Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Adamek, P.

Citation
Adamek, P. (2012, September 11). *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*. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19770

Version:	Not Applicable (or Unknown)
License:	Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden
Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/19770

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page

Universiteit Leiden

The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/19770 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Adamek, Piotr
Title: 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
Date: 2012-09-11

CHAPTER SIX: CULMINATION OF CUSTOM

The violation of a taboo name was considered to be a big offence and there were continuously persons trying to use it for their own intrigues. There were for instance two officials at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries in China who disliked each other: Lu Wenji 盧文紀 and Cui Xie 崔協 (d. 929). Cui Xie knew the taboo name of the father of Lu Wenji – Siye 嗣業 – and he managed to use it against Lu. He appointed Yu Ye 於鄴 as a subsidiary clerk of Lu Wenji. The names of the clerk and the father of Lu had the same pronunciation and similar notation. Lu was of course infuriated, often hearing his taboo name in his office. He gave Yu Ye a hard time and coerced him to resign. In the end Yu Ye could not bear up under the pressure and committed suicide. Lu was subsequently demoted.[1] In such a way the tabooing of name determined the life of people.

6.1. Sui

6.1.1. Sources

The main source for the Sui period (581–618) is the *Book of the Sui* (*Suishu* 隋書). It was composed by Wei Zheng 魏徵 *et al*. shortly after the fall of the Sui dynasty in 629–636.[2] In addition numerous interpretations of possible taboo instances in the Sui time were made later by Wang Guanguo 王觀國 in the Song period,[3] and by Zhou Guangye 周廣業 and Qian Daxin 錢大昕 of Qing times.[4]

6.1.2. Brief Characteristics of the Period

In Chinese historiography, the Sui dynasty is regarded as a turning point. The long time of disunion was finished and the new ruler, best known to us under his posthumous name of Emperor Wen 文帝 (r. 581–604), made many political, economic, military and educational reforms, which unified China and influenced the next generations. The same is also true with regard to name tabooing. Sui restored order to the disunity in taboo practices of the Southern and Northern dynasties period, and there were no more discussions about lists of

---

1 *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 55, p. 2ab.
2 Wilkinson 2000, p. 504.
3 *Xuelin,* j. 3, p. 69.
4 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, pp. 200–206; *Nian'er shi kaoyi*, j. 33, pp. 628-630; j. 34, pp. 650-652.

taboo or tabooing of courtesy names.[5] There are examples of the use of the equivalency system *tongxun daihuan* 同訓代換 ("replace and exchange by the same model", see 5.1.2.1), but also of other methods. During the rule of Emperor Yang (r. 605–617), many titles and geographical names were changed because of tabooing.

6.1.3. Taboos of Rulers and Their Ancestors

A clear change in the period of Sui is the greater number of taboo examples. There are quite a few instances of the tabooing of names in such a short period – more than in all other dynasties. Statistically speaking, there are 141 examples known from this time.[6] Even if we take into account that there are more preserved written materials from the time of Sui than before, the large increase of taboo instances compared to former periods is still remarkable. The practice was also surely influenced by rulers, for whom tabooing was important. It is also interesting that most of the examples (81) are connected with the taboo name of the father of the first Emperor of Sui – Zhong 忠, and most of the others (53) with the taboo of the Second Emperor – Emperor Yang – Guang 廣. There are only a few known instances of tabooing the name of the (First) Emperor Wen – Jian 堅 (5 examples), and his other ancestors: his grandfather Zhen 禎 (1) and another ancestor five generations back, Yuanshou 元壽 (1). Even though the taboo character of Yang Zhong and its homonyms were very popular, and that its tabooing was specially supported by his son Emperor Wen, such a huge difference with the tabooing of Emperor Wen's own name is hard to explain. The scholar Wang Jian has suggested that the discrepancy has come about because of the similarity in meaning of the taboo character *jian* 堅 and its equivalent *gu* 固 (both meaning solid). Because of the lack of case in which the replacement character is used in inappropriate ways, many examples of the taboo for *jian* have simply not been noticed by later authors.[7] In other words, the replacement of Emperor Wen's personal name of *jian* was most likely widespread, but we have no way of establishing with certainty that each and every instance of its equivalent *gu* was inspired by the need of tabooing, rather than just a different choice of words.

As already said, most taboo instances concern Yang Zhong, who was the father of the first Emperor. His name was tabooed and often changed to *cheng* 誠. We can find this

---

5 Wang Jian 2002, p. 116.
6 Wang Jian 2002, p. 120.
7 Wang Jian 2002, pp. 120-121.

character in two edicts of the Emperor Wen, issued in 583 AD and 602 AD.[8] According to Wang Jian, the expression *chengjie* 誠節 of the first edict should in fact be *zhongjie* 忠節 (faithful), and *chengxiao* 誠孝 in the second one – *zhongxiao* 忠孝 (filial piety), but they both were changed because of taboo. He also gives other examples of such alterations in the *Book of the Sui*.[9]

Still more frequent was the tabooing of the homonym of the name of Yang Zhong – the very popular character *zhong* 中 (middle). It was changed to *nei* 內 (inside), because of its similar meaning. This method was described by Wang Guanguo of the Song dynasty in his *Xuelin*: "During the Sui dynasty the name of Secretariat *zhongshusheng* 中書省[10] was changed because of taboo to *neishusheng* 內書省.[11] The character *zhong* was changed to *nei*."[12] There are many examples of similar changes in geographical names from that period: Zhongguo 中國 to Neiguo 內國, Zhongmou 中牟 to Neimou 內牟, Zhongxiang 中鄉 to Neixiang 內鄉, Langzhong 閬中 to Langnei 閬內, Zhongjiang 中江 to Neijiang 內江, Zhongqiu 中丘 to Neiqiu 內丘, Yunzhong 雲中 to Yunnei 雲內, and Baozhong 褒中 to Baonei 褒內.[13] A similar list of examples can be made with names of offices changed because of taboo in that time: Palace Attendant-in-ordinary (*zhongchangshi* 中常侍)[14] to *neichangshi* 內常侍, Section for Inner Troops (*zhongbingcao* 中兵曹)[15] to *neibingcao* 內兵曹, Secretariat Supervisor (*zhongshujian* 中書監)[16] to *neishujian* 內書監, Secretary (*zhongsheren* 中舍人)[17] to *neisheren* 內舍人, *zhongshi* 中侍 to *neishi* 內侍, Grand master of Palace Leisure (*zhongsan dafu* 中散大夫)[18] to *neisan dafu* 內散大夫, *dianzhong jiangjun* 殿中將軍 to *diannei jiangjun* 殿內將軍, *dianzhong shiyu* 殿中侍御 to *diannei shiyu* 殿內侍御.[19] Luckily, a term like the modern Chinese word for China, Zhongguo 中國, was changed back again, or Chinese would today have called their country Neiguo 內國.

---

8 *Suishu*, j. 1, p. 11a and j. 48, p. 4b.
9 Wang Jian 2002, p. 117.
10 One of the „Three Departments and Six Ministries" (三省六部), which was the main central administrative system of China. Cf. Hucker 1985, p. 194; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 108.
11 For *neishusheng* see Hucker 1985, p. 352; Xu Lianda 2010, p. 108. Hucker mentioned "some confusion about this in the sources." Xu Lianda noticed the change of name because of taboo of Sui.
12 *Xuelin,* j. 3, p. 69; Cf. also *Nian'er shi kaoyi,* j. 33, p. 628.
13 Wang Jian 2002, p. 118. Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 205; *Lidai huiming kao*, j. 1, p. 6a.
14 Hucker 1985, p. 188.
15 Hucker 1985, p. 192.
16 Hucker 1985, p. 193.
17 Hucker 1985, p. 192.
18 Hucker 1985, p. 192.
19 Wang Jian 2002, p. 117.

In the five instances of tabooing his personal name that we do know, the name Jian 堅 of Emperor Wen was changed to *gu* 固. These examples were discovered in the *Book of the Sui* by the Qing author Zhou Guangye.[20] According to him, the character *gu* 固 in such expressions in *Book of the Sui* as *zhizhi migu* 執志彌固[21] should be read in fact as *jian* 堅. Also the name of the son of the Emperor Wucheng (r. 561–565) of the Northern Qi dynasty, written as Rengu 仁固 in the *History of the Northern Dynasties* (*Beishi*),[22] was actually Renjian 仁堅.[23]

The taboo character of the name of Emperor Yang – Guang 廣 (meaning great, expanded) – had several equivalents with similar meaning: *da* 大 (large), *bo* 博 (extensive) and *kuo* 闊 (wide). The first one was often used in geographical names, as for example, Guang'an 廣安 was changed to Da'an 大安, Guangliang 廣梁 to Daliang 大梁, Guangxian 廣縣 to Daxian 大縣, Guangde 廣德 to Dade 大德, Guangwei 廣威 to Dawei 大威 and Guangzhi 廣至 to Dazhi 大至.[24] In other cases, the character *bo* 博 was often used as the equivalent. For example, in the Sui period the famous dictionary *Guangya* 廣雅 was called by Cao Xian 曹憲 as *Boya* 博雅.[25] Similarly, the expression "expand all around" (*guangsi* 廣四) from the *Records of Examination of Craftsman* (*Kaogongji* 考工記)[26] is quoted in the petition to the emperor in the *Book of the Sui* as *bosi* 博四,[27] because of this taboo.

The replacement of the taboo character *guang* with *kuo* 闊 in the same *Book of the Sui*[28] was also reported by Zhou Guangye.[29] Three further examples of tabooing with the equivalent method and a list of 30 other changes because of the taboo character *guang* can be found in the work of Qian Daxin.[30] In addition, the Qing author Liu Xixin 劉錫信 recorded in his *Lidai huimingkao* 歷代諱名考 the change of geographical names Guangling

---

20 Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 202.
21 *Suishu*, j. 71, p. 11a.
22 *Beishi,* j. 8, p. 4b. Cf. also *Bei Qishu,* j. 8, p. 1b.
23 Wang Yankun 1997, p. 216.
24 Wang Jian 2002, p. 118.
25 *Jiu Tangshu,* j. 46, p. 14a.
26 *Zhouli,* j. 12, p. 16a.
27 *Suishu*, j. 68, p. 2a. Interesting that the same quotation of *Kaogongji* with the character *guang* 廣 is recorded also in one of former chapters of the *Suishu*, j. 49, p. 3a.
28 *Suishu*, j. 12, p. 13a. Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 130.
29 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 13, p. 202.
30 *Shijia zhai yangxin lu,* j. 11, p. 9b.

