning a similar case, namely that the Western Han Dynasty (founded in 202 BCE) had bypassed the Qin Dynasty and adopted a dynastic phase generated by the Zhou Dynasty, which had perished many decades earlier (in 256 BCE).[19] Similarly, the Northern Wei could bypass intermediate dynasties and adopt the Water Phase, following the Western Jin's Metal Phase.[20] Thereupon, Zhang's essay provides a succession of legitimate dynasties that establishes the Northern Wei as the direct successor of the Western Jin.[21]

In conclusion, similarly to Wang Tong, Zhang Fangping defines legitimacy according to various factors, such as the occupation of the central realm, the adoption of Confucian principles, and a long-lasting reign. With these factors he not only denies the legitimate status of the Eastern Jin and ensuing Southern Dynasties due to their loss of the central realm and their short reigns, but also highlights the Northern Wei's legitimate status by introducing their rulers' great merits. He also highlights that the Northern Wei's legitimacy was gradually established and that the Western Jin produced the rightful dynastic phase for the Northern Wei.

5.1.1.2 Chen Shidao

Chen Shidao once served as "Erudite of the National University" and "Proofreader of the Palace Library" (*mishusheng zhengzi* 秘書省正字) in the Northern Song Dynasty.[22] He was a famous scholar and left many well-known poems to posterity.[23]

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[18] Ibid., 92.
[19] Hok-lam Chan also mentions that the Western Han bypassed the Qin Dynasty and established the Zhou Dynasty as its predecessor. See Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 28-31.
[20] In Section 2.1.2 the argument is made that the Northern Wei did not follow the dynastic phase of the Sixteen Kingdoms, and eventually adopted the Water Phase, which was generated by the Western Jin's Metal Phase.
[21] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 91.
[22] *Songshi*, 444. 13115-16.

Chen Shidao composed the essay "Zhengtong lun" 正統論 (Discourse on Legitimacy), in which he defends Wang Tong's views on the Northern Wei, and introduces three standards of legitimacy to support the Northern Wei's legitimate status.[24]

The three standards of political legitimacy identified by Chen Shidao are "Heaven" (*tian* 天), "Earth" (*di* 地), and "Human" (*ren* 人).[25] According to Chen's essay, the standard of "Heaven" is used to investigate whether a dynasty obtains the Mandate from Heaven. The standard of "Earth" determines a dynasty's legitimacy by its occupation of the central realm.[26] Chen literally reproduces Wang Tong's definition of the central realm, defining it as a combination of the area historically governed by Chinese dynasties, and the place that adopted Confucian principles.[27] The standard of "Human" suggests that a ruler with grand virtues and achievements could be legitimate.[28] In reference to the criteria of legitimacy that I outlined in the Introduction, Chen's three standards are similar to the cosmological, geographical and moral criteria. Adopting these three standards, Chen discusses various legitimacy disputes prior to the Northern Song.[29] The way in which he views the Northern Wei is investigated below.

Chen Shidao presents a three-stage succession of legitimate dynasties resembling Wang Tong's version to respond to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. The Eastern Jin possessed legitimate status in the first stage (290 to 396) since this dynasty met the standards of "Heaven" and "Human," possessing the Mandate of Heaven and having virtuous and capable rulers. Similarly to Wang Tong, Chen Shidao views the Eastern Jin as legitimate due to this dynasty's great achievement in caring for the people, as well as its Chinese culture, even though this dynasty lost large areas of northern China and hence failed to meet the standard of "Earth."[30] In the second

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[23] Chen Shidao's poetry collections, *Houshan ci* 後山詞, is extant today.
[24] This essay is included in Rao Zongyi's book, which is cited in the following discussion.
[25] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo Shixue*, 108.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid. The Confucian commentaries on the *Book of Changes* Heaven, Earth and Human are identified as the three ultimates of the world. See De Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition. Vol. 1*, 299, 321.
[29] Chen's essay also mentions other legitimacy disputes: the Eastern Zhou 東周 (770 – 221 BCE), the Kingdom Qi 齊國 (1046-221 BCE) and Jin 晉國 (1046 BCE-376 BCE) in the Spring and Autumn period, the Qin Dynasty 秦朝 (221-207 BCE) and Xin Dynasty, the Cao Wei Dynasty (220-265) and the Later Liang 後梁 (907-923). Ibid., 108-109.
[30] Ibid., 109.

stage (396 to 479), Chen argues for two kinds of legitimate dynasties. On the one side is the newly established dynasty, the Northern Wei, which partially meets the standards of "Heaven" and "Earth" by possessing the Mandate of Heaven and occupying northern China. On the other side are the Eastern Jin and the ensuing Liu Song dynasties, which still meet the standards of "Heaven" and "Human." Chen views the latter two dynasties as being of superior legitimacy compared with the Northern Wei, since they still firmly preserved Chinese culture and cherished the desire to reoccupy the central realm.[31] In the final stage (479-588), the Northern Wei met the standard of "Human" when Emperor Xiaowen ascended the throne. Similarly to Wang Tong, Chen Shidao views Emperor Xiaowen as a virtuous ruler who accomplished great achievements. The Northern Wei rulers, therefore, met all three standards and were thus legitimate rulers of the central realm. The Southern Dynasties at this stage became illegitimate since they failed to meet any of the three standards of legitimacy.[32]

Next, Chen Shidao mounts a defense of a significantly controversial idea in the *Zhongshuo*, namely that the Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen dynasties, rather than the Northern Wei, were "barbarians."[33] Chen's essay provides a novel explanation of this idea, one that does not occur in the *Zhongshuo*:

> If barbarians transform [by adopting Chinese culture], even if they are not purely Chinese, i.e. Xia, the gentleman promotes them. If Chinese transform [by losing virtue], even if they are not purely barbarian, the gentleman rejects them. 夷而變，雖未純乎夏，君子進之也。夏而變，雖未純乎夷，君子斥之也。[34]

Chen points out that it is simply a rhetorical technique to describe some Southern Dynasties as "barbarian" while praising the purportedly "barbarian" Northern Wei rulers as Chinese due their adoption of Chinese culture or political ways.[35]

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[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.
[33] The *Zhongshuo* refers to the Southern Qi, Liang, and Chen Dynasty as "barbarians," politically speaking. See Section 4.2.1.
[34] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 109.
[35] This type of rhetorical device, to debase Chinese as "barbarians" in political discourse, may derive from the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn Annals). Yuri Pines provides an insightful study on this issue. See Pines, "Beasts or Humans," 59-102.

In short, Chen Shidao employs the cosmological, geographical and moral criteria to discuss legitimacy. He uses his standards of "Heaven," "Earth" and "Human" to describe of the Northern Wei's progressive increase of legitimacy. He also shows that it is appropriate to extol the Northern Wei rulers as legitimate "Chinese" monarchs while denigrating rulers of the Southern Dynasties as "barbarians."

Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao were not the only thinkers to engage in this discussion in this period. In 984 and 1013, the Northern Song court commissioned scholars to compose two political encyclopedias, the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era) and *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 (Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature). The Northern Wei rulers, rather than the Southern Dynasties, were determined to be legitimate in both books, indicating that it was popular to view the Northern Wei as legitimate in the Northern Song period.[36]

5.1.2 Both Sides Fail to be Legitimate

In the previous section it was suggested that the Northern Wei had various supporters during the Northern Song. Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang, however, questioned the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Both scholars discuss various legitimacy disputes in history only to conclude that both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties failed to be legitimate.

5.1.2.1. Ouyang Xiu

Ouyang Xiu served as a high-ranking official in the Northern Song court and also proved himself to be a talented historian by compiling two of the Chinese official histories, the *Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史 (New History of the Five Dynasties) and the *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (New History of Tang). Having dealt with the legitimacy of the Five Dynasties while the compiling these works,[37] Ouyang Xiu in the year 1040 presented

[36] There are some differences between these two books. In the *Taiping yulan*, volumes 95 to 105 record the Northern Wei and its descendants and denote these dynasties as legitimate. Volumes 128 to 134 record the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties and describe them as inferior in legitimacy. The *Cefu Yuangui* also depicts the Eastern Jin as legitimate and records this dynasty, along with the Northern Wei and its descendants in the first volume. This book denotes all the other Southern Dynasties as inferior in legitimacy in volume 182.

[37] In his "Zhengtong lun," Ouyang Xiu explains that when he composed the history of the Five Dynasties, he was annoyed by previous scholars' debates about whether the Later Liang 後梁 (907–

a series of essays titled "Zhengtong lun" 正統論 (Discourse on Legitimacy) to the court, which revealed his view on legitimacy in general and on specific legitimacy disputes, including the Northern Wei.[38] In these essays, Ouyang Xiu discusses the Northern Wei by following three procedures: (a) he formulates a new definition of *zhengtong*; (b) he argues that both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties failed to be legitimate; and (c) he criticizes two popular ideas related to legitimacy.

Ouyang Xiu was one of the first scholars in Chinese history to provide a definition of *zhengtong* 正統. As he notes, "*zheng* is the means by which to put in order aspects of the world that are not yet in order; *tong* is the means by which to unite those parts of All Under Heaven that are not yet united." 正者，所以正天下之不正也。統者,，所以合天下之不一也。[39] All Under Heaven here denotes "the Chinese world," or the central realm to some extent.[40] In other words, Ouyang Xiu defines *zhengtong* as the combination of ruling the central realm with righteousness and uniting the central realm.[41] Hence, Hok-lam Chan explains Ouyang Xiu's dual definition as a combination of "the moral right to succession" and "the fact of unified political control."[42] Ouyang Xiu's definition of *zhengtong* thus combines what I call the moral and geographical criteria of legitimacy.

Next, Ouyang Xiu introduces his definition of *zhengtong* to discuss various legitimacy disputes in history. He suggests that three major legitimacy debates existed prior to the Northern Song, related to the Qin Dynasty, the Period of Disunion, and the Five Dynasties. In the following discussion the focus is specifically on how Ouyang Xiu approaches the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.

Ouyang Xiu first describes his disagreement with two popular views concerning the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Firstly, he points out that supporters of the Eastern Jin describe that dynasty as the successor of the Western Jin since both dynasties share the same ruling house. Similarly to Zhang Fangping, he points out that the Eastern Jin, rather than being a continuation of the Western Jin, was established by a distant relative of the ruling house of the Western Jin and failed to unite the central

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923) was legitimate, which is why he wrote "Zhengtong lun." See Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji* 歐陽修全集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 265-66.

[38] These essays are included in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 265-286.

[39] *Ouyang Xiu Quanji*, 267.

[40] Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 227.

[41] *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 268.

[42] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 39.

realm.[43] Secondly, Ouyang Xiu mentions that supporters of the Northern Wei attributed legitimacy to this dynasty on the basis of two merits: adopting Chinese culture and dominating the central realm. Ouyang Xiu disagrees, insisting that the Northern Wei was by nature the same as the short-lived northern states of the Sixteen Kingdoms period since all these states not only failed to unify the central realm but also largely relied on military power rather than the moral rule to sustain their dominance.[44] He goes on to state that ruling houses such as the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties established their reigns in their founders' self-interest.[45] In other words, none of these dynasties is entitled to be deemed *zhengtong* since they failed to adopt virtuous rule and unite the central realm.

Finally, Ouyang Xiu criticizes two widespread understandings of legitimacy. The first is to introduce the dynastic phase to discuss legitimacy.

