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

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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 legitimization 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 Lue 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 ruler'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 khalan 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’s 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.

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).