廣陵 to Jiangdu 江都, Guangle 廣樂 to Changle 長樂 and Guangfeng 廣豐 to Fengcheng 豐城, because of the tabooing of names.[31]

6.1.4. "Unsystematic" Tabooing Methods

In the last mentioned group of taboo instances no prescribed method was used, especially in geographical names. They can be seen as "unsystematic" changes, but some of them still follow a concrete custom and can be explained. A name could be, for example, changed to one of the old names, if it had existed before. For example present-day Canton (Guangzhou 廣州) was changed to its former name Panzhou 番州 (in the past actually Panyu 番禺) in the period of Sui, and at the same time Guangyang county 廣陽 in Sichuan restored its name from the past – Wenshan 汶山 (today Maowen 茂汶 county). Similarly Guangchang 廣長 (today near Lüeyang 略陽 in Shaanxi) turned back to its former name Xiucheng 修城 in the Sui time.[32]

Another method of changing a name because of taboo was to use names of rivers and mountains around a place. In this way, Guangdu 廣都 in Sichuan was changed to Shuangliu 雙流 during the Sui period, because of its two rivers, and Guangchuan county 廣川 in Hebei was changed to Changhe 長河,[33] since the river Changhe passed through the county. Nevertheless, there are still instances without a clear rule explaining the change. The character *guang* was sometimes simply deleted and another put in its place, as for example in the case of Guangzong 廣宗 county in Hebei which was changed to Zongcheng 宗城, or Guangfu 廣福 county in Hubei which was changed to Anfu 安福.[34]

6.2. Tang

6.2.1. Sources

Thanks to the flourishing of culture and the increased usage of paper, more sources are extant from this period, which also means abundant evidence on the practice of *bihui*. The most important historical sources for us are the *Old Book of the Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu*) composed in 940–945 amongst others by Liu Xu 劉昫 (sometimes written as 劉煦, 887–946)

---

31 *Lidai huimingkao,* j. 1, p. 6a.
32 *Shijia zhai yangxin lu,* j. 11, p. 9b.
33 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 26, p. 202.
34 *Shijia zhai yangxin lu,* j. 11, p. 9b.

and the *New Book of the Tang* (*Xin Tangshu*) composed in 1043–1060 amongst others by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061). The *Old Book of the Tang* is more reliable and the *New Book of the Tang* contains many errors.[35] There are also historical works composed in the Tang period (*Book of the Jin, Book of the Liang, Book of the Chen, Book of the Northern Qi, Book of the Zhou, Book of the Sui, History of the Southern Dynasties, History of the Northern Dynasties*) or commented by Tang scholars (*Records of the Historian, Book of the Han, Book of the Later Han*) where changes have been made because of Tang taboos.

The first Chinese penal code – the *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議) – was composed in 624 AD and enhanced in 653 AD with a commentary. It included the punishment for violation of taboo names, which was a basis for regulations for subsequent Chinese legal codes. From the Tang, we also have the first "collection of important documents" (*huiyao*) – *Important Documents of the Tang* (*Tanghuiyao* 唐會要) compiled by Wang Pu 王溥 (922–982), the already mentioned *Encyclopaedic History of Institutions* (*Tongdian* 通典) composed in 801 by Du You 杜佑 (735–812) and the *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜) edited in 1013 AD by Wang Qinruo *et al*. All these works discussed the topic of name taboos. In addition, the geographical work the *Gazetteer of the World During the Taiping Period* (*Taiping huanyu jizhi* 太平寰宇記志), compiled by Yue Shi 樂史 (930-1007) writes about changes in place names because of taboo. Stone inscriptions known from the Tang period are discussed here only in a very limited way and more research is still necessary on Dunhuang manuscripts as well.[36]

6.2.2. Brief Characteristics of the Period

The Tang and the Song periods was the time, when the custom of the tabooing of names most flourished.[37] The Tang dynasty is considered (especially in the Chinese historiography) one of the most successful periods in the history of China. Though modern research is more critical, the period it is still regarded as one of progress and stability. In that time the flourishing of Chinese culture and the blossoms of tabooing came together. This shows once

---

[35] Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 819-820.

[36] Dunhuang manuscripts can be dated to the period of the 5th – 11th centuries. The cave in Dunhuang was sealed off in 1035 AD. Cf. Wilkinson 2000, pp. 797-798, 826-829.

[37] Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.

more that the tabooing of names should not only be seen as a strange, negative and marginal custom, but on the contrary as an essential part of Chinese culture.

Many important changes in the system and the practice of tabooing were made especially in the beginning of the Tang dynasty. New edicts standardised rules of tabooing. Concrete punishment was prescribed for violation of taboo. New methods of tabooing were developed, among them a new method of omitting a stroke, i.e., a visual solution which allowed the original character to be preserved more or less intact, or at least to reduce the change. This can be attributed to the increasing importance of written characters in relation to the spoken word (reading over oral culture). All that brought an immense increase of examples of tabooing and the widening of its spectrum.

6.2.3. The Method of a Missing Stroke

One of the most important changes in practice from the period of Tang was a new method of tabooing: one stroke (usually the last one) was not written. In this way, on the one hand the tabooing was assured, while on the other hand the original character could be recognized (in most cases). The method of a missing stroke can be seen for the first time in the Tang period, during the ruling time of Gaozong (650-683). We know this from an imperial edict issued in 660 AD that ordered the omission of the last stroke of a taboo character or its replacement with another character if classical works are copied.[38]

In practice, other methods such as replacement of the characters (during the Tang still by characters with a different sound, which had been the main method before already), the use of "empty" characters, etc. were also continued. It seems that various methods were used in different situations, but further research is still needed on this topic. What we do know is that there are many characters with missing strokes (more than replaced characters)[39] in the classical texts, especially in stone inscriptions of Tang.

For example in the inscription of *Zengtai shikong xuangongbei* 贈泰師孔宣公碑 in the year 666 AD, the character *min* 泯 is written as *zhi* 汦.[40] The case is regarded as the first known example of the method of a missing stroke.[41] Similar instances can also be found in the *Zhiningbei* 志寧碑 (666 AD) – *shi* 世 is written as *sa* 卅 in the expression *shiwu* 世武, and on the *Stone Stele of Li He* 李賀碑 (677 AD) – there is the *sa* 卅 character put in place

[38] *Cefuyuangui*, j. 3, p. 11a.
[39] Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 146.
[40] *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 55, p. 2b.
[41] Chen Yuan 1958, p. 6.

of *shi* 世 in the name of Wang Shichong 王世充.[42] Moreover, the texts found in Dunhuang seem to make a distinction in writing: taboo characters of Tang in quotations from classical works are written without the last stroke, but in explanations and compilations other equivalent characters are used.[43]

6.2.4. Principles of Name Tabooing

The tabooing of the names of the living (*shenghui* 生諱) was already an undisputable standard, and the old principle of tabooing after the mourning time (i.e., taboo only for the names of the dead, see 3.5.1) was apparently fully forgotten. But three other old problems of name tabooing appeared again in the Tang time: tabooing of single characters of composite given names (e.g., *shi* and *min* in the name of Li Shimin 李世民, see 3.5.8), tabooing of homonyms (3.5.7) and tabooing of names of distant ancestors (3.5.5).

As we remember, the "traditional" rule of the *Records of Ritual* (*Liji*) was that in these three cases single characters should not be tabooed.[44] In imperial edicts of 626 (double names) and 660 (homonyms), this principle was still supported. In practice, however, tabooing was often observed in the three cases above, too. It is supposed by some scholars that until the death of Taizong (649) characters of double names were still not commonly avoided.[45] There are evidently few examples of the tabooing of the name of this emperor – Shimin 世民 – during his life time (his father, the founder of the Tang dynasty, had a one-character name), but it seems that some people practiced the tabooing of double names,[46] even if there was no punishment for violation of them.[47]

We know, for example, that in 630 AD the work *Deng cisi tajiming* 等慈寺塔記铭 of Yan Shigu 顔師古 (581–645) called the name of Wang Shichong 王世充 as Wang Chong 王充.[48] On the other hand, the Ministry of Revenue (*minbu* 民部)[49] was still called in this manner, and such people as Li Shiji 李世勣 (594–669) and Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638)

---

42 *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 3b.
43 Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 271.
44 Cf. *Liji*, j. 1, pp. 38b-40a.
45 *Laoxue anbiji*, j. 10, p. 94; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 267.
46 This popular practice is mentioned in the edict of 626: "Many people taboo singular characters of double-names … the characters *min* and *shi* should not be read together, but there is no need to taboo them separately." This edict is recorded in *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 10b.
47 *Tanglü yishu* 唐律疏議 compiled in the ruling period of Gaozu has the principle: "those who have violated the tabooing of homonyms or of characters from a double-name should not be punished" (*Tanglü yishu*, j. 10, p. 219-220).
48 *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 1b (text) ; j. 52, p. 5b (comments).
49 Hucker 1985, p. 332.

did not yet taboo their names.[50] But during the reign period of Gaozong (650-683), the name of the Ministry of Revenue was changed to *hubu* 户部,[51] and Li Shiji had to delete the character *shi* from his name and was called Li Ji. Yu Shinan was already dead.[52] Many other instances of tabooing are known from that time.[53] Besides, in the three examples alluded to above, characters of double names were avoided: 666 AD the character *min* 民 was replaced by *ren* 人 in the quotation *shengmin yilai* 生民以来, and the character *min* 泯 by *zhi* 泜 in the quotation *zhiyu qimin* 智愚齊泯 of the stone inscription *Zengtai shikong xuangongbei* 贈泰師孔宣公碑 (the first example of tabooing by the method of leaving a stroke out in inscriptions).[54]

The expression *shiwu* 世武 in the same year – 666 AD – was written as *sa* 卅 (thirty) in the inscription of *Zhiningbei* 志寧碑. In the year 677 AD, the middle stroke was missing in the character *shi* of the name of Wang Shicong 王世充 on the inscription of Li He (*Li He bei* 李賀碑).[55] As one can see, the tabooing of characters of double given names seemed to be common and accepted.

A similar remark can be made about the tabooing of homonyms. Even if the practice existed in the beginning of Tang, it was not sanctioned by the emperor, as we can see still in the edict of 660 AD and earlier in the *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi*).[56] Yet, the custom of tabooing of homonyms seemed to be used with increasing frequency.

One interesting example is the curious case of tabooing the name Li Chun 李淳 (778-820, later Emperor Xianzong, r. 806–820), described in the *Tanghuiyao* 唐會要. As he was established in 805 AD as the crown prince, the minister Wang Chun 王純 wanted to change his own name to Shao 紹, but the ruler refused it. Furthermore, the crown prince himself changed his name to Chun 純.[57] But a bit later, in case of an official Investigating

---

50 According to the Song source *Rongzhai sanbi*, j. 11, p. 2a.

51 *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 4, p. 1b: [649 AD] "*minbu* 民部 was changed to *hubu* 户部".

52 *Laoxue anbiji*, j. 10, p. 94.

53 There are, for example, many cases in which the taboo character *shi* 世 in the name of Emperor Taizong was replaced by the character *dai* 代. In the Nestorian Stele (erected in 781), the expression *chudai* 出代 was used twice in place of *chushi* 出世 (leave the world, epiphany of Buddha, here: incarnation of Jesus Christ). Cf. Xu Longfei 2004, p. 128. Of course, all taboo characters of Tang emperors were avoided in the stele, too,

54 *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 55, p. 2b.

55 *Jinshi cuibian*, j. 42, p. 3b.

56 *Tanglü yishu*, j. 10, p. 219-220

57 It is not clear if the petition of Wang Chun occured before or after the name change of the crown prince.

Censor (*jiancha yushi* 監察御史)[58] Lu Chun 陸淳 (d. 806) who had no wish to change his name (perhaps because of a homonym of the actual name of the emperor, but more probably because of his former name), a special decree was issued, ordering him to change his name to Zhi 質.[59] It can be presumed therefore that the tabooing of homonyms was perceived in an ambivalent way during the whole Tang dynasty. However, it is also quite possible that the avoidance of homonyms of a taboo name was not the main cause for changing his name. No explanation could be found as to why the crown prince decided to change his name (it is interesting that both names have a very similar meaning and pronunciation). The name change by Lu Chun was done most probably because of the former name of the crown prince.