> Since the flourishing of the ancient [sage] kings, one had to display an abundance of virtue to obtain the Mandate of Heaven, either their achievements led to benefits for the populace, or for many generations they gradually perfected the royal enterprise. How could [they] biasedly introduce a single dynastic phase (to make their rule flourish)?"
> 自古王者之興，必有盛德以受天命，或其功澤被於生民，或累世積漸而成王業，豈偏名於一德哉？[46]

The dynastic phase was long viewed as a crucial source of legitimacy in Chinese history, both by ruling houses and later scholars. In fact, during the Northern Song, scholars such as Yin Zhu 尹洙 (1001-1047) and Zhang Fangping also took into account the dynastic phase theory in their discussions about legitimacy.[47] Ouyang Xiu rejects the use of the dynastic phase, focusing instead on more pragmatic factors such

[43] *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 271-72. Similar discussions can be found in "Dongjin lun 東晉論" (Discourse of the Eastern Jin), an article written by Ouyang Xiu which specifically discusses why the Eastern Jin is not legitimate. Ibid., 282-83.
[44] Ibid., 272. Ouyang Xiu also introduces these ideas in his article "Hou-Wei lun 後魏論" (Discourse of the Eastern Jin), which is specifically a discussion of why the Northern Wei was not legitimate. Ibid., 284-85.
[45] Ibid., 271-72.
[46] Ibid., 268.
[47] Liu Pujiang, "The End of the Five Virtues," 521.

as the ruler's righteous rule, his political achievements, or the unification of the central realm as criteria to determine legitimacy.[48]

Another widespread idea regarding legitimacy, as Ouyang Xiu points out, is the supposed existence of a continuous succession of legitimate dynasties, as suggested by earlier scholars such as Wang Tong, Li Yanshou, and Huangfu Shi. Ouyang Xiu questions that kind of lineage. He argues that, as none of these dynasties succeed in meeting the two crucial requirements of *zhengtong* (righteous rule and the unification of the central realm), the notion of the succession of legitimate dynasties is compromised.[49] He also accuses previous scholars such as Wang Tong of including unqualified candidates in their lineages in order to formulate an illusionary continuous succession of legitimate dynasties.[50]

Ouyang Xiu thus puts forward his four-stage succession of legitimate dynasties. This succession consists of two kinds of legitimate dynasty, those that were established legitimately (such as the Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties), and those that were not but gradually obtained legitimacy thereafter (the Western Jin and Sui dynasties). All other dynasties are illegitimate since they failed to meet Ouyang Xiu's definition. This four-stage succession hence progresses in the following sequence.[51]

Chart 6. Ouyang Xiu's Version of the Succession of Legitimate Dynasties

Period	Legitimate Dynasties	Non-legitimate Dynasties[52]
beginning-220 CE	Legendary Kingdoms, Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, Han	
220-265		The Three Kingdoms
265-316	Western Jin	

[48] Prior to Ouyang Xiu, Wang Tong and Huangfu Shi had already implicitly excluded the dynastic phases as a standard of legitimacy. However, Ouyang Xiu may have been first scholar who explicitly rejected the dynastic phase theory. This, as the present-day scholar Liu Pujiang suggests, represents the rise of rationalism in Song Dynasty academia. Liu Pujiang, "The End of the Five Virtues," 513-54.
[49] *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 269.
[50] Ibid., 277.
[51] Ibid., 269-70.
[52] Ouyang Xiu stresses that no legitimate dynasty existed in the periods of the Three Kingdoms, the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Five Dynasties. He does not describe dynasties in these periods as illegitimate.

316-581		Eastern Jin, the Northern and Southern Dynasties
581-907	Sui, Tang	
907-960		The Five Dynasties
960	Northern Song	

The first stage began with the dynasties of the (legendary) Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors period (around the 20th century BCE), followed by the Xia, Shang, Zhou, Qin, and Han dynasties, and ends in 220 when the Eastern Han collapsed. During the ensuing Three Kingdoms period (220-265), the succession ceased since no dynasty met the requirement of *zhengtong*. The second stage began in 265 when the Western Jin was established and ended in 316 when it collapsed. Ouyang Xiu thinks the Western Jin met his definition of *zhengtong*. Thereafter during the Period of Disunion, no dynasty was legitimate. The third stage began in 581 when the Sui Dynasty was established and ended in 907 when the Tang Dynasty collapsed. During the ensuing Five Dynasties period (907-960), this succession ceased. Finally, the Northern Song was established in 960 and restarted this succession again.[53]

In short, Ouyang Xiu defines *zhengtong* as the combination of righteous rule and the unification of the central realm. He introduces his definition to deny the legitimate status of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. Ouyang Xiu also rejects the validity of dynastic phases as a determinant of *zhengtong* and supports a non-continuous succession of legitimate dynasties.

5.1.2.2. Sima Guang

After Ouyang Xiu released his studies on *zhengtong* and legitimacy disputes, another Northern Song scholar, Zhang Wangzhi 章望之 (11th century) provided his critiques.[54] Supporters of Ouyang Xiu, such as Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101), Chen Shidao

[53] Ibid., 270.
[54] As Yang Shaoyun points out, "Zhang Wangzhi had already criticized Ouyang's original position on the Cao-Wei and Later Liang on the grounds that neither regime had achieved a reunification of 'all under heaven'." See Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 228.

and Sima Guang, participated in the debate.[55] In this section the thought of one of the most distinguished followers of Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang, is examined.

Sima Guang was a famous politician and historian in the Northern Song court.[56] He once served as the "Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs and Concurrent Vice-Director of the Chancellery" (*Shangshu zuopuye jian mengxia shilang* 尚書左僕射兼門下侍郎), the approximation of a vice-prime minister in the mid-Song Dynasty.[57] From 1065 to 1084, the Northern Song court appointed Sima Guang to compile the famous chronological history *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Governance).[58] This history includes a commentary that deals with legitimacy disputes.[59] Echoing Ouyang Xiu's views on legitimacy, this commentary first provides Sima Guang's understandings of *zhengtong*, then attacks three popular views concerning the legitimacy disputes (including the Northern Wei), and ends with the author's answer to these disputes.

In his commentary Sima Guang first discusses the requirement for the legitimacy of a ruler from a historical perspective. He mentions that humans do not have sufficient ability to create an orderly society, and thus require the leadership of a ruler.[60] Sima Guang points out that numerous rulers existed in the early period of (Chinese) civilization and that a superior ruler emerged thereafter. This was the Son of Heaven, who wielded his power over All Under Heaven.[61] Sima Guang describes the legitimate ruler by saying "I humbly believe that someone who fails to make the nine

[55] Rao Zongyi provides a general introduction to the views of Ouyang Xiu's followers. See Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 39-44, 92-113.
[56] McLaren, "Challenging Official History," 332.
[57] In 1076, the Northern Song adopted a reform of the official system. Under this reform, the official title of the vice-prime minster changed from "Participant in Determining Governmental Matters" (both Zhang Fangping and Ouyang Xiu held this position) to "Vice-Director of the Department of State Affairs and Concurrent Vice-Director of the Chancellery," the official title of Sima Guang. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 395.
[58] *Songshi*, 336.10762-63.
[59] *ZZTJ*, 69.2185-88. Sima Guang also discussed the legitimacy dispute in one of his letters. This letter is included in Rao Zongyi's *Zhongguo shixue*, 111-113.
[60] *ZZTJ*, 69.2185. Sima Guang continues by highlighting the two basic responsibilities of a qualified ruler (*jun* 君 as it used to be rendered), "to prohibit violence and eliminate evil, thereby assuring [his people] a safe life; to reward good deeds and punish bad deeds and thereby prevent [his people] from slipping into disorder. 禁暴除害以保全其生, 賞善罰惡使不至於亂." Ibid., 69.2185.
[61] Ibid., 69.2186. In later periods, an alternative title *huangdi* 皇帝 was used to replace the title *wang* 王 (king) to refer to *tianzi*, as mentioned in Section 2.1.

domains [i.e., the central realm] one,[62] he only has the name of Son of Heaven without actually being one" 竊以為苟不能使九州合為一統，皆有天子之名而無其實者也.[63] Apparently, Sima Guang sees the unification of the central realm as a precondition for being regarded as a legitimate ruler. He differs from Ouyang Xiu, who focuses on both the ruler's righteous rule and the unification of the realm.

Similarly to Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang attacks prevalent views concerning legitimacy, which are frequently introduced by scholars to discuss the Northern Wei's legitimacy. The first problematic view is to include abdication in the discussion of legitimacy. Previous historians such as Sheng Yue, Xiao Zixian, and Li Yanshou, support that idea and argue that a dynasty could inherit the legitimacy of its abdicated predecessor. Sima Guang points out this idea actually leads to a dilemma in discussing the Northern Wei's legitimacy dispute. As his commentary indicates, the Chen Dynasty, a legitimate dynasty in the view of Southern Dynasties' supporters, failed to abdicate and transfer its rule to a later dynasty; and the Northern Wei, a legitimate dynasty as far as its supporters are concerned, did not have any predecessor that abdicated to transfer its legitimacy to the Northern Wei.[64] This leads Sima Guang to disagree with using abdication as a factor in the study of legitimacy disputes.

The second problematic view is to see the dominance of parts of the central realm as a reason for accepting a dynasty's legitimacy. Scholars such as Gao Lüe, Wang Tong, and his followers used this idea to support the Northern Wei's legitimate status. Sima Guang points out that this idea fails to explain why dynasties in the Period of Disunion, such as the Former Zhao, Former Yan, and Former Qin, were viewed as illegitimate by most scholars in history, even though these dynasties had all once occupied northern China, the alleged heartland of the central realm.[65]

The third problematic view is to consider a state legitimate due to its ruler being virtuous, a view held by Wang Tong and Chen Shidao, for instance, to support the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Sima Guang disagrees. Without giving any examples, he states that states far away from the central realm may have virtuous rulers, but they

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[62] The *Book of Documents* includes the *Shugong* 禹貢, an address allegedly by Dayu 大禹, the founder of the Xia Dynasty. The speaker notes that the central realm has nine domains. See *Shangshu zhengyi*, 132-153. Later scholars in Chinese history therefore used the nine domains to refer to the central realm.
[63] *ZZTJ*, 69.2186. In another article, Sima Guang admits that this idea can be derived from Ouyang Xiu's discussion, in which the unification of the central realm was posited as a crucial attribute of legitimacy. Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 112.
[64] *ZZTJ*, 69.2187.
[65] Ibid., 69.2187. Sima Guang indicates that these dynasties in the division period were short-lived and ruled their people brutally; thus few historians in history viewed them as legitimate.

would not be viewed as legitimate rulers of the central realm, whereas dynasties that are generally seen as legitimate in Chinese history may have had immoral rulers.[66]

Finally, Sima Guang discusses legitimacy disputes prior to the Northern Song. It is clear that it was only during periods in which China was not unified that dynasties were involved in legitimacy disputes due to the fact that co-existing dynasties strove to be legitimate. The disputes re-emerged when later scholars debated with each other on what constituted the legitimate status of these co-existing dynasties. Sima Guang, however, questions the necessity of these later scholarly debates. He stresses that all dynasties in the division period were far from being legitimate since they failed to unite the central realm. Even though these dynasties could vary widely, from Chinese to "barbarian," from virtuous to brutal, from big to small, and from mighty to weak, Sima Guang asks to what extent one of them could be determined to be legitimate while describing others as illegitimate.[67]

As a historian, Sima Guang could not escape the discussion about legitimacy. It was customary for historians to date events according to the reign titles of rulers from dynasties they considered legitimate. In so doing, they revealed what dynasties they considered legitimate. Hence, Sima Guang also needed to choose the "correct" reign titles to date the periods in which the central realm had more than one dynasty and in which some of them competed with others for legitimacy. Sima Guang stresses that his choices merely follow popular conventions and do not reflect his views on legitimacy.[68] His choice of reign titles is based on the following principles. The reign titles of several dynasties (Zhou, Qin, Han, Western Jin, Eastern Jin, Sui, and Tang), are used because China was unified under their rule.[69] In periods when the central realm had various co-existing dynasties, Sima Guang adopts the reign titles of some dynasties despite the fact that he considers none of them legitimate. Specifically, he chooses the reign titles of the Cao Wei Dynasty to date events in the Three Kingdoms period, the reign titles of the various Southern Dynasties to date events in the Period of Disunion, and the reign titles of the Five Dynasties to date events in 10th century

[66] Ibid., 69.2187.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid. In contrast to Ouyang Xiu, Sima Guang views the Eastern Jin as the continuation of the Western Jin, with little explanation.

