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

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Propositions

1. The Northern Wei built its legitimacy from the ground up, while the Southern Dynasties relied on inherited legitimacy resources.
2. Both the Northern Wei and the Southern Dynasties possessed only fragmentary legitimacy.
3. Scholars throughout Chinese history who engaged in the legitimacy dispute can be divided into four groups: those who see the Northern Wei as legitimate, those who see the Southern Dynasties as legitimate; those who see both as legitimate; and those who see neither as legitimate.
4. The study of the Northern Wei legitimacy dispute reveals the evolution as well as the final disintegration of the traditional Chinese views of legitimacy.
5. Discussion of the Northern Wei's legitimacy indirectly contributes to the formation of a sense of Chinese identity among pre-modern Chinese scholars.
6. Scholars adopted various cosmological, moral, historical, geographical, and ethnic criteria in discussing political legitimacy.
7. The Chinese term *zhengtong* shares both differences and similarities in meaning with the Western term *legitimacy*, with which it is often equated.
8. The doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven and All under Heaven explain the origin, possession, transfer, and location of legitimate rule in the traditional Chinese context.
9. Scholars' varying social statuses and distinct historical circumstances greatly influenced their views on political legitimacy.
10. Muslim mayors in traditionally non-Muslim countries (e.g. Rotterdam's Ahmed Aboutaleb or London's Sadiq Khan) face similar legitimacy questions as non-Chinese rulers in China.

11. History is a story. Scholars' unremitting mission should be to question that story.

12. Fearlessness derives from ignorance. Caution comes from erudition.