The problem of the tabooing the names of distant ancestors was also a topic in the Tang period. As one might recall, the "traditional" principle (see 3.5.5) was to taboo names of the dynasty's founder and the last seven ancestors ("seven temples")[60] as it was once more stressed in the *Tongdian*.[61] Yet in the Sui dynasty, another system of tabooing of four ancestors was introduced.[62] This system, probably continued in the beginning of the Tang dynasty, was successively extended by the next emperors: to seven ancestors by the Emperor Taizong (r. 627–649), nine ancestors by Xuanzong (r. 712–756), and "nine generations with eleven places" by Wuzong (r. 840–846).[63]

This extension generated discussions about the limit of tabooing. Already in the ruling time of Gaozong (r. 650–683) a petition to the throne was made (in 651 AD) not to taboo distant ancestors.[64] Later in the time of the Emperor Xianzong (806–820), as his father was entombed, the soul tablets of Gaozong and Zhongzong were moved from the ancestral temple and were no longer tabooed.[65] The practice of tabooing in the times of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705) is also interesting. The Empress, who founded a new dynasty with her own ancestors, erected "seven temples" for her ancestors in Dongdu 東都 (today's Luoyang) and ordered people to taboo their names as state taboo (*guohui* 國諱).[66]

---

58 Hucker 1985, pp. 145-146.
59 *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 453. Cf. also *Yeke congshu*, j. 9, p. 84.
60 About rituals of Tang dynasty see McMullen 1987, pp. 181-236.
61 *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 552.
62 Cf. Xiong 2006, pp. 128-129. It was believed that this system was a Western Zhou tradition.
63 *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 25, p. 12a.
64 *Tanghuiyao*, j. 23, p. 452.
65 *Cefu yuangui*, j. 591, p. 10a.
66 About the time of the Empress Wu Zetian see Forte 1976.

From the same period during the reign of Empress Wu Zetian, a case of avoiding parts of a character (*pianpang* 偏旁) is known. Cui Yuanye 崔元暈 was forced to change his name to Yuanwei 元暐, because the lower part of the character *ye* was identical with the taboo name Hua 華 of an ancestor of the Empress.[67] The case already reflects the increasing impact of writing in her period.

6.2.5. Penalties

For the first time, as far as we know, the tabooing of names was codified in law. Concrete penalties were now prescribed for the violation of taboos, which were later also adopted in the legal codes of subsequent dynasties. The *Tang Code with Commentaries* (*Tanglü shuyi*) determined that: "All cases of violating ancestral temple name taboos in documents or petitions on affairs submitted to the emperor are punishable by eighty blows with a heavy stick. If such errors are made orally, or used in other official documents, the punishment is fifty blows with a light stick."[68] Even stronger is the next prescription: "Cases of offending by using the emperor's name are punishable by three years of penal servitude."[69]

In the concrete case of Song Ang 宋昂, he was eventually demoted by two degrees since he had used the same name as Emperor Wenzong (Li Ang 李昂, r. 826–840) for ten years.[70] Nothing is said in the sources about emprisonment, as he should have been according to law. This therefore indicates that taboo practice may have differed from taboo rules.

The penalty in the case of a name of office violating the taboo name of one's father was comparatively strong in the *Tang Code*: "All cases involving those who hold posts whose administrative designations or official titles violate their fathers' or paternal grandfathers' name taboos … are punishable by one year of penal servitude."[71]

It is interesting that the legal prescriptions of Tang were not only to the imperial taboo, but also included the family taboo. It shows that the tabooing of names was not considered merely as an internal expression of courtesy, or as an external instrument of power and legitimacy of the emperor. On the contrary – it was an essential part of the right culture for all strata of Chinese society.

---

[67] *Cefuyuangui*, j. 825, p. 3b.
[68] *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 219. For translation see *The T'ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 83.
[69] *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 220. For translation see *The T'ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 83.
[70] *Tanghuiyao,* j. 23, p. 453.
[71] *Tanglü shuyi*, j. 10, p. 224. For translation see *The T'ang Code* 1997, Vol. II, p. 91.

The Tang dynasty can be called a turning point, not only in the codification of law, but also in the sense of tabooing. Until that time, tabooing had not only been the obligation of subjects, but the emperor or tabooed person himself often tried to make his name easier for tabooing. In the Tang dynasty there are still examples of a ruler's name change for this purpose. Later this custom disappeared and the ruler executed the law without thinking of common people.[72]

In the *Tang Code,* the use of single characters of double names and of homonyms was not punished, and what we find in practice seems to confirm this. There is, for example, the case of Li Xi 李谿 (d. 895) who in 871 wrote the character *song* 訟 (homonym of the taboo name Song 誦 of the Emperor Shunzong, r. 805) in a petition to the emperor and was punished with reduction in salary, but acquitted after he protested.[73]

6.2.6. Diffusion of Custom to Other Coutries

Chinese culture had, of course, influence on the surrounding countries. The flourishing of the Tang dynasty also brought many international contacts and cultural impact, amongst others in the culture of name tabooing. Many foreign students studied in China, and after their studies took up the practice of tabooing of names in their home countries. The research about the effect of the Chinese system of tabooing in other countries is still scant.[74] Still, it can be supposed that neighbouring countries of China also had their own customs of tabooing, and we will briefly discuss the avoidance of taboo names in Korea and Japan later on (see 10.5).

Further research on the Chinese impact of taboo in Japanese and Korean documents is still needed. Here it should only be pointed out that foreigners coming to China were obliged to observe Chinese taboo. We know, for example, about the Japanese monk Ennin (Yuan Ren 圓仁, 794–864),[75] who came for studies in the Tang period. He was instructed by a monk from the Ximing Temple 西明寺 in Chang'an, who listed for him all taboo characters of the Tang dynasty and prohibited him from using their homonyms.[76]

---

[72] Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 278.
[73] *Tanghuiyao,* j. 23, p. 453.
[74] Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, pp. 129-136.
[75] In Japan known by his posthumous name Jikaku Daishi (慈覺大師), a monk of the Buddhist Tendai-shū school. For more about Ennin see Groner 2002, pp. 305-308; Repp 2005, pp. 150-151;
[76] *Rutang qiufa xunli xingji*, j. 1, p. 19. For translation of this work see Reischauer 1955.

6.2.7. Naming Taboo for Relatives of the Emperor

The custom of name tabooing was practiced also in relation to relatives of the emperor. For example, during the reign of the Empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705), not only her name, but also those of her father, mother, crown prince, emperor's son-in-law etc. were taboo (cf. 10.1.2).[77] The *Taiping huaiyuji* reports that the name of Xincheng county 新城縣 was changed because of the name Jiancheng 建成 of the crown prince Yin (隱太子, 589–626) into Xinzheng county 新政縣.[78] When Hong 弘 became the crown prince in 656 AD, the Gate of the Broad Teachings (*hongjiaomen* 弘教門) was changed into the Gate of Respecting the Teachings (*chongjiaomen* 崇教門). Later, when Xian 賢 became the crown prince in 675 AD, the Hall of Respecting the Sages (*chongxianguan* 崇賢館) was replaced by the Hall of Respecting Culture (*chongwenguan* 崇文館).[79]

6.2.8. Family Taboo

There are many examples illustrating the importance of family taboo, which was commonly observed, at least in higher classes of Chinese society. The best known instance of that time is probably that of the famous poet Li He 李賀 (790–816), who was not allowed to attend the highest civil service examination of the Advanced Scholars (*jinshi* 進士) and sank into poverty, because one character of this title conflicted (as homonym) with the name of his father – Jinsu 晉肅.[80]

The case was criticized by the poet Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) in his work *Against Taboos* (*Huibian* 諱辨) as exaggerated: contrary to the rules of the *Records of Ritual* (cf. 3.5) a single character of double given name Jinsu was tabooed and its homonym avoided. He asked as a rhetorical question: If somebody whose father's name was Ren 仁 still would be allowed to remain a man (*ren* 人).[81]

6.2.9. Tabooing in Practice

Tabooing in social relations was widely practiced in the Tang period, not only within one's own family. The avoidance of superiors' taboo was accepted. Especially powerful officials

---

77 Chen Yuan 1958, p. 28.
78 *Taiping huanyuji*, j. 86, pp. 10b-11a.
79 *Tongdian*, j. 104, p. 554. Note that the last stroke is omitted in the character *hong* 弘.
80 *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 137, p. 7b; *Rongzhai xubi*, j. 11, p. 3.
81 *Quan Tangwen,* j. 558, 1a–2a.

demanded the tabooing of their own names in the whole country and regarded its violation as a sign of disloyality. On the other hand, avoiding the names and taboos of friends and neighbours became a norm of respect and courtesy. This was, for example, the practice between scholars of the Hanlin Academy 翰林院 founded in the beginning of Tang dynasty in 718 AD[82] by Emperor Xuanzong.[83]

The spectrum of tabooing became much larger than before. At least a lot more facts are known from this period, suggesting that there was indeed a spread in the practice of tabooing. Not only was the name of the Emperor tabooed, but also his era names (*nianhao* 年號), temple name (*miaohao* 廟號) and tomb name (*lingming* 陵名). The changes because of tabooing now included not only people and geographical names, but also Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches, liturgical vessels, and names of Taoist temples. The practice of tabooing appeared in petitions to the throne, official documents, historical works, stone inscriptions, and in the imperial civil-service examination.[84] In fact, in Tang dynasty China tabooing penetrated already all situations of social life.

6.3. Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960)

6.3.1. Sources

There are few historical sources for this period between two dynasties that have survived to this day. The most important for us are as always the standard histories: the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史) written by Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912–981) and the *New History of the Five Dynasties* (*Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史) written by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072).[85] Materials of this period can be found, too, in the *History of the Southern Tang* (*Nan Tangshu* 南唐書) – about the history of Southern Tang Kingdom, compiled in 1184 by Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210). Much later another work about that period was written, the *Spring and Autumn of Ten Kingdoms* (*Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋), composed in 1669 by Wu Renchen 吳任臣. Additional information can be found in the

---

82 Twitchett 1979, p. 378.
83 *Quan Tangwenjishi*, j. 1, p. 11ab.
84 Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 278.
85 Translated completely by Richard L. Davis. See Ouyang Xiu 2004.

Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature (*Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜) edited in 1013 AD by Wang Qinruo *et al*.[86]

6.3.2. Brief Characteristics

The period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–960) was relatively short and turbulent. The former territory of the Tang Empire was now divided into numerous political units, which often fought each other. Later historians (to be specific, Ouyang Xiu – the author of the *New History of the Five Dynasties*)[87] invented a distinction between the Five Dynasties which, in their view, legitimately succeeded the Tang, and the Ten Kingdoms which did not. However, at the time, all these states saw themselves as legitimate rulers and practically all of them practiced the taboo system. Specific practices varied between the different states. Whereas it remained strict in most dynasties, the rules of taboo seem a bit relaxed especially in the non-Chinese dynasties (Later Tang, Later Jin, Later Han). Many imperial edicts etc. are known from this period and we can trace the practices in some detail.

6.3.3. Later Liang 後梁 (907–923)

The Tang dynasty came to a formal end in 907 when the last Emperor Ai 哀帝 (r. 904–907) abdicated (and was later murdered, in 908) in favour of the first emperor of Later Liang, Zhu Quanzhong 朱全忠 (r. 907–912). The new ruler considered the tabooing of names a highly important custom. He used political prophecies in which writing played an important role.[88]

Even before Zhu Quanzhong started to reign as an emperor instead of the warlord that he originally was, the last Emperor of Tang was forced by him to issue six edicts about the tabooing of the names of him and his ancestors (Cheng 誠, Xin 信, Maolin 茂林) within only a few months in 905 AD. The edicts ordered taboo characters in all names to be changed.[89] Similar edicts were repeated after the accession of Zhu to the throne.

Because of Zhu's father Zhu Cheng 朱誠, the character *cheng* 城 in all names of counties was removed and names changed to one-character names. The temple for King

---

[86] Wilkinson 2000, pp. 822-823.
[87] Cf. *Xin Wudaishi,* j. 71, p. 1a.
[88] Cf. ter Haar 2004, pp. 26-27.
[89] *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, pp. 9a, 10a, 11a; Chen Yuan 1958, p. 149.