China.[70] Although Sima Guang adopts the reign title of the Southern Dynasties, he reiterates that this does not mean he sees them as legitimate.

In short, Sima Guang continues Ouyang Xiu's discussion on *zhengtong*. He relies heavily on the unification of the central realm to determine legitimacy. He further questions three prevailing ideas concerning legitimacy, arguing that abdication, occupation of only part of the central realm, and dominion by a virtuous ruler fail to ensure a dynasty's legitimate status. Sima Guang concludes by stressing that both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties were not legitimate, even though he adopts the reign title of the Southern Dynasties in his history.

5.1.3 The Northern Wei is Illegitimate

In the 12th century, the pursuance of legitimacy became an urgent issue. Both the Jurchen-led Jin Dynasty and the Southern Song proclaimed themselves to be the legitimate ruler of the central realm. Perhaps with an eye on the Jurchen Jin, the ethnic criterion became influential in Southern Song discussions on legitimacy in general, and on the Northern Wei in particular.[71] Zhu Fu 朱黼 (1140-1215) and Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1150), for instance, asserted that the Northern Wei's "barbarian" rulers and "barbaric" rule precluded this dynasty from being accorded legitimate status.[72] Meanwhile, along with the flourishing of Neo-Confucianism, the moral criterion of legitimacy had become increasingly significant in scholarly discussions about legitimacy.[73] Although the Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi seemingly agreed with Sima Guang's views and defined a legitimate dynasty according to its unification of the central realm, he also stressed that the monarch's obedience to morality was of considerable significance to his legitimacy.[74] Therefore, Peter Bol points out that "the Neo-Confucians' view of politics shifted moral authority away from the political system and towards the individual, with a new conception of the

[70] Ibid., 69.2187-88.
[71] Cao Pengcheng 曹鵬程, "Shishu nansong de zhengtonglun 試述南宋的正統論," *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* 四川師範大學學報 40.5 (2013):143-149.
[72] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 116. Zhu Fu 朱黼, *Yongjia zhuxiansheng sanguo liuchao wudai jinian zongbian* 永嘉朱先生三國六朝五代紀年總辨 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1997), 565, 572.
[73] Bol indicates that Neo-Confucianism strove to constrain autocratic dynasties by introducing Confucian moral principles. See Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 151-152.
[74] Li Jingde, *Zhuzi yulei*, 105.2636. For further information on Zhu Xi's support of the moral criterion of legitimacy, see Zhu Xi, *Zhuzi qunshu* 朱子全書 (Shanghai: shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 8.22.

self as grounds for morality in society and politics."[75] This section discusses a typical and influential representative, Zheng Sixiao.

Zheng Sixiao lived in the last half of the 13th century, when the Mongol Yuan defeated the Jurchen Jin and kept on striking the Southern Song. Shocked by the Southern Song's defeat by a Mongolian power, in about 1278 Zheng Sixiao wrote an essay titled "Gujin zhengtong dalun" 古今正統大論 (Grand Discourse about Legitimacy in Past and Present).[76] To discuss the Northern Wei's *zhengtong* status, Zheng examined the moral dimensions of legitimacy before explaining why non-Chinese dynasties, including the Northern Wei, were illegitimate. The essay ends with Zheng Sixiao's version of the succession of legitimate dynasties.

After Ouyang Xiu provided his bipartite definition of *zhengtong*, namely righteous rule and unification of the central realm, an increasing number of scholars followed that definition in their legitimacy discussions. Sima Guang, as the previous section revealed, focused on the latter dimension and described a dynasty as legitimate only when it ruled over a unified central realm. Zheng Sixiao focuses on the first dimension and argues that only after bringing order to the central realm by means of his great virtue, could a ruler be credited with legitimacy.[77] This idea evidently reflected the moral criterion of legitimacy, in which the legitimacy of a dynasty is determined by the virtue of its rulers. To better establish his conception, Zheng discusses the relation between four terms: All under Heaven, the central realm, *zhengtong*, and sage ruler. He points out that dominance of All under Heaven alone does not ensure legitimacy.[78] He further argues that occupying the central realm and adopting Chinese term do not ensure a dynasty's legitimacy. This seemingly aims to deny the legitimate status of any non-Chinese who had adopted Chinese culture, such as the Northern Wei or the Jurchen Jin Dynasty. Zheng declares that "only the sage ruler can combine and unite All under Heaven, the central realm, and *zhengtong*." 惟

[75] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 4.
[76] This essay is included in *Zheng Sixiao ji* 鄭思肖集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 132-37. Yang Shaoyun also studies this essay, see Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 388-399. Note that Zheng Sixiao put most of his essays, including this one, into an iron casket and dropped that casket into a well. Around 1638, the casket was discovered and Zheng Sixiao's works were made known to the public.
[77] Zheng Sixiao, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, 132.
[78] The aim of this idea is probably to deny the Yuan Dynasty's legitimate status since this non-Chinese dynasty had ruled vast territories beyond the central realm. All Under Heaven in Zheng Sixiao's article hence refers to the whole world known to the contemporaneous Chinese people.

聖人始可以合天下、中國、正統而一之.[79] Apparently, Zheng Sixiao determines that the moral ruler is the crucial component of any legitimate dynasty. This idea possibly derives from Neo-Confucianism, given that this ideology was prevalent in the late Southern Song period.[80]

Secondly, Zheng reintroduces the ethnic criterion of legitimacy to denote non-Chinese dynasties as illegitimate. He indicates two kinds of illegitimate dynasties: those built by usurpers and those by "barbarians." The first kind of dynasty is illegitimate because of its immoral founders, who violated moral principles and rebelled against their lords.[81] The second kind of dynasty is illegitimate due to its "barbarian" nature. Zheng Sixiao puts much emphasis on this idea.

Prior to the Tang Dynasty, historians such as Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Xiao Zixian, as we have seen, frequently adopted the ethnic criterion of legitimacy when discussing the Northern Wei. Scholars' interest in that criterion, however, seemingly faded from the Tang onwards. On the one hand, Wang Tong and Zhang Fangping, for instance, had argued that "barbarian" ethnicity does not preclude the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Chen Shidao had also pointed out that the Northern Wei's rulers could even be viewed as political Chinese due to their adoption of Chinese ways. On the other hand, historians such as Li Yanshou, Ouyang Xiu, and Sima Guang scarcely mentioned the dichotomy between "barbarian" and "Chinese" when discussing legitimacy in general or the Northern Wei legitimacy issue in particular. Nevertheless, the severe conflict between non-Chinese and Chinese in the Song Dynasty had a major impact on the world in which Zheng Sixiao lived, which led him to reintroduce the ethnic criterion.

Zheng Sixiao argues that barbarians and Chinese have different physiological natures, saying that barbarians originated from "aberrant *qi*" (*nieqi* 孽氣), in contrast to the Chinese, who originated from "rightful *qi*" (*zhengqi* 正氣).[82] Only within the central realm was *qi* perfectly balanced and gave rise to civilization, while *qi* in the barbarians' homelands was not properly aligned and thus they were denied the benefits of civilization, or so Zheng Sixiao claims. Therefore, he stresses that the

[79] Zheng Sixiao, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, 135.
[80] Zhu Xi's great influences on scholars' views on legitimacy in the late Southern Song, see Wang Jianmei 王建美, "Zhuxi lixue yu yuanchu de zhengtong lun 朱熹理學與元初的正統論," *Shixueshi yanjiu* 2 (2006): 26-31.
[81] Zheng Sixiao, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, 132, 134.
[82] Ibid., 133.

central realm is the exclusive domain of Chinese. All non-Chinese, as he argues, should live in their original habitats and cherish their own indigenous cultures. He asserts, "It is not a blessing but an aberration for barbarians to follow the ways of the central realm" 夷狄行中國事，非夷狄之福，實夷狄之妖孽。[83] To illustrate this idea, Zheng Sixiao provides a colorful metaphor: if a horse or a cow speaks a human language and wears human clothes, people would describe that animal as a monster, not as a human being.[84] This applies to the Northern Wei rulers, Zheng says, because they did not maintain their indigenous Tuoba customs, but adopted Chinese culture instead, which makes the Northern Wei an aberration of a barbarian dynasty.

Zheng Sixiao also criticizes two ways in which the ethnic disparity between non-Chinese and Chinese is decreased. The first way is found in Wei Shou's *Weishu*, in which it is argued that the Tuoba people could have derived their original ancestry from the Yellow Emperor. Zheng Sixiao rejects this view with another colorful analogy, saying that a thief or slave cannot prove himself a gentleman even if he has aristocratic forebears. For a similar reason, it was groundless for the Tuoba people to cite their supposed ancestor, the Yellow Emperor, in order to declare themselves Chinese.[85] The second way was posited by Zhang Fangping, who claimed that non-Chinese could found legitimate dynasties since some sage kings in ancient China, such as Yu and King Wen, were also "barbarians." Zheng Sixiao criticizes that idea, stressing that the sage kings were the authentic offspring of the Yellow Emperor, and therefore Chinese. It is merely because they came to "barbarian" lands and established their regimes there that people in later periods falsely viewed these sage kings as "barbarians."[86]

Finally, Zheng Sixiao advances his version of the succession of legitimate dynasties. This succession follows both the moral and ethnic criteria of legitimacy. It excludes the Cao Wei and Jin dynasties since their founders were usurpers, and it also excludes the Northern Wei and successive dynasties since they were established by barbarians. Zheng's succession even excludes the Sui and Tang dynasties since they had "barbarian" royal blood.[87] Notably, Zheng's succession also excludes the Southern Dynasties, even though they had Chinese rulers. The reason, although not

[83] Ibid., 132.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 133.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 133-34.

specifically mentioned in his essay, could be that the Southern Dynasties failed to meet the moral criterion due to the fact that their founders were usurpers and because of their notorious governance.[88]

In short, Zheng Sixiao highlights the moral and ethnic criteria in discussing legitimacy, viewing a legitimate rule as a Chinese-ruled central realm with virtuous monarchs. Being virtuous and Chinese are two prerequisites of the legitimate ruler. In view of the Northern Wei, Zheng stresses that this dynasty, like all other non-Chinese dynasties, had no access to legitimacy because of their "barbarian" rulers. He provides a succession of legitimate dynasties, which sees the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties as illegitimate due to their barbarian and usurping founders respectively.

5.2 Views after the Song Dynasty

From the 13th century onwards, a series of dynasties – Yuan, Ming, and Qing – ruled the entire central realm and resolutely claimed their *zhengtong* status. A considerable number of scholars during this period still showed an interest in the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. A possible reason could be the fierce conflict between Chinese and non-Chinese during this period. The Yuan and Qing were non-Chinese dynasties while the Ming was continually at war with the northern "barbarians." The Northern Wei legitimacy dispute was relevant to the issue of how to assess non-Chinese rulers' legitimate status in contrast to that of the Chinese dynasties, which scholars from the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties also encountered. Thus, among the scholars of this period, whoever served a Chinese or non-Chinese dynasty was expected to indirectly support their dynasty's legitimacy by denying or supporting the legitimacy of the Northern Wei. For example, most supporters of the Northern Wei, such as two scholars from the Yuan Dynasty, Yang Huan 楊奐 (1186-1255) and Hao Jing 郝經 (1223-1275), and a scholar from the Qing Dynasty, Shao Tingcai 邵廷采 (1648-1711), shared the idea that non-Chinese dynasties — including the Northern Wei as well as the dynasty that they served — could be legitimate if they adopted Chinese

[88] Yang Shaoyun notes that in Zheng Sixiao's views, "the key criterion for legitimacy that they [the Jin Dynasty and the Southern Dynasties] failed to meet was not ethnicity but governance: the two Jin dynasties 'absolutely did not govern well' 絕無善治, while the Southern Dynasties 'kept the lifeblood of the Central Lands flowing by one feeble artery' 綴中國之一脈 and also 'all did not govern well' 俱無善治." Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 394-395.

culture and followed Confucian political principles.[89] Opponents of the Northern Wei's legitimacy, such as the Ming scholars Fang Xiaoru, Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559) and Qiu Jun 丘浚 (1421-1495), partially agreed with Zheng Sixiao's views and defined all non-Chinese dynasties as illegitimate, thereby indirectly rendering support to the legitimate status of the dynasty that they served.[90] A large number of scholars during this period discussed *zhengtong* in general, as well as the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in particular, typically building on earlier views. Since few of them made significant or original contributions to the discussion on legitimacy, the specifics of these scholars' views will not be dealt with here. Instead, the following two sections comprise an outline of the views of two opposing perspectives held by post-Song Dynasty scholars who provide us with some fresh and innovative perspectives from which to view legitimacy in general and the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in particular. The first perspective is represented by the Ming scholar Fang Xiaoru, who appealed to Neo-Confucianism to deny *zhengtong* to both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties. The second is represented by Wang Fuzhi and Liang Qichao, who deconstructed *zhengtong* and suggested that no dynasty in history — including the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties – could be described as *zhengtong*.