Wucheng 武成王 was renamed the temple of King Wuming 武明王.[90] The military commandery *Zhaoxin* 昭信 was renamed *Rongzhaog* 戎昭.[91] Numerous changes were made because of the taboo of the grandfather of Zhu, which was Maolin 茂林. Maozhou 茂州 was changed to Wenzhou 汶州, Maoming county 茂名 to Yueshang 越裳.[92] It is worth mentioning that the changes were not consistent. There was apparently no central prescription on how to solve the problem, but only a proclamation of several names as taboo.

Furthermore, as the character *wu* 戊 was a constituent part of *mao* 茂, this character was also prohibited and had to be replaced by *wu* 武. Therefore, for example, the combination *wuchen* 戊辰 from the Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches was changed to *wuchen* 武辰.[93] Because of the taboo name of Zhu Quanzhong himself,[94] the place Xuchang 許昌, called Zhongwu 忠武 in the Tang period, was changed to Kuangguo 匡國.[95]

When in 912 AD Zhu Quanzhong, and in 913 AD his son Yougui 友珪 were murdered, Zhu Youzhen 朱友貞 (r. 913–923) became the new ruler. His former name was Zhen 貞, and he tabooed it as well. Therefore, for example, Kang Huaizhen 康懷貞 had to change his name to Huaiying 懷英.[96]

6.3.4. Later Tang 後唐 (923–936)

In 923 the Shatuo Turks headed by Li Cunxu 李存勖 (r. 923–926) destroyed the Later Liang dynasty. Li founded – or as he expressed it, "restored"– the (Later) Tang dynasty.[97] Although the period of his reign was very short, we have numerous instances of name tabooing – a custom he strongly accented as an important legacy of the Tang dynasty. Apparently he wanted to be regarded as Chinese or rather as an inhabitant or possessor of a long-established imperial culture.

---

90 *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, p. 10a.
91 *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 20, p. 10a.
92 *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 3, p. 4a.
93 *Lüyuan conghua*, j. 9, p. 17.
94 Zhu Quanzhong was called originally Wen 溫 and received the name Quanzhong 全忠 in 882 from the Emperor Xizong of Tang. Zhu hated later the name because it stressed his loyality to the Tang dynasty. This may have been a reason for tabooing the name. Later his changed his name to 晃 (bright).
95 *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 60, p. 13a.
96 *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 23, p. 5a.
97 Note that Tang Emperors were half-Turkish, too. Cf. Twitchett 2000, pp. 122-126.

Most cases are examples of avoiding the name of Li's grandfather – Guochang 國昌. Thirty seven place names were ordered to be changed in 924 AD according to the *Cefu yuangui* because they contained the character *chang* 昌.[98] For example, the name of Yanchang county 延昌縣 was changed to its old name Yantang 延唐 (which indicates that the memory or record of former names was preserved), Yichang county 義昌縣 to Yizhang 義彰, and Changjiang county 昌江 to Pingjiang 平江 (in today's Hunan province).[99] Besides, Gao Jichang 高季昌 (858–929) – later the founder of Nanping (one of Ten Kingdoms in south-central China, see 6.3.7) changed his original name to Gao Jixing 高季興 because of the taboo of the Later Tang.[100]

Compared with the number of examples of tabooing the name of Li Cunxu's grandfather, there are hardly any instances know for the tabooing of his own name in historical works. Actually, only one case is known. The name of Li Gui 李璝 from the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*)[101] is explained in the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑) as Li Cungui 李存璝.[102] The name was apparently changed in the Later Tang period because of taboo. The character *cun* 存 was omitted and restored again by Sima Guang in his *Comprehensive Mirror*.

Li Siyuan 李嗣源 (r. 926–933) became the second ruler of the Later Tang in 926, after his father Li Cunxu was killed during a rebellion. He also stressed the importance of name tabooing as a legacy of the Tang dynasty, and issued a few edicts. The edict of 926 AD imitated that of Taizong of Tang.[103] The edict of the following year changed the taboo name of the Emperor to the single name Dan 亶.[104] Another edict of 928 ordered the omission of strokes in taboo characters in petitions to the throne.[105] Shortly afterwards the regional military governor from Jingzhou – Yang Tan 楊檀 – changed his name to Yang Guangyuan 楊光遠, and the geographical names of Tanzhou 檀州 and Jintan 金壇 were

---

98 *Cefuyuangui*, j. 31, p. 6a.
99 *Cefuyuangui*, j. 31, pp. 6b-7a. The author of this dissertation is not sure if the last two names were former names of these localities, or if another method of tabooing was used.
100 *Xin Wudaishi*, j. 69, p. 1a.
101 *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 43, p. 4a-5a.
102 *Zizhi tongjian*, j. 278, pp. 1a-1b. It was compiled by Sima Guang (1019–1086), cf. Wilkinson 2000, p. 499.
103 *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 36, p. 4a. Cf. *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 2, p. 6a.
104 *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 38, p. 1a. The author of this dissertation could not find an explanation for the cause of this change.
105 Recorded in *Wudai huiyao*, j.4, p. 47.

altered.[106] Interestingly, in these last few cases the problem characters are slightly different and even have a slightly different pronunciation.

6.3.5. Later Jin 後晉 (936–947)

The Later Tang dynasty ended in 936 when the son-in-law of Li Siyuan – Shi Jingtang 石敬瑭 (r. 936-942) – deposed him, in collusion with the Khitan people. His new dynasty was named (Later) Jin. Although Shi Jingtang was largely under control of the Khitan, he nevertheless held name tabooing in particularly high regard. In 938 AD his edict was issued, announcing the adoption of the proper ritual of name tabooing according to the rules of the Tang period.[107] Homonyms of taboo characters and parts of taboo characters (*pianpang* 偏旁) also had to be avoided.

In practice, the following methods were used: people who had as their family name Jing 敬 wrote it as Wengou 文苟 since that time,[108] and those with the family name Tang 唐 changed it to Tao 陶.[109] Later, in 942 AD – the last year of the rule of Shi Jingtang – an imperial letter was issued, which mandated in even greater detail that all names of palaces, prefectures, counties and offices offending the taboo name of the Emperor had to be changed. Twenty seven concrete examples are given, where names with the characters *tang* 唐, *tang* 堂, *jing* 竟 and *jing* 鏡 were changed.[110] Similarly, all family names violating taboo also had to be changed.[111]

The successor of Shi Jingtang – Shi Chonggui (r. 942–947) – continued the taboo policy of his father and in 942 AD issued a new imperial letter about it. He further widened and intensified the regulations. No wonder that when Liu Xu 劉昫 (887–946) finished the compilation of his *Old Book of the Tang (Jiu Tangshu)* in 945 AD, he could not use this name directly and originally named his work the *Book of Li Clan* (*Lishishu* 李氏書).[112] Next to the tabooing of Shi Jingtang, we also know about the avoidance of his father's name, Shi

---

[106] *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 47, p. 3b.
[107] *Jiu Wudaish*i, j. 77, p. 1b.
[108] *Qidong yeyu*, j. 4, p. 40. Note that *pu* 攵 and *wen* 文 are different radicals.
[109] *Songshi*, j. 269, p. 1a.
[110] It is interesting that the last two characters were changed to the homonym *jing* 景, which probably entails only a change of tone.
[111] *Cefu yuangui*, j. 3, p. 16ab.
[112] *Cefu yuangui*, j. 554, p. 37a; *Rizhilu*, j. 26, p. 18b-19a.

Shaoyong 石紹雍. Because of that, the name of the building *Yongxilou* 雍熙樓 was changed to *Zhanghelou* 章和樓.[113]

6.3.6. Later Han 後漢 (947–950) and Later Zhou 後周 (951–960)

The custom of tabooing was so common that we have examples of taboo even from periods of very short dynasties, such as the Later Han. The founder of this dynasty – Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠 – reigned only about one year (947–948 AD), and his dynasty was finished two years later. We know that the military governor of Binzhou 邠州 – Zhe Congyuan 折從遠 – changed his name in 947 AD because of the imperial taboo to Zhe Congruan 折從阮.[114] The minister Zhang Zhaoyuan 張昭遠 changed his name to Zhang Zhao 張昭,[115] and Zhao Yuan 趙遠 (895–961) to Zhao Shangjiao 趙上交 (it was his courtesy name).[116]

According to later historiographers of the *History of the Song* (*Songshi*), they found 214 replaced characters in old works because of the taboos of this extremely brief period.[117] An edict of Liu Zhiyuan from the year 948 is known, which changed his personal name to the monosyllabic and more easily avoidable Gao 暠.[118] Probably people had been complaining, because the characters of his original name were extremely common.

Paradoxically, materials about tabooing in the slightly longer dynasty of Later Zhou (951–960), started by Guo Wei 郭威 (951–954), are much fewer. But the tabooing of names was apparently no less strict, and examples of avoiding names of emperors and nobility are available.[119] We know that in 951 AD the commander Cao Wei 曹威 changed his name, because of the taboo of the emperor, to Cao Ying 曹英, Ma Lingwei 馬令威 to Ma Lingzong 馬令琮, and Guo Yanwei 郭彦威 to Guo Yanqin 郭彦欽. Geographical names were also changed, such as Weishengjun 威勝軍 to Wushengjun 武勝軍, Weizhou 威州 to Huanzhou 環州, and the name of the office *zuoyou weiwei* 左右威衛 to *zuoyou tunwei* 左右屯衛.[120] Analogical names of successors of Guo Wei – Chai Rong 柴榮 (r. 954–959) and

---

[113] *Jiu Wudaishi*, j. 77, p. 2a.
[114] *Cefu yuangui,* j. 3, p. 16b.
[115] *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 17, p. 273.
[116] *Songshi*, j. 262, p. 8b. The name of Zhang Shangjiao is also a nice pun, as its meaning is "to seek contact with a higher authority."
[117] *Songshi*, j. 264, p. 5a.
[118] *Cefu yuangui,* j. 3, p. 17a.
[119] In 956 AD in works of the Hanlin Academy, these names and their homonyms were tabooed. Cf. *Wudai huiyao*, j. 13, p. 175.
[120] Cf. *Cefu yuangui,* j. 3, p. 17ab. The name of office is not included in Hucker 1985 and Xu Lianda 2010.

Chai Zongxun 柴宗訓 (r. 959–960) were also tabooed: we know about one Li Rong 李榮 who changed his name to Li Yun 李筠,[121] Xiang Xun 向訓 whose name was changed to Xiang Gong 向拱[122] and Zhang Chongxun 張崇訓 changed to Zhang Chonggu 張崇詁[123] because of the taboo name of the emperor.

6.3.7. Ten Kingdoms

The tabooing of names in the kingdoms in the south of China outside the Five Dynasties area is less known, which is strange given that these areas were well within the Chinese cultural heartland. The materials which we do have show that all rulers regarded name taboos as an essential part of culture and the basis of their power. We still have examples of taboo in all kingdoms except for the Northern Han 北漢 (951–979). But we know that the founder of this dynasty, Liu Min 劉旻 (original name Liu Chong 劉崇, r. 951–954), was the brother of Liu Zhiyuan 劉知遠, founder of the Later Han dynasty, whose strict practice of tabooing has just been described (see 6.3.6). Therefore, a similar practice can be assumed in the Northern Han kingdom as well.

The Wu kingdom 吳國 (904–937) was founded by Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (r. 904–905) in the territory of what is today Anhui and Jiangsu province, with its capital in Yangzhou 揚州. According to Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), the name of the first ruler of Wu was a common taboo, and because of that, the Xingxi river 荇溪 (with a homonym of his name)[124] was changed to Lingxi 菱溪.[125] Furthermore, the word for apricot – *xing* 杏 – was prohibited in the Wu kingdom and replaced by the words *tianli* 甜李 (sweet plum) or *tianmei* 甜梅 (sweet Chinese plum).[126] Besides, another character of the name of Yang Xingmi was tabooed: the name for honey *fengmi* 蜂蜜 was changed to *fengtang* 蜂糖 (bee sugar).[127] This name is, it seems, used until the present day.[128]

---

[121] *Songshi*, j. 484, p. 5a.
[122] *Songshi*, j. 255, p. 4b.
[123] *Songshi*, j. 484, p. 7b.
[124] Note that the taboo character *xing* 行 is also a component (*pianpang* 偏旁) of the character *xing* 荇.
[125] According to an analysis of the name of the river, done by Ouyang Xiu in *Jushiji*, j. 40, p. 1a.
[126] *Lidai huiming kao*, j. 1, p. 8a.
[127] *Yeke congshu*, j. 9, p. 85.
[128] Cf. Wang Jian 2002, p. 162.

The founder of the Wuyue kingdom 吳越國 (904–978) in today's Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces (with the capital in Qiantang 錢塘,[129] i.e. modern Hangzhou) was Qian Liu 錢鏐 (r. 904–932). The people of Wuyue tabooed the homonym of his name – the character *liu* 劉, and everybody having this character as their family name changed it to Jin 金.[130] It can be mentioned that the character *jin* 金 is actually a component of the taboo character Liu 鏐, but here the pronunciation was apparently more important for people than the written form. It is known, for example, that the name of the Chinese poet and scholar Liu Ling 劉伶 (221–300) was changed in historical works to Jin Ling 金伶.[131] Furthermore, the name of the pomegranate – *shiliu* 石榴 – was forbidden and changed to *jinying* 金櫻 (golden cherry).[132]

There are also examples of tabooing in both kingdoms that existed in what is now Sichuan, namely the (Former) Shu 前蜀 (907–925) founded by Wang Jian 王建 (r. 907–918) and the (Later) Shu 後蜀 (934–965) founded by Meng Zhixiang 孟知祥 (r. 934). The personal name of the first ruler was tabooed in the case of the military governor Wang Jianzhao 王建肇, who because of that changed his name to Wang Zhao 王肇.[133] Similarly, because of the taboo name of Meng Zhixiang, Zhang Zhiye 張知業 changed his name to Zhang Ye 張業.[134]

The ruler of the Chu kingdom 楚國 (897–951) in present-day Hunan was Ma Yin 馬殷 (r. 897–930). He tabooed the name of his father Ma Yuanfeng 馬元豐 and therefore an official called Tuoba Yuan 拓跋元 had to change his name to Tuoba Heng 拓跋恆.[135] The eastern neighbour of the Chu kingdom was the Min kingdom 閩國 (909–945) in the today's Fujian.[136] Its founder was Wang Shenzhi 王審知 (r. 909–925). Because of his name the family name Shen 沈 – as a homonym of the taboo name of the ruler – could not be used anymore, and was changed to You 尤 (the water radical was cut).[137]

---

[129] The name was changed from Qiantang 錢唐 to Qiantang 錢塘 in the Tang period, in order to taboo the name of the dynasty. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 14, p. 208.
[130] *Liangxi manzhi*, ch. 3, p. 6b.
[131] Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 18, p. 285.
[132] *Yekecongshu*, ch. 9, p. 85.
[133] Chen Yuan 1958, p. 14.
[134] *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 51, p. 5b.
[135] *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 73, p. 4b.
[136] For more about the Min kingdom see Schafer 2006.
[137] The form of both characters is also different. *Liangximanzhi*, j. 3, p. 6b; *Shiguo chunqiu*, j. 102, p. 16b.

At the end of this section, three examples can be given to illustrate the custom of tabooing in the remaining three kingdoms: the Southern Han Kingdom 南漢 (917–971, the territory of Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan), the Southern Tang Kingdom 南唐 (937–975, largely located in modern Jiangxi) and the smallest kingdom Nanping 南平 or Jingnan 荊南 Kingdom (924–963, located in modern Hubei). Because Liu Yan 劉龑 (before 926 Liu Yan 劉巖, r. 917–941), the founder of the Southern Han, had an ancestor named Liu Anren 劉安仁, a certain Wang An 王安 had to change his name to Wang Hui 王會.[138]

The favourite bird of the last emperor of Southern Tang 南唐[139] – Li Yu 李煜 (r. 961–975) – was the myna bird, called *quyu* 鸜鵒 in Chinese. This popular name was unfortunately similar in sound to the name of the Emperor and therefore was changed to *bage* 八哥, and is used to this day in the vernacular language.[140] As we can see here and above, southern taboos were still strongly sound-oriented. In the Nanping Kingdom, the name of Anxing county 安興 and Anxing river was changed to Anqing 安慶, because the name of the kingdom's founder was Gao Jixing 高季興 (r. 909–928).[141]

6.4. Song

The period of Song and Southern Song (960–1279) is considered, together with the Tang times, as the apogee in the development of name tabooing custom.[142] The Song dynasty was able to establish a strong central government and ensured administrative stability. Song China became "the most prosperous and highly developed society on the earth" at the time.[143] It was also a period of complex social organization. However, problems inside the country (a separatist regime of military governors that limited the central authority) as well as abroad (wars with the Khitans, Tanguts, Jurchens and Mongols) caused finally the decline of the Song dynasty.[144]

The strong accent on imperial taboo was to support the central power.[145] Therefore, during the Song we find quite an extensive system of taboo with severe rules, meticulous

---

[138] *Nan Tangshu*, j. 6, p. 128.
[139] For more about Southern Tang dynasty see Kurz 2011, p. 93.
[140] *Tianzhongji*, j. 59, p. 21b; Cf. also the article of Ptak 2007, pp. 450-451.
[141] *Jingshi biming huikao*, j.18, p. 289.
[142] Cf. Chen Yuan 1958, p. 1.
[143] Ropp 2010, p. 75.
[144] For more about the Song dynasty see Twitchett 2009. For the Neo-Confucian culture of Song period see Hu Hong 2009; Van Ess 2009; Bol 2010.
[145] Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 280.

discussions and hundreds of taboo characters. The large number of them was the result of avoiding homonyms: some taboo names additionally involved more than fifty tabooed homonym-characters (see 6.4.3).

The Song emperors tried to emphasize the legitimacy and the genealogy of their own power by tabooing of names of their – real and legendary – ancestors: for example their legendary forebear (taboo name Xuanlang 玄朗), or a legendary sovereign – the Yellow Emperor (given name Xuan Yuan 軒轅). They were proclaimed to be "distant ancestors" of Song rulers in a direct blood relationship (see 6.4.4). For that purpose, the system of emperors' temples (the *zhaomu* 昭穆 system) was also newly conceived.

One of frequently used method of tabooing was omitting a stroke[146] or replacing the taboo character with another one. Taboo characters were also sometimes covered with yellow paper. Name tabooing was an important part of the culture of the Song dynasty, and also a part of the courtesy observed in its interstate relations.

6.4.1. Sources

Many examples of tabooing can be found in the *History of Song* (*Songshi* 宋史), compiled in 1343–1345 by officials of the chancellor Tuotuo 脫脫 and from the Yuan Historiography Academy.[147] There are also taboo instances in other Standard Histories written in the period of Song, such as the *Old History of the Five Dynasties* (*Jiu Wudaishi*) (see 5.3.1). Another textual source is the *Gazetteer of the Nine Regions during the Yuanfeng Period* 1078–1086 (*Yuanfeng jiuyu zhi*) 元豐九域志 by Wang Cun 王存, published in 1085.[148]

6.4.2. Taboo of Emperors

The name of the First Emperor of Song – Kuangyin 匡胤 (Emperor Taizu, r. 960–976) – was taboo. Therefore, two weeks after his enthronement, his younger brother Kuangyi 匡義 had to change his name to Guangyi 光義, as was recorded in the *History of Song* (*Songshi*).[149] Brothers used the same character in their name, according to the order of

---

[146] Note, for example, that in the Song edition of the *Nan Qishu* (*Baina benjing yin Song Shu daziben* 百衲本景印宋蜀大字本), the character *jing* 竟 is always written without the last stroke because of the taboo name of the grandfather of the Song Emperor Taizu – Jing 敬. Cf., e.g., *Nan Qishu* (b), j. 54, p. 21a.

[147] Wilkinson 2000, p. 847.

[148] Wilkinson 2000, p. 849.

[149] *Songshi*, j. 1, p. 3b.

seniority (*paihang* 排行 system).[150] The avoidance of a taboo name by a brother here shows the connection between the tabooing of names and the change of status. The promptness of this change of name demonstrates, too, the significance of tabooing for the emperor and suggests a continuation of the existing practice.

Very soon, other names of people and geographical names were also changed to avoid violating the imperial taboo: for example, Lu Kuangfu 陸匡符 (of Southern Tang) to Lu Zhaofu 陸昭符, Zhao Kuangzan 趙匡贊 (of Later Shu) to Zhao Zan 趙贊,[151] military prefecture Kuangguo 匡國軍 (in Shaanxi) to Dingguo 定國,[152] Hankuang 洽涯 (in Guangdong) to Hanguang 含光, Kuangcheng county 匡成縣 (in Henan) to Changyuan 長垣, Kuanglu Mountain 匡廬山 (in Jiangxi) to Lu 廬.[153] The *History of Song* (*Songshi*), quoting the same work of Liao Kuangtu 廖匡圖 (952–1003), some time called him Liao Guangtu 廖光圖,[154] and another time Liao Zhengtu 廖正圖.[155] These are two different characters used for tabooing *kuang* 匡.[156]

Similarly, the second character of the name of the First Emperor of Song – *yin* 胤 – was taboo, even if used separately. Therefore, many personal names were changed, as for example Lü Yin 呂胤 – whose name was changed to his courtesy name (*zi* 字) Yuqing 餘慶,[157] Li Chongyin 李重胤 – to Chongyi 重裔,[158] or Cheng Changyin 程昌胤 – to Changyi 昌裔.[159] The same change was made in geographical names, too, for example the name of Yinshan county 胤山縣 was changed to Pingshu 平蜀.[160]

In 976 AD the brother of the First Emperor of Song – Zhao Guangyi 趙光義 (Emperor Taizong, r. 976–997) – came to power. After his death his name had to be taboo. In this regard, the name of the younger brother of both first emperors is interesting. His

---

150 For more about *paihang* system see Bauer 1959, pp. 147-222.
151 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 293.
152 *Nien'ershi kaoyi,* j. 69, p. 1149. Note that the new name was also with meaning (*dingguojun* 定國軍 means "to fix the military of the state"). In the period of early Song, like also before in the time of the Five Dynasties, playing on the names of persons and localities was a kind of political prophecy.
153 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 295.
154 *Songshi*, j. 208, p. 6b.
155 *Songshi*, j. 208, p. 9a.
156 Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 255-256.
157 *Songshi*, j. 263, p. 8a.
158 *Jiu wudaishi* (b), j. 19, p. 10b. Note that the *SBBY* edition of *Jiu Wudaishi* has Li Chongyun 李重允 in that place (*Jiu wudaishi,* j. 19, p. 6a). The character *yin* 胤 restored in the Ming time was once more tabooed in the Qing period and changed to *yun* 允, because of the taboo name of the Emperor Yongzheng (Yinzhen 胤禛, r. 1722–1735).
159 *Nien'ershi kaoyi,* j. 51, p. 889.
160 *Shuzhong guangji*, j. 54, p. 3b.

original name, Zhao Kuangmei 趙匡美, was already changed in 960 to Guangmei 光美 when his brother became emperor. Then he had to change his name once again to Tingmei 廷美, because the new name of his second brother also became taboo.[161] Numerous other personal and geographical names were changed, too, as for example: Yang Guangmei 楊光美 to Yang Mei 楊美, Yang Yi 楊義 to Yang Xin 楊信 and Li Huaiyi 李懷義 to Huaizhong 懷忠.[162]

Besides, the names of later emperors were tabooed and replaced. Because of the name Heng 恆 of Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022), the Mountain Heng 恆山 was changed to Mountain Chang 常山 (see 10.4.2). There are many instances of taboo of Emperor Renzong (r. 1023–1064). Because of his name Zhen 禎, the Daoist Heavenly Fortune Festival (*tianzhen* 天禎) was changed to *tianqi* 天祺,[163] the famous Daoist monk Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735) was called Chengxiang 承祥,[164] and the Era name (*nianhao*) Zhenguan 貞觀 (627–649) of Taizong of the Tang dynasty was changed to Zhengguan 正觀.[165] Some scholars think that because of the same reason, the name of the steamed cake *zhengbing* 蒸餅 in the famous Chinese novel *Water margin* (*Shuihuzhuan* 水滸傳) is written as *chuibing* 炊餅.[166] However, both these characters *zhen* 禎 and *zheng* 蒸 seem rather too different for tabooing.