5.2.1 The Adoption of Neo-Confucianism: Fang Xiaoru

Born in 1357, Fang Xiaoru was a well-acknowledged writer of literature during his time and once served as "Hanlin Academician" (*hanlin xueshi* 翰林學士). However, in 1402 when Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360-1424), the future Yongle Emperor 永樂帝 (r. 1402-1424), usurped the throne, Fang Xiaoru was executed for his resolute criticism of that usurpation.[91] Fang Xiaoru's discussions on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute can be found in the essay "Shitong" 釋統 (Interpretation of Succession).[92] In this essay, Fang Xiaoru first introduces so-called "Heavenly principles" to describe legitimacy, in which the emphasis is on both the moral and ethnic criteria of legitimacy. He also

[89] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 125-127, 202-205. Yang Shaoyun also briefly mentions Yang Huan and Hao Jing's views in his discussion. See Yang Shaoyun, "Reinventing the Barbarian," 381-388.
[90] Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 161-162, 163-165.
[91] For biographical information on Fang Xiaoru, see *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 426-33, and Zhang Tingyu 张廷玉 and others comp. *Mingshi* 明史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), 141.4017-21.
[92] This essay is included in the corpus of Fang Xiaoru's writings. See Fang Xiaoru, *Xunzhizhai ji* 遜志齋集 (Ningbo: Ningbo chubanshe, 2000), 52-56.

studies types of dynastic succession, arguing for "rightful" and "variable" succession. Fang finally states that neither the Northern Wei nor the Southern Dynasties were legitimate.

As noted above, scholars prior to Fang Xiaoru appealed to various factors, such as auspicious portents, dynastic phases, long reigns, virtuous and Chinese rulers, and the unification of the central realm to determine legitimacy. Fang, however, questions these factors. In the first section of his essay, he asks whether we can equate brutal and short-lived dynasties, such as the Qin and Sui, with glorious and long-lasting ones, such as the Zhou and Han.[93] This could be possible, since all these dynasties had different pieces of evidence to support their legitimacy, such as the unification of the central realm or the adoption of the rightful dynastic phase.[94] However, Fang describes this as ridiculous. He argues that any discussion about legitimacy should be based on "Heavenly principles," the core notion of Neo-Confucianism, which, as he indicates, could enable one to distinguish illegitimate dynasties from legitimate ones. Heavenly principle, as Antonio Cua points out, "is often used to convey the Neo-Confucian notion of *ren*, the ideal of the universe, as a moral community."[95] Fang Xiaoru provides some clues about how Heavenly principles could be used to discuss legitimacy.

> As for the discussion about legitimacy, what does it take to be successful? If we add the label [legitimate] to [a regime] because it rules All under Heaven, then why does that regime not add the label by itself, since it [is powerful enough to] rule All under Heaven? However, because we wish to use this [discussion of legitimacy] to praise or criticize [dynasties in history], to bring order to the major distinctions [among various social classes], to explain the righteous relationship between rulers and officials, to shed light on the difference between benevolence and tyranny, to include Chinese and exclude Barbarians, and to support Heavenly principles and punish the malpractice of man, it should not be left undiscussed.

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[93] Fang Xiaoru, *Xunzhizhai ji*, 52.
[94] These four dynasties all declared their possession of the Mandate of Heaven (the cosmological criterion), had Chinese ruling houses (the ethnic criterion), succeeded to the thrones of previous dynasties (the historical criterion) and ruled the central realm (the geographical criterion).
[95] Antonio S. Cua, "Reason and Principle," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, ed., Antonio S. Cua (New York; London: Routledge, 2003), 636.

正統之說，何為而立耶？苟以其全有天下，故以是名加之，則彼固有天下矣，何不加以是名也？苟欲假此以寓褒貶，正大分，申君臣之義，明仁暴之別，內夏外夷，扶天理而誅人偽，則不宜無辯。[96]

It is evident that rather than citing a dynasty's dominance of the central realm to support its legitimacy, Fang Xiaoru believes the discussion of legitimacy should represent a moral evaluation of a dynasty, highlight social order, distinguish between benevolent rule and tyranny, and support the dichotomy between "barbarian" and "Chinese." All these factors could be viewed as specific terms of Heavenly principles, which generally represent various Confucian moral principles, such as righteousness and benevolence. Fang also views the dichotomy between "barbarian" and "Chinese" as a part of Heavenly principles. Apparently, in Fang's understanding, Heavenly principles include both the moral and ethnic criterion of legitimacy.

Next, Fang Xiaoru argues for a twofold classification of dynastic succession. The first type is "rightful succession" (*zhengtong* 正統), which was accomplished by two kinds of legitimate dynasties.[97] The superior kind included the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou), which were completely legitimate due to their absolute obedience to Heavenly principles.[98] The inferior kind consisted of three dynasties (Han, Tang, and Song) which, while not equal to the superior dynasties, had practiced some manner of virtuous rule and were therefore included.[99] Fang argues that the Mandate of Heaven, or political legitimacy, was transferred between these six dynasties, which constituted the "rightful succession" category.

The second type of dynastic succession is "variable succession" (*biantong* 變統) which was practiced by three classes of illegitimate dynasties that violated Heavenly principles. These three classes, as Fang Xiaoru points out, are dynasties founded by usurpation, such as the Eastern Jin and all the Southern Dynasties;[100]

[96] Fang Xiaoru, *Xunzhizhai ji*, 52-53.
[97] Ibid., 53.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid., 53-54. Fang Xiaoru gives a further explanation about why he includes these three dynasties in the list of rightful successions. He admits that it is hard for a dynasty to reach the same level of legitimacy as the three sage kingdoms, which could frustrate rulers' desire for legitimacy and thereby lessen their desire to adopt morality in politics.
[100] Ibid., 57-58. Fang Xiaoru specifically points out that the usurping monarch violated the moral norms between lord and subject by betraying and replacing their lords to establish their own rules.

those ruled by tyrants, such as the Qin and Sui; and those governed by barbarians or females, such as the Northern Wei and the Wu Zhou 武周朝 (690-705).[101]

Note that Fang specifically discusses why a barbarian dynasty is illegitimate by referring to the ethnic criterion. He accuses rulers of "barbarian" dynasties, such as the Northern Wei, of practicing inferior culture and having insufficient conscience to follow moral principles.[102] Similar to Zheng Sixiao, Fang Xiaoru describes barbarians as "beasts." His analogy is that of a child who would try to kill a beast even if that beast presented itself as human, indicating that a barbarian ruler could not be viewed as civilized and legitimate even if he adopted Chinese culture.[103]

In short, Fang Xiaoru appeals to Heavenly principles to discuss legitimacy and views a legitimate dynasty as one that embodies Confucian values of righteousness and benevolence. He provides a classification of dynasties, in terms of which the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties are determined to be illegitimate because they were established through usurpation, and the Northern Wei as illegitimate because of their supposedly barbarian rulers.

5.2.2 The Deconstruction of *zhengtong*

From the end of the Ming Dynasty, a new perspective emerged in the study of legitimacy. Some scholars started to reflect on previous theories and questioned the traditional cornerstone of legitimacy, the idea of *zhengtong* 正統. Their perspective greatly broadened scholarly understanding of legitimacy in general and the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in particular. This section analyzes two scholars, Wang Fuzhi and Liang Qichao, who deconstructed the idea of *zhengtong* and described both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties as illegitimate. The former questioned the validity of *zhengtong* and replaced it with terms *zhitong* and *daotong*. The latter went even further, arguing that the concept of *zhengtong* actually supported iniquitous autocracy, and introduced the Western idea of constitutionalism to discuss legitimacy.

[101] Ibid., 53-54. A female ruler could not be legitimate since she ruled males, which violated the moral principles regarding male and female, as Fang Xiaoru points out.
[102] Ibid., 60.
[103] Ibid., 59. Although Fang Xiaoru offers Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei high praise, he still views the Northern Wei as illegitimate.

5.2.2.1. Wang Fuzhi

Wang Fuzhi was born in the late Ming period. In 1644, his family was ruined in the turmoil that led to the founding of the Qing Dynasty. Wang served the exiled Ming court in the ensuing years, but once the Qing had conquered all of China, he retreated to his hometown. During the remaining forty years of his life, he lived in seclusion and devoted himself to scholarly pursuits.[104]

Wang Fuzhi was one of the first thinkers to question the validity of *zhengtong*. His work *Du tongjian lun* 讀通鑒論 (Reading Notes of the Comprehensive Mirror) includes discussions about legitimacy, which focus principally on two topics: to show the shortcomings of *zhengtong* and to explain the advantages of two alternative terms: *zhitong* 治統 (succession of rulers) and *daotong* 道統 (succession of the [Confucian] way).[105] He also denies legitimacy to both the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties.

Wang Fuzhi first points out three shortcomings of the term *zhengtong*: its disgraceful origin, false application, and questionable premise.

To demonstrate the disgraceful origin of *zhengtong*, Wang offers a historical review of the term. In contrast to present-day scholars, who argue that *zhengtong* was first introduced by the Eastern Han historian Ban Gu, Wang Fuzhi states that term was introduced during the Cao Wei Dynasty (220–265), when it was argued that a dynasty could be included in the legitimate succession of dynasties if it inherited the throne from the previous dynasty.[106] Following that idea, the Cao Wei could be considered legitimate because Cao Pi, its founder, had inherited the throne after the abdication of the last ruler of the Eastern Han. Wang Fuzhi indicates that *zhengtong* in this case played a disgraceful role since it served to legitimize the usurpation. Thereafter, the term *zhengtong* was used by a series of dynasties, including the Eastern Jin Dynasty and the Southern Dynasties, to legitimize their usurpation-based establishments.[107]

The second shortcoming of *zhengtong* rests upon one of its major applications: to be included in the list of legitimate successions by adopting the dynastic phase.[108] Ouyang Xiu had already criticized the use of dynastic phases in his discussions about

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[104] For biographical information about Wang Fuzhi, see Wang Zhichun 王之春, *Wang Fuzhi nianpu* 王夫之年譜 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989). For an overview of Wang Fuzhi's thought, see Liu JeeLoo, "Wang Fuzhi (Wang Fu-chih)," in *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy*, 748-55.

[105] Wang Fuzhi, *Du tongjian lun* 讀通鑒論 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2003). This book consists of notes concerning Sima Guang's *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒.

[106] Wang Fuzhi, *Du tongjian lun*, 1106.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

legitimacy. Wang Fuzhi goes further. He denies the validity of the dynastic phase by pointing out two relevant problems: (a) dynastic phases were frequently adopted by illegitimate dynasties to legitimate their rule, and (b) the theory behind the practice led to two contradictory progressions: Zou Yan's theory of dynastic phases suggests that each new phase "overcomes" its predecessor (the dynastical phases of the Xia, Shang, Zhou, and Qin dynasties proceeded in such a permutation), while Liu Xin's theory suggests that each phase "generates" its successor (dynasties subsequent to the Han adopted their dynastic phases by following that logic).