During the rule of Yingzong (r. 1063–1067), whose given name was Shu 曙, this character and its homonyms *shu* 署 and *shu* 薯 were forbidden. One case is described by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) in the *Thematic discourses of Master Zhu* (*Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類): "What is now called Area Commander-in-chief (*zongguang* 總管),[167] was named Administrator (*bushu* 部署)[168] in the beginning of the dynasty. Later it was changed in order to taboo the name of the Emperor Yingzong."[169] Furthermore, in the Song collection of

---

161 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 310.
162 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 310.
163 *Songshi xinbian,* j. 28, p. 5b. For more about the Heavenly Fortune Festival see *Daojiao dacidian,* p. 187.
164 Cf. *Chongren zongmu*, j. 4, p. 278.
165 *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 20, p. 315. Note that even though these characters have a different radical, they were avoided too, as the pronunciation must still have mattered.
166 *Qingxiang nanji*, j. 2, p. 8a; *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 20, p. 317. The text of *Water margin* is probably from the 14th century, but written on the basis of former stories. The action takes place in China of the Song dynasty. Characters *chuibing* 炊餅 for "cakes" are used sixteen Times in *Shuihuzhuan* (for example, j. 24, p. 2b). For translation see Buck 1933, p. 429.
167 Hucker 1985, p. 531.
168 Hucker 1985, p. 393.
169 *Zhuzi yulei,* j. 128, p. 13a.

Tang poems *Wanshou Tangren jueju* 萬首唐人絕句, the word *shuji* 曙雞 (morning bird) in the poem Mancheng 漫成 of Li Shangyin 李商隱 was changed to *xiaoji* 曉雞.[170] The names of emperors Shenzong (Xu 頊, r. 1067–1085), Zhezong (Xu 煦, r. 1085–1100), Huizong (Ji 佶, r. 1100–1125) and Qinzong (Huan 桓, r. 1126–1127) – and their homonyms were also tabooed. In the *Dream Pool Essays* (*Mengxi bitan* 夢溪筆談) of Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095), the name of the Vietnamese king Lê Hoàn (Li Huan 黎桓, r. 980–1005) was therefore written as Li Wei 威.[171]

After northern China was conquered by the Jurchen and the Song capital was moved in 1127 to Lin'an 臨安 (today's Hangzhou) in the south, the new ruler of the Southern Song empire became the Emperor Gaozong (r. 1127–1162), son of the Emperor Huizong. During his reign, the tabooing of homonyms reached a peak in Chinese history. According to the *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式, more than 50 characters had to be avoided because of the Emperor's name, Gou 構.[172] For example, a general Chen Gou 陳遘 (1090–1127) changed his name to his courtesy name Heng Bo 亨伯, because of taboo of the Emperor.[173]

Emperors Xiaozong (Shen 昚, r. 1162–1189), Guangzong (Dun 惇, 1189–1194) and Ningzong (Kuo 擴, 1194–1224) continued the practice of name tabooing, though the number of tabooed characters[174] was apparently reduced. We know for certain that the name of Ma Kuo 馬擴 was changed to Ma Guang 馬廣 because of the taboo of the Emperor Ningzong.[175] The imperial decree of 1190 AD ordered commoners not to adopt new names that violated taboos of distant ancestors, and they had to change existing ones.[176]

Sources are very scant about name tabooing in the following period. Even so, a few instances of taboo of the name Yun 昀 of the Emperor Linzong (r. 1224–1264) are known. Because of his name, the place Yunzhou 筠州 was changed to Ruizhou 瑞州.[177] Because of the name Zi 孜 of the Emperor Duzong (r. 1264–1274), this character and its homonym *zi*

---

[170] *Wanshou Tangren juejushi,* j. 41, p. 16a. Cf. *Quan Tangshi,* j. 540, p. 44b.
[171] *Mengxi bitan,* j. 25, p. 11b.
[172] *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 331. Cf. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 121.
[173] *Dongdu shilüe*, j. 109, p. 3a.
[174] Cf. the list of taboo characters of *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式 in *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, pp. 335, 338, 341, 342.
[175] Wang Yankun 1997, p. 262.
[176] *Songshi,* j. 108, p. 10b.
[177] *Songshi,* j. 41, p. 3a.

咨 were also avoided.[178] We have no materials about possible taboo customs during the reign of the three last, short-living emperors (1274–1279).

6.4.3. A Large Number of Taboo Characters

One of the most important characteristics of tabooing during the Song dynasty was a large number of homonyms of taboo characters, which also had to be avoided. There were many characters to be avoided – more than ever before and after. The bureaucracy was very strong in that period. Many taboo names involved about fifty tabooed homonym-characters. Lists of them can be found in such works as the afore-mentioned *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* 淳熙重修文書式.[179] Though there were so many taboo characters, there were still officials who wanted to increase the number of them.[180]

Rules for replacement of taboo characters were not clearly defined and no concrete equivalents were fixed. Therefore, different characters are used for this purpose. For example characters *zheng* 正, *guang* 光, *fu* 輔, *kan* 刊, *jiu* 糾 and *xing* 興 were used for the taboo character *kuang* 匡, and *yi* 裔 and *si* 嗣 for the taboo character *yin* 胤, both being characters of the name of the first emperor of Song – Kuangyin 匡胤.[181]

Knowing that so many characters were taboo and had to be avoided, it seems strange that the principle "difficult to offend and easy to avoid" (*nanzhi er yibi* 難知而易避, see 5.1.1 and 5.2.2) would still apply for tabooing, at least in the beginning of that dynasty. The second emperor of Song, Taizong, issued a decree which refers to this rule leading him to change his name Guangyi 光義 (with popular characters) to (the less used) Gui 炅. The characters of the former name did not need to be avoided anymore. Only names of counties, offices and people that had already been changed because of this former taboo had to be preserved in their new form.[182] In any event, taboo names of many emperors were often rare characters.

---

[178] *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 21, p. 343.
[179] Quoted partly in the section of every Song emperor in *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 291 - j. 21, p. j. 21, p. 343. For more about *Chunxi chongxiu wenshushi* see Wang Jian 2002, 185-188.
[180] Cf. *Rongzhai sanbi*, j. 11, p. 2b.
[181] Cf. examples of such replacement in Wang Yankun 1997, pp. 253-259 and 551-553.
[182] *Songchao shishi*, j. 1, p. 9ab.

6.4.4. Ancestors

Extension of ancestor worship and tabooing of distant ancestors were also special features of Song times. The tabooing of their names was, on the one hand, an expression of reverence for deceased relatives, and on the other hand a way to strengthen one's own authority and mythologisation of one's own genealogy. In the beginning of the Song dynasty, the first emperor established the system of four ancestors. They received a special temple name, were worshiped in the ancestral temple, and their names were taboo.[183] These four tabooed ancestors were: the father of the first emperor Hongyin 弘殷, his grandfather Jing 敬, great grandfather Ting 珽, and great great grandfather Tiao 朓.

We know, for example, that the name of the poet Xie Tiao 謝朓 (464–499) was changed retrospectively to *tiao* 眺,[184] and later once again to *liao* 暸, because of taboo. The second change was made, perhaps, because the character *tiao* 眺 was too similar to the taboo character as its homonym, and sound taboo was still important in Song. We know that Mi Fei 米芾 (1051–1107), when quoting *Qianziwen* 千子文, wrote the character *liao* 暸 instead of *yao* 朓.[185] According to the *Songchao shishi* 宋朝事實, there were twenty one characters avoided as taboo because of the name of the imperial ancestor Ting 珽.[186] Furthermore, the taboo character *jing* 敬 (the name of an ancestor as well) was replaced by *gong* 恭, *jin* 謹 and *jing* 景, or *qin* 欽.[187] All family names Jing 敬 had to be changed to Gong 恭.[188]

Tabooing the names of the last few ancestors had been a normal practice also before the Song dynasty and was therefore nothing special. But other changes made by the third Emperor Zhenzong were more curious. Trying to mythologize his genealogy, he created the First Ancestor (*shizu* 始祖). His name, Xuanlang 玄朗, was tabooed,[189] together with more than 40 other homonym characters connected to it.[190] Because of that, general Yang Yanlang 楊延朗 (958–1014) had to change his name to Yang Yanzhao 楊延昭.[191] Besides, the

---

[183] Wang Jian 2002, p. 173.
[184] Cf., for example, Xie Tiao 謝眺 in *Mengxi bitan* (b), j. 2, p. 2b. In the *CSJC* already revised to Xie Tiao 謝朓 (*Mengxi bitan*, j. 2, p. 10).
[185] Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, p. 301. Wang Yankun 1997, p. 448.
[186] *Songchao shishi*, j. 1, p. 1b.
[187] Wang Yankun, pp. 236-238.
[188] *Gujin xingshi shu bianzheng,* j. 3, p. 32.
[189] Cf. *Xuzizhi tongjian*, j. 30, p. 13a; *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian,* j. 79, p. 12a. Note that the character 玄 was tabooed in both sources in different way: replaced by the character *yuan* 元 and omitting one stroke.
[190] Cf. *Jingshi biming huikao*, j. 19, pp. 296-297.
[191] *Dongdu shilue*, j. 34, p. 5a.

temple name Xuanzong 玄宗 of an Emperor from the Tang dynasty (r. 712–756) had to be changed to Minghuang 明皇 during the Song period (the same name was used again in the Qing period when the name of the Kangxi Emperor – Xuan 玄 – had to be tabooed). [192]

Furthermore, the legendary ancestor of the Chinese – the Yellow Emperor – was proclaimed the ancestor of Song in 1014 AD, and the characters of his taboo name Xuanyuan 軒轅 were prohibited from use.[193] Although we also know past cases, in which emperors used legendary ancestors to support their own power – for example the Emperor Xuanzong of Tang in 741 AD saw Laozi in his dream, claimed him as the imperial ancestor and honored him as Emperor Xuanyuan 玄元[194] – but this mythologisation of one's own genealogy created by the Emperor Zhenzong was unparalleled. It was perhaps in part inspired by competition with the Western Xia and Liao dynasties.

6.4.5. Tabooing of distant ancestors

The tabooing of names was a very important topic for Song society. Discussions and decisions about the system of ancestral temples and rules for tabooing the imperial name have been recorded,[195] initiated by the Minister of Rites (*liguan* 禮官).[196] The Song dynasty followed at first the system of the Tang dynasty and its principle of "non-tabooing of distant ancestors" (*yitiao buhui* 已祧不諱).[197] According to this principle, in the beginning of the reign of Zhezong (r. 1085–1100), the tablet of Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085) was placed in the ancestral temple and the tablet of Zhao Jing 趙敬 (grandfather of the Emperor Taizu) was moved into the room with tablets of distant ancestors (*jiashi* 夾室).[198] This traditionally implied that the character *jing* 敬 should no longer be taboo and we can assume that this was probably also promulgated.

But we know that later in the time of Zhezong's brother – the Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125), the tablet of Zhao Jing was moved back from the temple of distant ancestors to the main ancestral temple.[199] Only in 1162 AD, when the tablet of Qinzong (1126–1127) entered the ancestral temple, was the tablet of Zhao Jing finally moved to the distant

---

[192] Liang Chen 2006, pp. 31-32.
[193] *Songshi*, j. 8, p. 5b.
[194] *Jiu Tangshu*, j. 24, p. 10ab. See also Wechsler 1985, pp. 69-71.
[195] Cf., for example, *Songshi*, j. 106, p. 4b.
[196] Hucker 1985, p. 305; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 281.
[197] *Rizhilu,* j. 23, p. 21b.
[198] *Songshi,* j. 106, p. 7a.
[199] *Jingshi buming huikao,* j. 19, p. 302. Wang Xinhua 2001, p. 182.

ancestors' room and his name no longer tabooed. We read about this in the *History of Song*: "(In 1162 AD), in the first month, Ministry of Rites and Court of Imperial Sacrifice (*taichangsi* 太常寺)[200] decided that Qinzong will enter the ancestral temple, and therefore Yizu 翼祖 (temple name of Zhao Jing) will be moved. On the ninth day of the first month, Zhao Jing and Empress Jianmu 簡穆皇后 (his spouse) were moved to the distant ancestors, and their names is no longer taboo."[201]

Besides, names of distant ancestors were later also tabooed. At least in the decree of Emperor Guangzong 1190 AD, he writes that "commoners, when choosing a new name, should not violate the taboo of distant ancestors, and already existing names with such characters should be changed".[202] It was only limited to the real taboo characters (*zhenghui* 正諱), not involving their homonyms.

6.4.6. Imperial Examination

Tabooing was strictly observed during the state exams (see 8.2.2). From the Sui period onwards, people had to pass civil service examinations (*keju* 科舉) in order to be eligible for a civil service post.[203] Exams expanded under the Song dynasty. They were held every three years and had several stages from local to palace exams. The core texts used in the examination were mainly poems and classics.[204] The candidate not only had to know these texts, but also to learn various taboo characters of the emperor and examiners (see 7.2.2).

The candidates using taboo characters during these exams were secretly eliminated. Therefore, candidates avoided many characters in order to be safe from the accusation of violating taboo. We read for example in the *History of Song* (*Songshu*) in the biography of the Southern Song official Lou Yue 樓鑰 (1137–1213) about a case when a candidate in the Advanced Scholar examination accidentally violated a former name of the emperor, and causing those in charge to place him into the last class of candidates.[205]

---

[200] Hucker 1985, p. 476.
[201] *Songshi,* j. 123, p. 14ab.
[202] *Songshi,* j. 108, p. 10b.
[203] For more about the civil service examinations see Elman 2000. Taboo cases are mentioned in Elman 2000, pp. 206 and 211.
[204] Cf. *China: Five thousand years* 2007, p. 552.
[205] *Songshu,* j. 395, p. 1a; Shiba Yoshinobu 1976, pp. 668-672. See also Walton 2002, pp. 1-38. Note that Lou Yue's collected works (in SKQS) are extant.

6.4.7. Name Tabooing in the States of Liao, Western Xia and Jin

In a comparable period of time, apart from the Song dynasty, three other non-Chinese dynasties were known to be established in the north of China: the Liao dynasty of Khitans (907–1125), the Jin dynasty of Jurchens (1115–1234) and the Western Xia dynasty of Tanguts (1038–1227). We know less about possible taboo practices in these countries. But on the basis of Chinese sources, the influence of Chinese name tabooing can be noticed there.[206] The idea of name taboo was regarded as an important part of their cultures and was used outside of China, especially in political and cultural relations, but also as a basis of the ruler's power. The fact that the taboo custom reached its apogee during the Song dynasty certainly influenced its growing implementation abroad. On the other hand, there are only Chinese sources used for this dissertation, so that this research is principally limited to taboos connected with China itself. We know about the tabooing of Chinese names of rulers of states in diplomacy and in formal use, but practically nothing about taboo of other people, about the ritual aspect of taboo, and about private taboo custom in these countries.

6.4.7.1. Liao 遼 and Western Xia 西夏

Examples of name tabooing are very rare in these two dynasties. We know nothing about tabooing of Khitan and Tangut names. Therefore, some scholars have assumed there was no taboo custom before the Chinese writing system was introduced.[207] Opinions to the contrary are also only hypothetical.[208] Concretely, numerous names of Liao rulers were tabooed by the Chinese. An envoy Han Yi 韓億 (11th c. AD) was sent in 1026 to Liao with congratulations for the birthday of the empress. As his name was identical with the (Chinese!) taboo name of the Emperor Taizu of Liao (r. 907–926) – Yi 億 – he changed it to Yi 意.[209] The same thing happened when, an another envoy Ding Yi 丁億 was sent to Liao. He also had to change his name to Yi 意.[210] Ninety years later, the story was repeated once more: Zhang Yi 張億 was sent with New Year greetings and changed his name to Yi

[206] About description of the Liao dynasty in Chinese sources see Standen 2011, p. 147-197. For more about Liao dynasty see Twitchett – Tietze 1994, pp. 43-153. For more about Western Xia see Dunnel 1994, pp. 154-214; Dunnel 1996. For more about Jin dynasty see Franke 1994a, pp. 215-320.
[207] Chen Yuan 1958, p. 158; Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 286.
[208] Cf. For example Wang Jian 2002, p. 220.
[209] *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 104, p. 19b.
[210] *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.

易 because of the taboo of Emperor Taizu.[211] It is symptomatic that the avoidance of taboo is unilateral: Only Song envoys tabooed names of Liao rulers, but there is no known example of the observance of Song taboo by Liao. A possible explanation is the weakness of the Song dynasty and Liao's lack of esteem for it,[212] but it seems equally likely that Liao rulers just had little awareness of Chinese name taboos.

Examples of taboos of other Liao rulers can be given, too. We know about two other envoys sent to Liao: Li Weixian 李惟賢 changed his name in 1043 to his courtesy name Baochen 寶臣, because of the taboo name Xian 賢 of Emperor Jingzong of Liao (r. 969–982).[213] This change was certainly only temporary for the time of his mission. It was different in the case of Wang Deji 王德基, who eleven years before, in 1032, was sent for the birthday of the empress dowager of Liao. In all likelihood he had no need for changing his name, but in the *History of Liao* (*Liaoshi*), his name is recorded as Wang Deben 王德本, in order to observe the taboo of Emperor Daozong (Hongji 洪基, r. 1055–1101).[214] Of course, this avoidance of the taboo of Daozong could not happen before the period of his reign, but the change was made by later writers.

The only direct mention of name tabooing in the *Liaoshi* is the case of the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*guanglusi* 光祿寺). We can read there that the Court was originally called *chonglusi* 崇祿寺, and that its name was changed because of the taboo of Emperor Taizong (given name Deguang 德光, r. 926–947).[215] For the same reason, names such as Fan Yanguang 范延光 (the envoy of the last emperor of the Later Tang dynasty in 936)[216] or Song Guangye 宋光業 (an official from Later Jin)[217] were written as Fan Yanguang 范延廣 and Song Huiye 宋暉業 in the same *Liaoshi*.[218]

A bit curious is the story about avoiding the era name. One of two Era names of the Emperor Xingzong of Liao (r. 1031–1055) was the Chongxi 重熙 period (1032–1055). After the enthronement of the Emperor Tianzuo 天祚 (r. 1101–1125), whose name was Yanxi 延禧, the Era name Chongxi started to be written as Chonghe 重和, in order to avoid

---

[211] *Liaoshi,* j. 17, p. 4b; *Nian'ershi kaoyi*, j. 83, p. 1350. It is also possible that the name of Zhang Yi 張億 was only tabooed in the *Liaoshi*.
[212] Wang Jian 2002, p. 222.
[213] *Xuzizhi tongjian changbian*, j. 142, p. 32b.
[214] Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 287.
[215] *Liaoshi*, j. 47, p. 9b.
[216] Cf. *Xin wudaishi,* j. 51, pp. 2b-5a.
[217] Cf. *Jiu wudaishi,* j. 76, pp. 10b.
[218] *Liaoshi*, j. 3, p. 7a; *Liaoshi,* j. 4, p. 5a.

the homonym of the emperor's name. The same Era name Chonghe 重和 (1118–1119) appeared a few years later in the Song dynasty under the reign of the Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–1125), but it was very soon changed to Xuanhe 宣和 (1119–1125). Thus the reason for tabooing by Song was not the original taboo of a Liao emperor (which would have been *xi* 禧), but only to avoid a year title of the Liao dynasty that had itself been the subject of tabooing.[219]

A similar incident is reported for the year 1031: The Era name Mingdao 明道 (1032–1033) of the Song dynasty had to be quickly changed to another one – Jingyou 景祐 (1034–1038) – after someone discovered that the name (*xiaozi* 小字) of Emperor Jingzong (r. 969–982) of Liao was Mingyi 明扆.[220] We may wonder why the Song thought it prudent to keep in mind Liao taboos, but the difficult peace of Shanyuan in 1004 was probably still fresh in people's minds.[221] We should also note that, according to Chinese sources, there is also an example of taboo of Liao by Korea as its vassal state at the time. King Sukjong (real name Wang Hee, Wang Xi 王熙, r. 1095–1105) apparently changed his name to Yong 顒 because of the taboo personal name Yanxi 延禧 of Emperor Tianzuo of Liao.[222]

Only a short note can be made about the Western Xia dynasty in the Northwest of China, because its taboo customs are still unexplored. Chinese taboo customs were apparently known, but it is only documented for us in formal relations with the Song dynasty. A few examples describe the tabooing of Song emperors by Western Xia subjects. From Chinese sources, we know about Yi Yin 彝殷, who changed his name to Xing 興 because of the taboo name Hongyin 弘殷 of the father of the first Emperor of the Song.[223] Similarly, Li Guangrui 李光睿 avoided the taboo name of Emperor Taizong of the Song and changed it to Kerui 克睿.[224] Furthermore, it is presumed that the first Era name of Western Xia – Xiandao 顯道 (1032–1034) – was the tabooed version of the Era name of Song – Mingdao 明道 (1032–1033) – at the same time. The character *ming* 明 had to be avoided because of the taboo name of the father of the Emperor Jingzong – Li Deming 李德明 (981–1031).[225] In the work *Lunyu quanjie* 論語全解, compiled in Western Xia by Chen

---

[219] *Tieweishan congtan*, j. 1, p. 6a; *Laoxue anbiji,* j. 1, p. 5; *Jingshi buming huikao,* j. 22, p. 349.
[220] *Songchao shishi,* j. 2, p. 14a; *Guitianlu,* j. 1, p. 7b; *Jingshi buming huikao,* j. 22, p. 349.
[221] For more about the treaty of Shanyuan see Twitchett – Tietze 1994, pp. 108-110.
[222] *Songshi,* j. 487, p. 7b.
[223] *Songshi,* j. 485, p. 1b.
[224] *Songshi,* j. 485, p. 2a.
[225] Cf. Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 288.