The third shortcoming is the erroneous premise of *zhengtong*. Wang Fuzhi details two supposed premises: the central realm should be united and the succession of legitimate dynasties should be continuous.[109] Previous sections show that Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang stressed the unification of the central realm when discussing legitimacy, while Wang Tong and his followers supported a continuous succession. To invalidate these two premises, Wang Fuzhi describes three phases in China's history.

The first phase was when the central realm changed from division to unification. Wang Fuzhi argues that ever since the legendary sage rulers (such as Yao and Shun) united the central realm, a series of dynasties (from the beginning to the Zhou Dynasty) inherited the rule of their predecessors and kept the central realm unified.[110] During this period, the two premises of the *zhengtong* fitted historical reality.[111]

The second phase was when the central realm fell into a cycle of division and unification.[112] After the Zhou Dynasty collapsed, the central realm fragmentized. Various regional states emerged and fought each other until the Qin Dynasty established its unifying rule over the central realm.[113] Similar scenarios happened repeatedly in the later period. Once a united dynasty collapsed, various states appeared and dominated parts of the central realm. Then dynasties such as the Han, Jin, Sui, Tang, and Song gradually arose and eventually united the central realm. These dynasties established their unifying rule after years of combat with competitors, rather than directly replacing an earlier unified dynasty.[114] The historical mode during this period can be seen as a cycle of division and unification. This mode directly contradicts the premise of *zhengtong* since the central realm during this period did not

[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid. Sima Guang had a similar view, as we saw in Section 5.1.2.2.
[112] Ibid., 1107.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

remain unified all the time and the unifying dynasties did not follow immediately upon each other.

The third phase was when the central realm, rather than repeatedly alternating between division and unification, was ruled by a series of unified dynasties.[115] The collapse of the Southern Song did not cause the central realm to become fragmentized. The Yuan Dynasty directly replaced the Song Dynasty and became the ruler of the entire central realm.[116] Similarly, the Ming and Qing dynasties directly seized their rules from the previous, united dynasties. However, Wang Fuzhi, notably, describes both the Yuan and the Qing dynasties as illegitimate due to their "barbarian" rulers and views only the Ming Dynasty as legitimate. He argues that this contradicts the premise of *zhengtong*, because only the Ming Dynasty was a unified and legitimate dynasty, although it had no relation to prior or subsequent unified yet illegitimate dynasties.

These observations about three phases in China's history not only reveal the complex realities of rule, conquest, succession, abdication, division, and unification in Chinese history, but also demonstrate the failure of the premises of *zhengtong*. In other words, Wang Fuzhi avers both the idea that the central realm did not necessarily remain united and that a continuous succession of legitimate dynasties did not exist.

The above three deficiencies indicate that the term *zhengtong* fails to be a valid concept in discussing legitimacy, allowing Wang Fuzhi to introduce two others: *zhitong* and *daotong*. Wang Fuzhi adopts these two terms to discuss legitimacy.

The term *zhitong* literally means "succession of rulers." Wang Fuzhi uses this term to refer to a lineage of legitimate rulers in history. He argues that only those rulers who had immense virtue and achieved great accomplishments were entitled to be considered legitimate. Wang Fuzhi continues by stating that since all legitimate rulers in history ruled virtuously, they could form a succession, even if their reigns did not follow one another.[117] Hence, *zhitong* is a discontinuous succession that includes only the successful rulers from the Shang, Zhou, Han, Tang, and Song dynasties.[118] It is not surprising to see that this *zhitong* does not include any ruler of the Period of Disunion. On the one hand, Wang Fuzhi shares Zheng Sixiao's view that non-Chinese

[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Wang Fuzhi, *Du tongjian lun*, 13. 408-09.
[118] Ibid., 22.779-81. Wang Fuzhi must have viewed Ming rulers as eligible members of *zhitong*, although he does not mention them in this book.

rulers have barbarous natures that prevent them from achieving virtuous and legitimate rulership.[119] He even provides a metaphor, asserting that Emperor Xiaowen, the allegedly successful Northern Wei ruler, adopted Chinese customs like a monkey wearing a crown to present itself as human.[120] On the other hand, since all the Southern Dynasties had a usurpation-based foundation and few of them had virtuous monarchs, Wang Fuzhi's *zhitong* excludes rulers of the Southern Dynasties as well.[121]

The term *daotong* literally means "succession of the [Confucian] way." This term was quite popular in Neo-Confucianism and denotes the succession of Confucian masters who are fully familiar with Confucian moral principles. As Peter Bol points out, Zhu Xi had already used this term in his discussion about legitimacy.[122] Richard Davis also points out that this term was first popularized by the Song scholar Li Yuangang 李元綱 (12th century), in which the Confucian Way is depicted as being transferred from Confucius and Mencius to a series of Northern Song scholars, such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017-1073), Chen Hao 程顥 (1032-1085), Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1108) and other Neo-Confucian masters.[123] Wang Fuzhi argues that the succession of the Confucian Way accompanies and supports the succession of rulers.[124] He also suggests that a legitimate ruler should promote Confucianism and thereby receive support from Confucian masters to support his legitimacy.[125] No scholars from the Period of Disunion are included in this succession.

In summary, Wang Fuzhi deconstructs the term *zhengtong* by pointing out three deep-seated shortcomings of that term. To discuss legitimacy and the legitimacy disputes, he introduces the terms *zhitong* and *daotong*. Since none of the rulers or scholars of the Northern Wei or the Southern dynasties met the *zhitong* and *daotong* criteria, these dynasties failed to be legitimate.

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[119] Ibid., 14.431.
[120] Ibid., 17. 576. A similar and interesting metaphor can be found in Dutch, namely "geef een aap een gouden ring, het is en blijft een lelijk ding" (if you give a monkey a golden ring, it still remains an ugly thing, i.e. animal).
[121] Ibid., 22.780. Wang Fuzhi offers high praise to the Liu Song Dynasty for their resistance of the "barbarian" Northern Wei. Ibid., 15.477-78.
[122] Bol says, "Zhu Xi himself argued that there was a separate line of authority over the Way outside rulership; he and his successors called this the 'Succession of the Way' (*daotong*) […] The *daotong* thus came to stand alongside the older political term for a 'correct succession' (*zhengtong*) of dynasties that were 'legitimate' successors to the sage -kings of antiquity as possessors of heaven's mandate." See Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 132.
[123] Richard Davis**,** "Historiography as Politics," 48.
[124] Wang Fuzhi, *Du tongjian lun*, 13.408-09.
[125] Ibid., 15. 497.

5.2.2.2. Liang Qichao

The criticisms of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy reached the peak at the end of 19th century, when China encountered severe challenges from the West. Liang Qichao was arguably the most influential person to question the term *zhengtong* and introduce Western ideas into the discussion about legitimacy.

In 1890 when Liang failed the "Metropolitan Graduate" national examinations in Beijing, he became a disciple of Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858-1927), a distinguished reformer of the Qing Dynasty. Soon afterwards, in 1898, he participated in the famous "Hundred Days' Reform" (*wuxu bianfa* 戊戌變法) and fled to Japan after it failed.[126] In 1902, while in exile in Japan, he wrote an essay titled "Lun zhengtong" 論正統 (Discourse on Legitimacy) to express his views on traditional Chinese discussions on legitimacy.[127] In this essay Liang Qichao primarily points out six questionable "proofs" of legitimacy supposed by the term *zhengtong*, and explains how these supposed proofs became popular. This essay ends with an introduction to the relevance of Western ideas of constitutional monarchy to the issue of legitimacy and the conclusion that no dynasty, including the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, possessed real legitimacy.

In the beginning of his essay, Liang stresses his total rejection of the term *zhengtong*, saying "among the mistakes of Chinese historians, none is graver than the discussion of *zhengtong*" 中國史家之謬, 未有過於言正統者也.[128] Liang notes that the six popular substantiations of legitimacy that were adopted by previous scholars are questionable, namely the occupation of a large territory;[129] a long reign;[130] the same ruling house as the previous dynasty;[131] the same capital as the previous dynasty;[132] an allegedly legitimate successor;[133] and a Chinese ruling house.[134] Liang

[126] For biographical information about Liang Qichao and an overview of his thoughts, see Joseph Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-Ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970).
[127] This essay is included in the corpus of Liang Qichao's writings, *Yinbingshi heji* 飲冰室合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989).
[128] Ibid., 9.20.
[129] Ibid., 9.21. Liang Qichao gives the example that the Yuan Dynasty is viewed as legitimate since it occupied the largest territory in China's history.
[130] Ibid. Liang argues that since the Xin Dynasty 新朝 (9-23) had a short reigning period, few scholars in history viewed that dynasty as legitimate.
[131] Ibid. The Eastern Jin and the Southern Song are allegedly legitimate, according to this evidence, as Liang asserts.
[132] Ibid. As Liang points out, both the Cao Wei and the Five Dynasties are viewed as legitimate by some scholars since they shared the capital with their previous dynasties. The Northern Wei is a similar case, since this dynasty transferred the capital to Luoyang.

continues by pointing out numerous contradictions of these substantiations. If one accepts the first one and confirms a dynasty's *zhengtong* due to the size of its territory (shared by Gao Lüe and Li Yanshou), two widely recognized illegitimate dynasties in previous scholars' views, the Former Qin and Jurchen Jin dynasties, should be treated as *zhengtong* due to their substantial accumulation of territory.[135] The second verification, that of the extensive duration of a reign (used by Li Yanshou and Zhang Fangping), is similarly problematic. For instance, it fails to explain why two supposedly illegitimate dynasties, the Northern Wei and the Western Xia, had longer reigns than the ostensibly legitimate dynasties of their times, the Southern Dynasties and the Northern Song respectively.[136] The third piece of evidence, that of having the same ruling house as the previous dynasty (mentioned by Shen Yue and Huangfu Shi), does not enable one to explain why the ancient state of Song 宋, where the Shang Dynasty nobles resided after their dynasty was sacked by the Zhou, as not considered *zhengtong* by previous scholars.[137] The fourth criterion, in terms of which a dynasty is seen as legitimate due to its having an appropriate capital, is also problematic. According to this evidence, two supposedly illegitimate dynasties, the Northern Wei and the Jurchen Jin, should be viewed as legitimate since they both shared capitals with preceding dynasties, the Western Jin and the Northern Song Dynasty respectively. The fifth indicator of legitimacy (as used by Li Yanshou) is that a dynasty could be viewed as *zhengtong* because of its well-acknowledged legitimate predecessor. This determinant does not enable one to explain why the supposedly illegitimate Northern Wei had a legitimate successor, the Tang Dynasty. The last one, of having a Chinese ruling house (used by Zheng Sixiao and Fang Xiaoru), is contradicted by the fact that the Five Dynasties were viewed as legitimate by most previous scholars although three of them had non-Chinese rulers.[138] In conclusion, these six indicators, which were used by many scholars mentioned in this dissertation, do not provide any indisputable criterion of legitimacy.

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[133] Ibid. Many scholars describe the Sui Dynasty as legitimate since the allegedly legitimate Tang Dynasty succeeded the abdicated ruler of the Sui Dynasty.
[134] Ibid. Liang argues that the southern dynasties have to be viewed as legitimate if this criterion is adopted.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] After the Zhou Dynasty was founded, elites of the preceding Shang Dynasty were given land that was later to become the state of Song 宋國 (11th century BCE-286 BCE).
[138] Liang Qichao, *Yinbingshi heji*, 9.21.

Liang Qichao also investigates why the six criteria of legitimacy became popular. The first reason, he argues, derives from scholars' selfish desires to support their own dynasties' legitimacy. Liang asserts that historians such as Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Li Yanshou supported their own dynasty's legitimacy by introducing various questionable factors, such as a large territory and a Chinese ruling house, into their arguments regarding the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute. Similarly, various Southern Song thinkers firmly supported the Eastern Jin's legitimacy.[139]

The second reason was that scholars tried to flatter their rulers by inventing dubious factors regarding legitimacy, for example, that the central realm needed a sage and rightful ruler at any given time, and that there should not be two rightful rulers at the same time.[140] As Liang explains, if at one point there was no identifiable qualified ruler, scholars would have had to settle on the least unqualified one among all candidates (including usurpers, thieves, and barbarians) in order to demonstrate the first assumption. If there were more than one candidate for the position of rightful ruler, scholars in history would have had to support their rulers by denigrating other candidates as illegitimate in order as to demonstrate the second assumption.