Xiangdao 陳祥道 (11 c.), strokes are missing in the character for *xiao* 孝, as this was a part of the name Renxiao 仁孝 of the Emperor Renzong of Western Xia (r. 1139–1193).[226]

6.4.7.2. Jin 金

The tabooing custom was also present in the Jin dynasty of the Jurchen. We do not have materials about taboos of Jurchens themselves, but examples of avoiding Chinese taboo are known from the beginning of the dynasty. After conquest of the Liao state (1125), and the invasion and occupation of North China that immediately followed, the process of sinicization of the Jurchens was further intensified. They started to use two names: the Jurchen one – for everyday life, and the Chinese one – for official decrees,[227] and only the Chinese name was tabooed if it was written in Chinese, as the Jurchen name had no standard transcription. Already the first Emperor of the Jin dynasty – Emperor Taizu (Wanyan Aguda 完顏阿骨打, r. 1115–1123) had adopted another Chinese name – Min 旻. Later on homonyms of this name such as *min* 憫, *min* 閔, *min* 岷 were tabooed.[228] Therefore, for example, Minzhou county 岷州 in today's Gansu province was changed to Xihe 西和 in 1143.[229] But the tabooing practice during the reign of the first three emperors: Taizu, Taizong (r. 1123–1134), and Xizong (r. 1135–1149) is still vague for us.

The first decisive change was the provision of taboo information to neighboring countries of Jin – to Song, Korea and Western Xia. This announcement made in 1150 shows that name tabooing was considered important in diplomatic relations.[230] Later, mutual avoidance of taboos in diplomatic relationships confirmed this intention. The tabooing of names was approved as a part of culture, first in international relations and later also within the Jin state. Then, in 1169, a memorandum about tabooing of homonyms was issued, on the basis of the practice of the Tang dynasty:

> In the *Tanghuiyao* 唐會要 we find that old homonyms of taboo names were not avoided…, but in later ages there was a large-scale avoidance. Hence now homonyms are taboo. … We have already promulgated a list of homonyms of the name of the emperor (Shizong, r. 1161–1189)…, altogether 28 homonym characters

[226] Wang Xinhua 2007, p. 288. The author of this dissertation has only seen the SKQS edition of *Lunyu quanjie*, but there, all *xiao* characters are written without curtailment.
[227] *Nianer shi zaji*, j. 28, pp. 6a-7b.
[228] *Songmo jiwen,* j. xia, p. 16a.
[229] *Songshi*, j. 89, p. 10a.
[230] *Jinshi,* j. 60, p. 14a.

> of the character *you* 褎 (which was the original name of the Emperor), to be avoided.[231]

The work *Da Jin jili* 大金集禮 (compiled by Zhang Wei 張瑋 in 1195) did not note here the taboo name You 褎 directly, but avoided it by using the Chinese method *fanqie* 反切 (two characters representing the initial consonant and the final) to indicate its pronunciation. Apparently, name tabooing was intensified during the time of Emperor Shizong. It should also be noted that his reign was also the period of the strongest impact of the Chinese in the Jin state, and a time of increased adaptation of Chinese culture.[232]

The high point of taboo avoidance in the Jin dynasty was the period of Emperor Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208). He obviously admired Chinese culture, including its taboo customs. In his emulation of the Chinese taboo, he went even further than the Song dynasty. It is interesting to consider that "external" nations, such as the Jurchens or Koreans, were even stricter in the "Chinese" taboo practice after their sinicization. They wanted perhaps to accent in this way their affiliation with the "cultured" world. Directly after the enthronement of Zhangzong in 1191, a special, unprecedented prescript for officials was issued on how to avoid names of former dynasties:

> Liao 遼 had to be changed to Heng 恆, Song 宋 to Bian 汴, Qin 秦 to Hao 镐, Jin 晉 to Bing 并, Han 漢 to Yi 益, Liang 梁 to Shao 邵，Qi 齊 to Peng 彭, Yin 殷 to Qiao 譙, Tang 唐 to Jiang 絳, Wu 吳 to E 鄂, Shu 蜀 to Nao 夔, Chen 陳 to Yuan 宛, Sui 隋 to Jing 涇, Yu 虞 to Ze 澤.[233]

One year later, in 1192, an imperial edict for all subjects was announced, which ordered the tabooing of names of "former emperors" and of Confucius and the Duke of Zhou (Dan 旦, 11 c.).[234] The regulation about the taboo of Confucius was repeated yet again in 1205 for Advanced Scholars (*jinshi* 進士).[235] Furthermore, the tabooing of imperial names was extended: In 1201 an edict prescribed that all taboo names and childhood names of all Jin emperors (including their ancestors) should be avoided, starting from the "First Emperor" (Shizu 始祖) – Wanyan Hanpu 完顏函普 (r. 941–960 as an overall Jurchen leader).[236]

---

[231] *Da Jin jili*, j. 23, p. 203.
[232] For the process of sinicization of the Jurchen see also Tao Jing-shen 1977.
[233] *Jinshi*, j. 9, p. 6b.
[234] *Jinshi*, j. 9, p. 11a.
[235] *Jinshi*, j. 12, p. 3a.
[236] *Jinshi*, j. 11, p. 5b.

The importance of taboos for the emperor can be seen in the precise analysis of taboo characters made for him by deputy imperial censor Sun Jikang 孫即康. The names of six Jin emperors were discussed. For example, the character *sheng*/*cheng* 晟 (taboo of Emperor Taizong, r. 1123–1134) had to be tabooed by omitting strokes only if it had pronunciation *sheng* and not if it was pronounced *cheng*. The first character of the taboo name Zongyao 宗堯 of Ruizong (1096–1135, leader of the Jurchens) had to be written as *chong* 崇, with the lower part written as 未. By tabooing of the first character of the name of Xianzong – Yungong 允恭 (1146–1185) – omitting strokes was appropriate, for example, in the character *chong* 充, but was not needed if it appeared in more complex characters, such as *tong* 統. Additionally, the design of totally new forms of characters was proposed (using the example of the Tang dynasty) as equivalents for taboo characters.[237] As we can see, the appreciation of Chinese taboo customs reached a climax in the period of Emperor Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208).

The avoidance of taboo names was not only a highbrow idea, but affected also the life of common people, as for example in cases of Wanyan Kuang 完顏匡 (12th c.) and Zhang Yuansu 張元素 (1151–1234). For the first, it had only a temporary impact. When he became an envoy to the Song state in 1193, he had to change his name to Bi 弼 in order to avoid the taboo name of Emperor Taizong of Song.[238] But for Zhang Yuansu, name taboos determined the further course of his career in a crucial way. That is to say that in the Jin the custom was especially observed during civil examinations, just as in the Song dynasty. Those who violated an imperial taboo name were dismissed. Zhang wanted to become an Advanced Scholar and prepared for his exams in 1196. But he made one big mistake – he used a character that was an imperial taboo and automatically failed the civil-service exam. Because of this disappointment, he started to study medicine, became a famous doctor, and wrote many important medical works.[239] At least in his case a mistake in taboo avoidance also bore a positive outcome, at least for posterity.

A bit curious is the case of the posthumous name of Wulinda 烏林答 (d. 1151). The story of her life is very romantic and tragic. She was the wife of the later Emperor Shizong of Jin (r. 1161–1189), and was very devoted to him. The Emperor Hailingwang (r. 1149–1161) admired her and ordered her to leave her husband and come to his inner court. She

---

[237] *Jinshi*, j. 99, p. 7a; cf. also Wang Jian 2002, p. 226.
[238] *Jinshi*, j. 10, p. 2b.
[239] *Jinshi,* j. 131, p. 3ab.

went there in order not to bring danger to Shizong, but committed suicide immediately after her arrival. After Shizong finally raised a rebellion ten years later, murdered Hailingwang and became emperor in 1161, he honored his faithful wife with the posthumous title Empress Zhaode 昭德. In contrast, Hailingwang received no temple name. But the problem started later during the reign of Zhangzong (r. 1190–1208), when somebody discovered that both of the characters in her posthumous title were already included in the long posthumous name of the Emperor Taizu. It was then decided that the posthumous name of the Emperor should be tabooed and the faithful wife then received the new posthumous name Mingde 明德.[240]

In the time of the aforementioned Emperor Hailingwang, an example of tabooing the name of the crown prince is known. When Guangying 光英 (1150–1161) was appointed to crown prince in 1152, a certain Yang Boying 楊伯英 tabooed his name and changed his own name to Boren 伯仁.[241] Furthermore, the name for eagle (*ying* 鷹) was apparently changed, and therefore falcon cage (*yingfang* 鷹坊)[242] was called "domesticated eagle cage" (*xunzhifang* 馴鷙坊). Moreover, geographical names such as Guangzhou 光州 were changed to Jiangzhou 蔣州, Guangshan county 光山縣 to Qisi 期思, Yingguo 英國 to Shouguo 壽國, and Yingguo 應國 to Qiguo 杞國. The military prefecture Guanghua 光化 was also changed to Tonghua 通化.[243]

In last years of the Jin dynasty, taboo customs may have become less strict. We learn at least about the practice of non-avoidance of the first character of the name of an emperor, which was in fact used jointly by all the male relatives of his generation as to mark their generation within the descent line. The emperor in question, Aizong 哀宗 (Shouxu 守緒, r. 1224–1234), was practically the last emperor of the Jin dynasty. The last one, Emperor Mo, was killed after ruling for shorter than one day, which marks the shortest reign in Chinese history. During the reign of Aizong, there was a man with the name Li Shoujie 李守節. After Aizong was enthroned, Shoujie dropped the first character of his name. The Emperor thought it was not necessary and sent a courtier with words "I do

---

[240] *Jinshi*, j. 64, pp. 2a-3b.
[241] *Jinshi*, j. 125, p. 6a.
[242] One of the Five Cages of animals used in imperial hunts under the supervision of the Palace Administration (cf. Hucker 1985, p. 583).
[243] *Jinshi,* j. 82, p. 10b.

not want you to avoid the first character of your name. Why do you (Li Shoujie) avoid it?" The answer was that it was necessary if a subject respects the ruler.[244]

In conclusion, the period between the Sui and Song dynasties can be called the golden age for the custom of name tabooing. Certainly we can mention different aspects of the practice of name tabooing having their pinnacle in other periods of Chinese history. In this period the tabooing custom was applied in just about every sphere of life of the people. In this period, the avoidance of names was officially included in the penal system and concrete punishments were henceforth prescribed. From the Tang to the Song, many discussions about different topics related to name tabooing are reported. There is also no other period during which such a multitude of characters had to be tabooed.

The main taboo person in this period was clearly the emperor, and the tabooing of his name was often a matter of discussion for the Board of Rites. Imperial taboos had to support central power. The taboo on the names of relatives from within one's own kinship group was also flourishing. A very important role was played by the taboo of officialdom. Probably the observance and inconsistent nature of the taboos depended on the quality (or lack thereof) of bureaucratic control.

An important change in the taboo custom was made at the end of the period. Until the Song dynasty, the practice of reading aloud was prevalent, and therefore the sound of a taboo character was the most important thing. In the Northern Song, we find many avoided homonyms of taboo characters. In the Southern Song, the practice of silent reading started, and therefore the written form of taboo character became decisive.[245]

---

[244] *Zhongzhouji*, j. 7, p. 2a; *Jingshi biming huikao,* j. 22, p. 357.

[245] The development of print culture in the Song period played an important role in this change. More about the popular printing in the Song see Chia 1996, pp. 10-48.