After demonstrating the invalidity of previous views on *zhengtong*, Liang considers the paradox beneath these views. His essay shows that previous views on *zhengtong* actually rendered no dynasty in history legitimate. A "barbarian" dynasty, as scholars believed, especially those in the Southern Song and Ming dynasties, could not be viewed as legitimate. Therefore, the Northern Wei, the Five Dynasties, the Khitan Liao, the Jurchen Jin, and the Yuan Dynasty were not qualified to be legitimate.[141] Since various scholars defined dynasties established by usurpation as illegitimate, the Cao Wei, the Jin Dynasty, the Southern Dynasties, the Sui, the Tang, and the Song could not be viewed as legitimate.[142] Finally, since "burglars" could not be viewed as legitimate, even the Han and the Ming dynasty become illegitimate.[143] The result is that, throughout the entirety of the two thousand years since the collapse of the Zhou Dynasty, no dynasty qualified to be legitimate.

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[139] Ibid., 9.23-24.
[140] Ibid., 9.24.
[141] Ibid., 9.21.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid. Historical records note that the founders of the Han and the Ming dynasties were vagrants ("burglars") in their early life and hence, according to Liang Qichao, could not found a legitimate dynasty.

What constitutes a legitimate regime in Liang Qichao's view? At the end of his essay, he stresses that a legitimate regime is one that has a constitutional monarchy, as in Britain and Japan.[144] In a constitutional monarchy, once rulers ascend to the throne, they must vow to respect the constitution and to devote themselves to serve their people. Liang indicates that rather than the Mandate of Heaven, the ruler's morality, or any other invented symbol of legitimacy, only upholding the constitution gives a ruler legitimacy.[145] Given the absence of a constitution for most of China's history, it is clear that no dynasty in China's history, including the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, was legitimate, according to Liang Qichao.

In short, in order to deconstruct the term *zhengtong*, Liang Qichao points out six mistakes embedded in previous views of that term, which had been frequently introduced by scholars to discuss the Northern Wei's legitimacy. He argues that the term had been used to support Chinese monarchs' autocratic rule. It is hence meaningless to discuss whether the Northern Wei or the Southern Dynasties possessed *zhengtong*. Introducing Western constitutional monarchy, he indicates that a legitimate ruler should follow the constitution and devote himself to serving his people.

5.3 Conclusion

In the mid-18th century, Qing Dynasty scholars were commissioned to compile the largest collection of books in Chinese history, the *Siku Quanshu* 四庫全書 (Complete Library in Four Sections). Scholars soon encountered a troublesome question relating to Yang Weizhen's 楊維楨 (1296-1370) essay, "Zhengtong bian" 正統辨 (Disputation about Rightful Succession), in which the writer insisted that the legitimate succession of dynasties went through the Northern Song to the Southern Song, and then to the Yuan Dynasty, entirely bypassing the Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin dynasties.[146] The Qing scholars appreciated this essay because, similarly to Yang Weizhen, they viewed their dynasty, which also had non-Chinese rulers and united the central realm, as legitimate. However, Yang Weizhen also fiercely rejected the legitimacy of all other non-Chinese dynasties, especially the Jurchen Jin, which in Qing times was seen as

[144] Ibid., 9. 25.
[145] Ibid., 9.25-26.
[146] See Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 134-138. Richard Davis offers a detailed study of Yang Weizhen and attaches an English translation of the "Polemic on Legitimate Succession." See Richard Davis, "Historiography as Politics," 51-72.

the ancestral predecessor of the Qing Dynasty.[147] Qing scholars hence suggested excluding Yang Weizhen's essay from the *Siku Quanshu*.[148]

Interestingly, in an edict to his officials, the Qianlong Emperor 乾隆帝 (1735-1795) firmly supported Yang Weizhen's essay and continued by describing his dynasty as the legitimate successor of the Ming Dynasty, rather than the Jurchen Jin.[149] Moreover, the Qianlong Emperor also pronounced his view on previous legitimacy disputes, arguing that the Southern Dynasties and the Song Dynasty – rather than the Northern Wei, the Khitan Liao, and the Jurchen Jin – were legitimate due to their adoption of moral rule, despite their ethnicity. The emperor concluded by describing his own Qing as the most legitimate dynasty in Chinese history since it fully met most standards of legitimacy mentioned by scholars, such as the possession of the Mandate of Heaven, the adoption of moral rule, and dominance over the central realm.[150] This case indicates that even in late-imperial China, rulers and scholars still had an interest in the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, and the moral criterion played a crucial role in discussing legitimacy.

In this chapter three stages of discussions about the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute, from the Northern Song Dynasty onwards, were discussed. In the first stage, scholars either subscribed to Wang Tong's conceptions when discussing legitimacy, such as Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao, or introduced their own conception of *zhengtong* into the discussion about legitimacy, such as Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang. These two followers of Wang Tong supported the Northern Wei's legitimate status by promoting this dynasty's rulers as legitimate "Chinese" monarchs due to their adoption of Confucian political principles, occupation of the central realm, and other factors. The last two scholars understood *zhengtong* in terms of virtuous rule and the unification of the central realm. They not only denied the legitimacy of both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, but also questioned factors such as abdication, the dynastic phases, and the virtuosity of rulers as determinants of legitimacy.

In the second stage, scholars introduced Neo-Confucian ideas into the legitimacy discussion. The typical Chinese chauvinist Zheng Sixiao subscribed to

[147] The members of the ruling class of the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu people, are close descendants of the Jurchen people. Therefore, the Manchu people originally named their regime the Late Jin 後金.
[148] *Siku quanshu*, 1040. 411.
[149] Ibid., 1040. 411-15.
[150] Ibid., 1040. 414.

both the moral and ethnic criteria of legitimacy, and determined that having a Chinese ruler and displaying moral rule were two prerequisites of a legitimate status. Fang Xiaoru highlighted so-called Heavenly principles instead. Both scholars came to the conclusion that the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties were illegitimate, the former due to its "barbarian" rulers and the latter for usurping the throne.

In the last stage, scholars strove to deconstruct the term *zhengtong* and displayed a negative attitude toward the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties and in fact most if not all other dynasties. According to Wang Fuzhi's arguments, the origin, application, and premises of the term *zhengtong* were disgraceful and questionable. Legitimacy, in his view, was ensured by the succession of an accomplished ruler and Confucianism. Liang Qichao argued that previous views of *zhengtong*, which related to geographical, historical and ethnic criteria, were invalid. Only the adoption of Western constitutional monarchy could ensure legitimacy.

Chapter 6. Evolution and Disintegration of Traditional Chinese Views of Legitimacy

In the previous chapters two main topics were examined: the competition for legitimacy between the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, and scholarly disputes on that contest in later Chinese history. The texts analyzed in those chapters are of great benefit in exploring two further issues: (1) traditional Chinese views on legitimacy; and (2) the evolution and disintegration of these views. This chapter is devoted to investigating the question of what criteria and variable factors lie beneath traditional Chinese views of legitimacy, and how these views evolve and disintegrate in the course of history.

6.1 Traditional Chinese Views of Legitimacy

In this section some practical criteria and variable factors that could account for similarities and differences among diverse views on legitimacy in history are discussed.

6.1.1 Practical Criteria

As argued in this dissertation, five criteria of legitimacy were adopted by rulers and scholars alike. They can be classified under five broad headings: cosmological, moral, historical, ethnic, and geographical. The Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties observed distinct legitimation practices, which followed these criteria. Likewise, scholarly discussions on the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute were also premised on these criteria.

(1) The cosmological criterion refers to a wide range of cosmological factors that were seen as a testimony to a dynasty's legitimate status. The Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties adopted various legitimization practices related to the cosmological criterion. One was to record auspicious portents.[1] Heaven supposedly uses auspicious portents to indicate the legitimate ruler. Section 2.2.2 shows how one of the southern dynasties, the Liu Song Dynasty, recorded or even fabricated an enormous number of auspicious portents to demonstrate its legitimate status. Another relevant practice was sacrificing to Heaven. Since the cosmological criterion presupposes a link between Heaven and secular monarchs, the

[1] This method of legitimization was popular throughout Chinese history and was adopted by nearly all dynasties. Thus most standard histories include these portents from the section of "Wuxing zhi 五行志" (the five elements chronicles). Loewe describes the Han Dynasty as proclaiming various auspicious portents to support its legitimacy. See Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology and Monarchy*, Chapter 3 and 5.

latter demonstrated his possession of the Mandate of Heaven by offering sacrifices to Heaven. As noted in Sections 2.1.1 and 2.2.2, various rulers of the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties, candidly announced their possession of the mandate by conducting a sacrificial ceremony. In Section 2.1.3 it is described how Emperor Xiaowen offered the sacrifice to Heaven to improve his legitimacy.

However, the cosmological criterion was not popular in scholarly discussions of legitimacy. As noted above, Cui Xuanbo once mentioned an auspicious monster and yellow star when discussing the Northern Wei's dynastic phase. Wang Tong mentioned the Northern Wei's sacrifice to Heaven as an indication of that dynasty's legitimacy.[2]

(2) The moral criterion determines political legitimacy in relation to a monarch's morality. In this regard, the Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties attempted to enhance their legitimacy with practices such as the observance of filial piety and abdication procedures.[3] In Section 2.1.4 we saw how Emperor Xiaowen demonstrated his legitimacy by observing the Confucian virtue of filial piety and strictly adhering to the three-year mourning period. Section 2.2.1 includes a description of the founders of the Southern Dynasties attempting to legitimize their usurped rule by enforcing abdication as a way of fulfilling the criterion that only the great virtuous person has the right to acquire an abdicated throne. These two legitimization practices met the moral criterion, legitimizing the rulership by highlighting the rulers' great virtue.

The moral criterion became increasingly important in scholarly discussions. Prior to the Southern Song Dynasty, various scholars cited the moral criterion in their discussions about legitimacy. Wang Tong supported the Northern Wei's legitimate status by highlighting this dynasty's adherence to Confucian moral principles.[4] His follower Chen Shidao even referred to the virtuous ruler as one of his standards of legitimacy.[5] Ouyang Xiu also included the moral rule in his definition of legitimacy.[6] From the Southern Song period, Neo-Confucianism prevailed, making the moral criterion even more influential. Zheng Sixiao, Fang Xiaoru, and Wang Fuzhi, as discussed in Chapter 5, shared the view that rule according to Confucian moral principles determined a dynasty's legitimacy. They thus viewed both the Northern Wei

[2] See Section 4.2.1.
[3] See Section 2.1.4, 2.2.1.
[4] See Section 4.2.1.
[5] See Section 5.1.1.2.
[6] See Section 5.1.2.1.

and the Southern Dynasties as illegitimate due to their rulers' supposedly barbaric rule and usurpation masked as abdication respectively.[7]

(3) In terms of the historical criterion, a legitimate dynasty is defined according to its historical link to the previous – and purportedly legitimate – dynasty. In Chapter 2 we saw that the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties applied the historical criterion in their various legitimization practices. For instance, Section 2.1.1 reveals that in its early period the Northern Wei pronounced itself the successor of the Cao Wei dynasty due to the fact that they shared the same name. In Section 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 it was shown that in its mid-period the Northern Wei changed its dynastic phase and capital city in order to be able to present itself as the rightful successor of the Western Jin. As noted in Section 2.2.1, the Southern Dynasty used dynastic phases and abdication to present themselves as the rightful successors of previous dynasties.

Since, in terms of the historical criterion, a dynasty could receive legitimate status from the preceding dynasty, all allegedly legitimate dynasties in history could be included in a succession of legitimate dynasties. Because they valued the historical criterion, a great number of scholars in Chinese history provided lineages of successive dynasties to describe the transferal of legitimacy from one dynasty to another. The inclusion or exclusion of the Northern Wei in a lineage thus indicates their authors' views regarding the Northern Wei's legitimacy. There were three main kinds of succession models: Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Huangfu Shi insisted on a continuous succession of legitimacy. Li Yanshou and Wang Tong supported a dual linear continuous succession. Ouyang Xiu, Fang Xiaoru and others argued for an interrupted linear succession.

(4) In terms of the geographical criterion, occupation or unification of the central realm is an indicator of legitimacy. Both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties fulfilled the geographical criterion to support their legitimate status. Section 2.1.3 shows that the Northern Wei symbolized their dominance over All Under Heaven by making Luoyang, the supposed center of All Under Heaven, their capital city. In Section 2.2.3 it was noted that the Southern Dynasties not only cited an antique prophecy to prove that their capital Jingling was the rightful capital, but also established immigrant commanderies to exhibit their domination of the central realm and thereby meet the geographical criterion.

The geographical criterion was frequently used by scholars in their discussions about the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Gao Lüe and Li Yanshou supported the Northern Wei's

[7] See Section 5.1.3, 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.1.

legitimacy by highlighting this dynasty's occupation of a large proportion of northern China. Wang Tong and Zhang Fangping argued that the Northern Wei had occupied the central realm and hence became legitimate. However, Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang argued that only the unification of All Under Heaven determined the legitimacy.

(5) In terms of the ethnic criterion, being a Chinese ruler and adhering to Chinese culture are prerequisites for legitimacy. The Northern Wei, as this dissertation shows, used two methods to meet the ethnic criterion. In Section 3.1.1 we saw that the Northern Wei used a legend to prove that their Tuoba rulers were the offspring of the Yellow Emperor, the ancestor of the Chinese people.[8] In Section 2.1.4 it was explained that the Northern Wei adopted some Chinese cultural conventions, such as the three-year mourning period and Chinese-style state sacrifices, to display their legitimacy. The Southern Dynasties demonstrated that they met the ethnic criterion in two ways. As noted in Section 3.1.2, the Liu Song Southern Dynasties highlighted that their rulers were the authentic offspring of the royal family or aristocracy of the Han Dynasty. Section 3.1.2 also describes that the Southern Dynasties undermined the Northern Wei's legitimacy by depicting a "barbarian" image of that non-Chinese dynasty.

The ethnic criterion was influential in scholarly discussions about legitimacy. Many supporters of the Northern Wei had a flexible view of the ethnic criterion, arguing that Chinese ethnicity could be culturally adopted or abandoned. Therefore, Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao described the ethnically Chinese rulers of the Southern Dynasties as "barbarians," while praising the Tuoba rulers as "Chinese" due to their adoption of Chinese culture.[9] Various opponents of the notion of the Northern Wei's legitimate status, however, cited the ethnic criterion. Huangfu Shi, for instance, accused the Northern Wei of failing to fully adopt Confucian codes and thus remaining "barbarous" and illegitimate. Zheng Sixiao, Fang Xiaoru, and Wang Fuzhi insisted on an impenetrable boundary between the Chinese and barbarians, indicating that Chinese culture and Confucian codes were unattainable for "barbarians" and the Northern Wei's rulers had no access to being Chinese.

6.1.2 Variable Factors

To account for differences among diverse views on legitimacy and the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute in Chinese history, in this section three major types of variable factors are

[8] See Section 2.1.1 and 3.1.1. Two Northern Wei officials Cui Xuanbo and Wei Shou cherished this idea.
[9] See Section 3.2.

examined: dynasties' distinct historical backgrounds, scholars' differing social statuses, and their distinct historical circumstances.

(1) Varying historical backgrounds are arguably the most important factor to take into consideration when attempting to account for dynasties' dissimilar views on legitimacy. Taking the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties as an example, although these dynasties agreed on the underlying principles of legitimacy, as discussed above, they implemented differing legitimization practices due to their distinctive historical backgrounds.

The Northern Wei was a "barbarian" dynasty in the eyes of Chinese people of its time. This dynasty had to establish its legitimacy from the ground up, with no legitimate predecessor that could provide it with political and cultural acceptability. Therefore, the Northern Wei paid a great deal of attention to legitimization practices that could either highlight its historical links with previous Chinese dynasties, such as the adoption of a meaningful dynastic name, a dynastic phase, and a capital city, or persuade its Chinese subjects to agree on the authority of its rule by embracing Chinese cultural conventions, such as certain Chinese-style virtues and sacrifices.

The Southern Dynasties were established one after another by replacing the preceding dynasty, thereby simply inheriting the presumed legitimacy of their predecessors. They thus focused on practices that would preserve and enhance their inherited legitimacy. Legitimization practices such as implementing abdication procedures, reporting auspicious portents, and setting up immigrant commanderies could either highlight their close relationship with previous dynasties or provide cosmological and geographical evidence to support their legitimacy.[10]

(2) Scholars' varying social statuses greatly influenced their views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei. The Northern and Southern Dynasties' official historians, Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Xiao Zixian, and later ones such as Li Yanshou, drew on their views of the Northern Wei's legitimacy to lend credence to the official assessment of the Northern Wei's legitimacy in their times.[11] In other words, they supported the *zhengtong* status of either the Northern Wei or the Southern Dynasties because this support benefited them in their own life or work. In contrast, literati without official positions, such as Wang Tong and Huangfu Shi, provided

[10] See Section 2.2.

[11] All the abovementioned scholar-officials or historians provided ideas that reflect the official answer to the Northern Wei legitimacy issue in their periods. This dissertation also reveals the fact that historians such as Wei Shou, Shen Yue, Xiao Zixian, and Li Yanshou asserted their ideas in order to support their own dynasties' legitimacy. See Section 3.1, 3.2.1.

more distant and less involved views on the legitimacy issue, and their views tended to contradict the official views of their periods.[12]

(3) Scholars' distinct historical circumstances also influenced their views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei. In the Period of Disunion, waves of non-Chinese powers challenged Chinese dynasties, causing ethnic conflict to become a prominent theme in that period. Therefore, historians in the Period of Disunion largely focused on ethnic aspects in their discussions of legitimacy.[13] A similar situation occurred from the Southern Song Dynasty onwards, when Chinese society encountered increasingly serious challenges from northern non-Chinese ethnic groups, such as the Jurchen, Mongols, and Manchu. Once again, ethnic strife became a predominant theme. This possibly explains why Chinese scholars such as Zheng Sixiao and Wang Fuzhi shared a hostile attitude toward the Northern Wei's legitimacy, since non-Chinese regimes in their own times greatly challenged their dynasties' legitimacy, just as the Northern Wei challenged the Southern Dynasties' legitimacy.

6.2 Evolution and Disintegration of Traditional Chinese Views of Legitimacy

The Northern Wei legitimacy dispute serves as a vivid example of the dynamism and complexity of traditional Chinese views on legitimacy. To illuminate these aspects, in this section the evolution and disintegration of the traditional Chinese views of legitimacy are described by referring to the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute.

Present-day studies show that cosmological and historical criteria of legitimacy dominated in early imperial China. The Qin and Han dynasties supported their legitimacy by means of dynastic phases, auspicious portents, divinations, state sacrifices, and other factors, as many scholars point out.[14] The Cao Wei and Western Jin also relied heavily on the practice of abdication to ensure their legitimate status.[15] According to Honey and Luo, non-Chinese rulers in the Sixteen Kingdom period also made use of resources such as the genealogical link to the Han Dynasty royal house, prophetic lore, and/or dynastic phases to legitimize their

[12] Wang Tong and Huangfu Shi provide contradictory views on the Northern Wei's legitimacy in relation to the official views of their periods. As mentioned in Section 5.1.1, the Sui and Tang courts firmly supported the Northern Wei's legitimate status. However, both Wang Tong and Huangfu Shi more or less supported the Southern Dynasties' legitimacy.
[13] See Section 3.1.
[14] Beck, *The Treatises of Later Han*, 156-164. Ming-chiu Lai, "Legitimation of Qin-Han China," 1-26.
[15] Leban, "The Accession of Sima Yan," 1-50. Knechtges, "The Rhetoric of Imperial," 3-35.

rule.[16] Thinkers prior to the Northern Wei's period also frequently followed cosmological and historical criteria in their discussions. For instance, Dong Zhongshu defined auspicious portents as divine testimony to a rule's legitimacy, while Liu Xin introduced the dynastic phase theory to depict a continuous historical succession of legitimate dynasties in history.

The Northern Wei and Southern Dynasties largely resorted to cosmological and historical criteria of legitimacy to support their rule. To win the "contest for legitimacy," the Northern Wei highlighted their meaningful dynastic phase, dynastic name, and capital, while the Southern Dynasties relied on auspicious portents and abdication. Meanwhile, these dynasties also subscribed to other criteria of legitimacy. As a non-Chinese dynasty, the Northern Wei met the ethnic criterion by embracing Chinese customs. Moreover, this dynasty and the Southern Dynasties attempted to meet the geographical criterion by establishing Luoyang as its capital city and creating numerous "immigrant commanderies" respectively. Historians during this period, such as Wei Shou, Shen Yue, and Xiao Zixian, placed more emphasis on the ethnic criterion, supporting or denying the Northern Wei's legitimacy by discussing whether this dynasty inherited Chinese culture and was ruled by Chinese.

Similarly to previous dynasties, the Tang Dynasty also derived its legitimacy from the dynastic phase, state sacrifices, ritual codes and other legitimating factors, as Wechsler's studies show.[17] Since the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute had bearing on the legitimacy of the Sui and Tang, scholars during that period paid much attention to that dispute. In general, scholars viewed legitimacy in a broader light than before. On the one hand, previous views on legitimacy were still accepted, with some revisions. For instance, both Li Yanshou and Wang Tong posited updated views on the historical criterion, describing the succession of legitimate dynasties as dual, not continuous-linear, and both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties could cite legitimate sources for their dynasties. These scholars also appealed to the cosmological and geographical criteria, mentioning the sacrifices to Heaven and occupation of the central realm in their discussions. On the other hand, some innovative ideas entered the discussion. Wang Tong and Huangfu Shi, for instance, updated the geographical criterion by depicting the central realm as a place where Confucian political principles and Chinese culture prevailed. Wang Tong also challenged the ethnic criterion by arguing that non-Chinese dynasties could be legitimate if they adopted Confucian principles. Li Yanshou highlighted a long reign when determining a dynasty's legitimate status.

[16] Honey, "Lineage as Legitimation," 616-621. Luo Xin, "Shiliuguo Beichao," 47-56.
[17] Wechsler, *Offerings of Jade and Silk*, 4-8, 224-232,

According to Liu Pujiang and Hok-lam Chan, the dynastic phase was still important to the Song, Liao, and Jin dynasties as a means of bolstering their legitimacy.[18] Lin Hu shows that the Liao Dynasty also selected their capitals to legitimize their rule.[19] During this period, different dynasties, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, competed with each other to be the legitimate rulers of the entire central realm. This situation is quite similar to what happened in the Period of Disunion. The Northern Wei's legitimacy was consequently discussed intensively. However, a drastic change took place in these scholarly discussions. On the one hand, some conventional views on legitimacy were still cherished or developed further. Referring to Wang Tong's ideas, Zhang Fangping and Chen Shidao appealed to criteria such as geographical, ethnic, and moral ones to discuss legitimacy, arguing that the possession of the central realm, the adoption of Chinese culture and a virtuous ruler supported the Northern Wei's legitimacy. Scholars in the Jin Dynasty, such as Lü Zhengan and Zhao Bingwen, shared a similar view but they finally supported the Jin Dynasty's legitimacy.[20] Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang developed the geographical criterion, which had been adopted by Li Yanshou and Wang Tong, determining the unification of the central realm to be a crucial factor of legitimacy. Zheng Sixiao not only advocated that the moral criterion meant that the ruler's legitimacy was confirmed by his moral character, but also used the ethnic criterion in an extreme way, highlighting the impenetrable line between Chinese and non-Chinese dynasties with respect to legitimacy, an idea that was shared by Shen Yue and Xiao Zixian.

On the other hand, scholars started to criticize various conventional ideas on legitimacy. The use of dynastic phases, which had long served as a significant way to indicate the transfer of legitimacy between dynasties, was shown to be contentious and invalid by Ouyang Xiu and Sima Guang. The idea of a continuous succession of legitimate dynasties, which was shared by Wang Tong, Li Yanshou and Huangfu Shi, was rejected by Ouyang Xiu, who proffered a discontinuous succession of legitimacy, a view that was to prevail thereafter. Sima Guang also questioned other popular views on legitimacy, such as using abdication and the virtuous ruler criterion to discuss legitimacy.

Dynasties after the Song period largely expanded their legitimization methods. To legitimize their rule, the rulers of the Yuan Dynasty not only introduced Chinese-style legitimacy conventions such as the dynastic name, dynastic phase, Confucian rites, and auspicious portents, but also borrowed beliefs, such as the Mongolian Heaven *tengri* and

[18] Liu Pujiang, "The End of the Five Virtues," 513-54. Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 37-40.
[19] Lin Hu. "A Tale of Five Capitals: Contests for Legitimacy between Liao and its Rivals," *Asian History* 44 (2010): 99-127.
[20] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 254. Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue*, 125-126.

various Buddhist doctrines.[21] The Qing rulers also embraced "the imperial tradition in China" and "the khanal tradition of Central Asia" to support their authority, as Crossley points out.[22] The Ming Dynasty also attempted to demonstrate its legitimacy by highlighting its historical links to the Song Dynasty.[23] The Northern Wei legitimacy dispute still attracted scholars' attention during this period. Three methods were employed when discussing legitimacy. Most scholars typically built on earlier views. For example, Fang Xiaoru used the historical criterion and devised an updated version of the succession of legitimate dynasties in a discontinuous sequence, rather like Ouyang Xiu's. He and Wang Fuzhi partially seconded Zheng Sixiao's view of the ethnic criterion and defined the Northern Wei as illegitimate due to their "barbarian" rulers.

The second method was to develop the moral criterion by introducing Neo-Confucianism. Scholars such as Wang Tong, Chen Shidao and Zheng Sixiao had already used Confucian principles as moral criteria. Their focus was on the monarch, because they viewed a ruler's adoption of Confucian moral principles a valid criterion for establishing legitimacy. Fang Xiaoru, however, suggested that a discussion of legitimacy should be focused on a set of Confucian principles, such as a righteous political order, the benevolent ruler, the difference between Chinese and barbarians and so on. Wang Fuzhi took up this line of thought and also discussed legitimacy in relation to two new aspects: the ruler who adopted moral rule and the Confucian masters who guided the politics.

The last approach was to question previous views of legitimacy. Wang Fuzhi suggested that the use of dynastic phases, the unification of the central realm and the continuous succession of legitimate dynasties, three ways that are endorsed by the cosmological, geographical, and historical criteria respectively, contradicted historical reality. Liang Qichao's objection to six popular "proofs" of *zhengtong* also led to his questioning of the geographical, historical and ethnic legitimacy criteria in the traditional Chinese context. To further the understanding of legitimacy, both scholars provided some fresh perspectives. Wang Fuzhi argued for two kinds of succession, namely that virtuous and successful monarchs or Confucian masters were essential criteria of political legitimacy. Liang Qichao adopted Western-style constitutionalism as a prerequisite for legitimacy.

[21] Franke, *From Tribal Chieftain*.
[22] Crossley, "Review: The Rulerships of China," 1473.
[23] Hok-Lam Chan, "The Song Dynasty Legacy," 91-133.

Present-day scholars see Liang Qichao's criticism as the end of traditional Chinese views of legitimacy.[24] In 1912, ten years after Liang Qichao wrote his essay on legitimacy, the Chinese imperial period ended. On February 12, the Qing court issued its last imperial edict, announcing its abdication, which declared that the Mandate of Heaven had been transferred to a newborn state: the Republic of China (ROC). This indicates that the Qing court still subscribed to the traditional Chinese view of legitimacy and viewed the Republic of China as the new recipient of the Mandate of Heaven.[25] The ROC, however, cherished a different idea. On January 1 of 1912 when its first president, Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 (1866-1925), proclaimed the establishment of that state, he announced that the ROC would base its legitimacy on the public will.[26] This idea was soon confirmed by the first constitution of the Republic of China, the Provisional Constitution (*linshi yuefa* 臨時約法). Meanwhile, the new term, "Accordance with the Law" (*hefaxing* 合法性), was coined by modern Chinese scholars to replace the term *zhengtong* when referring to the notion of political legitimacy.

6.3 Conclusion

Current Chinese scholars no longer subscribe to traditional Chinese views about legitimacy, but that does not mean that they are no longer relevant. Their value can be revealed in terms of the following aspects.

Traditional Chinese views on legitimacy are premised on a divine Mandate from Heaven, for which there are similar expressions in other civilizations. Hok-lam Chan points out that "the concept of divine sanction as the basis of theocratic kingship, derived from the religious belief that the temporal ruler was whether a god-king, son of god, or god's vicar on earth, was the principal source of legitimate authority in major centers of ancient civilization."[27] He also points out that various types of divine legitimacy could be discovered in ancient Egypt, India, Rome, Arabia, and other civilizations.[28]

The traditional Chinese use of the All Under Heaven doctrine to validate legitimacy greatly affected other ancient East Asian states. For instance, after the Qing Dynasty replaced the Ming Dynasty, thinkers from the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1897) suggested that Joseon

[24] Zhu Weizhen 朱維錚, "Introduction," in *Zhongguo shixue*, Rao Zongyi, 3.
[25] *Linshi gongbao* 臨時公報 (Beijing), Feb., 13, 1912.
[26] "Linshi dazongtong xuanyan shu 臨時大總統宣言書," *Linshi zhengfu gongbao* 臨時政府公報 (Nanjing), Jan., 29, 1912.
[27] Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China*, 4.
[28] Ibid.

became the new "central realm" due to their adoption of Chinese culture.[29] Similarly, many pre-modern Japanese scholars defined their lands as the "central realm," the supposed center of the world, which further supported their state' legitimacy.[30]

The traditional Chinese views of legitimacy left abundant legacies that have enabled the present Chinese government to strengthen its legitimacy. For example, Mencius and Wang Tong described the wellbeing of the public as a crucial requirement of legitimate rule. Some present-day scholars indicate that the ruling party of China – the Chinese Communist Party – places much emphasis on the wellbeing of the public, and thereby highlights its legitimacy.[31] Moreover, the moral criterion of legitimacy in traditional China has left a heritage of high moral requirements for the ruler on the one hand and the loss of legitimacy if he practices despotic and atrocious governance on the other. The Chinese government evidently at least partially agrees with these ideas, arguing that corruption endangers its political legitimacy. It therefore launched a series of anti-corruption campaigns to underscore its legitimacy.[32] Finally, the traditional Chinese views of legitimacy included an emphasis on geographical and cultural factors, namely the central realm and Chinese culture. The Chinese government nowadays not only aspires to the unification of China as its highest priority, but also supports a kind of "renaissance" campaign that aims to rejuvenate traditional Chinese culture, such as Confucianism.[33] The aim of these practices is to reinforce the Chinese government's legitimacy by highlighting its possession of the entire China and traditional Chinese culture. Although traditional Chinese views of legitimacy have received a severe blow and were replaced by other doctrines for more than a century, elements of this view still influence present-day Chinese politics.

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[29] Kwon Hee Young, "From Sinocentrism to Civilization Discourse," *The Review of Korean Studies* 13.3 (2010): 13-30. Prasenjit Duara, "The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism," *Journal of World History*, 12:1(1996): 1-5. Sun Weiguo 孫衛國, *Daming qihao yu xiaozhonghua yishi* 大明旗號與小中華意識 (Beijing: shangwu yinshuguan, 2007), 13, 262-267.

[30] Wai-Ming Ng, "Political Terminology in the Legitimation of Tokugawa Japan," *Journal of Asian History* 34.2 (2000): 135-148. Qiao Zhizhong 喬治忠, "Lun zhongri liangguo chuantong shixue zhi zhengtonglun guannian de yitong 論中日兩國傳統史學之 '正統論' 觀念的異同," *Qiushi xuekan* 求是學刊 32.02(2005): 109-116.

[31] Heike Holbig, "Ideological Reform and Political Legitimacy in China: Challenges in the Post-Jiang Era," *GIGA Working Paper No.18* (2006): 20-27.

[32] Samson Yuen, "Disciplining the Party: Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign and its limits," *China Perspectives* 3 (2014): 41-47.

[33] Heike Holbig and Bruce Gilley. "Reclaiming legitimacy in China," *Politics & policy* 38.3 (2010): 395-422. Fan Ruiping, ed. *The Renaissance of Confucianism in Contemporary China* (New York: Springer, 2011).

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Curriculum Vitae

Liu Puning was born in Shuozhou (Shanxi province) in the People's Republic of China on December 27, 1985. He specializes in traditional Chinese philosophy and the history of medieval China. He earned his BA of Philosophy from Shanxi University in 2010, and MA of Chinese Philosophy from Renmin University in 2013. Between 2013 and 2018, he conducted Ph.D. research at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies (LIAS).

Summary

The Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏 (386-535), founded by a non-Chinese ethnic group, competed with a series of Chinese ruling houses, collectively referred to as the Southern Dynasties 南朝 (420-589), in being perceived as the legitimate rulers of China. Scholars throughout Chinese history weighed in on the question of which side should be considered legitimate: the Northern Wei, the Southern Dynasties, neither, or both? This dissertation analyzes political legitimacy in Chinese history, with the Northern Wei as a case study. First it provides a historical background of the legitimacy dispute (chapter 1). It continues to analyze the various legitimation practices adopted by the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties (chapter 2). The dissertation then continues by studying, in chronological order, fourteen pre-modern Chinese scholars' views on the legitimacy of the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties (chapter 3, 4, and 5). With reference to the legitimacy dispute between the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties, this dissertation not only investigates practical criteria of legitimacy, which can be classified as cosmological, moral, historical, ethnic, and geographical, but also describes the evolution and disintegration of traditional Chinese views of legitimacy (chapter 6).

Samenvatting

De Noordelijke Wei-dynastie 北魏 (386-535), een niet-Chinees heersershuis, wedijverde met een reeks Chinese heersershuizen, gezamenlijk aangeduid als de Zuidelijke Dynastieën 南朝 (420-589), over wie gezien kon worden als legitieme bestuurders van China. Geleerden door de Chinese geschiedenis heen hadden uiteenlopende meningen over welke partij legitiem was: de Noordelijke Wei, de Zuidelijke Dynastieën, allebei, of geen van beide. Dit proefschrift bestudeert visies op politieke legitimiteit in de Chinese geschiedenis, met de Noordelijke Wei als *case study*. Hoofdstuk 1 biedt een historische achtergrond van de Noordelijke Wei en de Zuidelijke Dynastieën. Dit wordt gevolgd door een studie van de verschillende methoden die beide partijen inzetten om hun eigen legitimiteit te bewijzen (hoofdstuk 2). Daarna volgt, in chronologische volgorde, een bespreking van opvattingen van veertien Chinese geleerden op de legitimiteit van de Noordelijke Wei danwel de Zuidelijke Dynastieën (hoofdstuk 3, 4 en 5). Met verwijzing naar het legitimiteitsvraagstuk van de Noorderlijke Wei onderzoekt dit proefschrift niet alleen praktische criteria van legitimiteit die werden gehanteerd op kosmologisch, moreel, historisch, etnisch, en geografisch vlak, maar ook de ontwikkeling en het uiteenvallen van traditionele Chinese opvattingen over legitimiteit (hoofdstuk 6).