The soldier as a sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-confucianization of the military in sixteenth-century China

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Chapter 2 – The Separation of *Wen* and *Wu*

Developmental Cycles of Imperial Civil-Military Relations before 960

Instead of gradually drifting apart as during previous dynasties, during the Song a definitive separation of *wen* and *wu* in institutional and socio-cultural terms took shape, which carried over into succeeding dynasties. If we look at the preceding long-lasting Han and Tang dynasties, this separation in both cases developed gradually along largely similar lines, but was not a fixture over imperial governance right from the beginning, in contrast to the Song. In institutional terms, the Han dynasty, which succeeded the Qin after a brief reign of less than two decades, followed the precedent of universal military service of its peasant subjects. This system, nevertheless, began to lose its importance over the course of the dynasty, because the geopolitical reasons it has been created for changed when the Warring States were unified in a single empire. The nature of conflict changed therefore: internal conflicts between sedentary Han armies would continue to occur, but the most important external enemies of the empire were nomadic and thus cavalry-based armies. Therefore, the army with its recruitment based on universal subscription of peasant levies did not meet the changed military circumstances. The military centre of gravitas moved towards the frontiers, were permanent commands were set up, staffed by volunteers, criminals or non-Chinese nomads who mostly served indefinitely. This new arrangement was cheaper to maintain than a system of universal conscription, and it also reduced the risk that internal militarization entailed, namely that of internal elites forming private armies composed of trained peasants and other dependents.[110]

The Tang dynasty, which was led by an aristocratic elite of mixed Han Chinese and Turkic descent, went through roughly the same developmental cycle.[111] The Chinese component of this army would consolidate itself into the so-called *fubing* 府兵 system, the backbone of the early Tang armed forces, that would operate alongside nomad cavalry forces. The details of its early organization are unclear, but in its mature form it entailed Chinese farmers who were assigned

[110] Mark Edward Lewis, *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 16-17, 24-25; Mark E. Lewis, "The Han Abolition of Universal Military Service," in *Warfare in Chinese History*, edited by Hans van de Ven (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 36-39, 41-48, 52-61.
[111] Mark Edward Lewis, *China between Empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 81.

land to farm (or at least receive the income from) in exchange for military service. They were organized in units, which rotated in turn to the capital for the military-part of their occupation, while the rest of the time they were engaged in farming. The officers, often partly or completely from a non-Chinese background, were kept in the political centre, which kept them from establishing personal ties with their Chinese *fubing* troops.[112] Again, the locus of conflict shifted to opponents outside of the confines of the empire, often of a nomadic nature. In the course of the eighth century there was a shift from military centralization towards frontier decentralization, for reasons of military efficiency. Frontier governorships were established staffed, initially, by Han Chinese aristocrats or holders of a degree of the newly established examination system, but later they were succeeded by commanders of non-Chinese origins.[113] The troops they commanded also became enlisted on a more permanent basis from amongst the landless, supplemented by conscripted peasants. The *fubing*, in the meantime, were undermined by socio-economic changes as well. Wealthy landholders were consolidating large landed estates at the expense of the small-holding farmers who had formed the basis of the *fubing* labour pool. The nature of the officer's class also underwent changes: whereas during the early Tang civil and military officials were drawn from the same mixed aristocracy, during the eighth century the literate and more culturally refined would prefer civil careers over military assignments, leaving the latter to become the preserve of lower social classes.[114]

Wen and *wu* identities in the socio-cultural sense tended to drift apart over time because of this similar institutional dynamic. What can we know about the shape *wen* and *wu* identities took, and can we posit an influence of Confucianism on this process? If we look at the Han, the majority of the bureaucratic appointees was selected on the basis of recommendation by other officials. Despite the much-vaunted declaration of Confucianism as state orthodoxy during the Han, the state

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[112] Albert E. Dien, "The Role of the Military in the Western Wei/Northern Chou State," in *State and Society in Early Medieval China*, edited by Albert E. Dien (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), 332, 336, 346; David A. Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare, 300-900* (London: Routledge, 2002), 114; Lewis, *China between Empires*, 84-85.

[113] Nicola Di Cosmo, "Introduction," in *Military Culture in Imperial China*, edited by Nicola Di Cosmo (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 4-5

[114] Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare*, 208-216; David A. Graff, "The Reach of the Military: Tang," *Journal of Chinese History* 1 (2017): 244-253; David A. Graff, "The Sword and the Brush: Military Specialisation and Career Patterns in Tang China, 618-907," *War and Society* 18.2 (2000): 9-19; Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "What is the Meaning of `War' in an Age of Cultural Efflorescence? Another look at the Role of War in Song Dynasty China (960-1279)," in *War in Words: Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz, edited by* Marco Formisano and Hartmut Bohme *(Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 93.*

also exerted very little control over the actual contents of its learning and inculcation of officials. From 134 BCE onwards it was possible to enter the civil bureaucracy on the basis of service within the Imperial Academy, an institution staffed with specialists on one of the *Five Classics*, which was created to ensure the transmission of these texts. Furthermore, irregular examinations were held by the emperor in the palace, in which he would select advisors amongst candidates on the basis of their answers. However, the number of people selected on these grounds remained small.[115] Further evidence that Confucianism was far from hegemonic is provided by the intellectual leanings of parts of the serving and non-serving civil elites at the end of the Han, many of whom sought a cure to the ails of their predicament in either Daoism or Legalism.[116]

For the Tang there is also a lack of compelling evidence that Confucianism permeated the civil bureaucracy and encouraged a socio-cultural divergence between *wen* and *wu*.[117] At the beginning of the dynasty, most appointees were again selected by recommendation. The later re-implementation of the examination system only recruited a minority of civil officials. Did these examinations provide an inherent anti-military bias derived from Confucian ideology? If we look at the content of the examinations, it is clear that a candidate's ability to compose *belles-lettres* was tested primarily, and that knowledge of the classics was secondary most of the time. Far from being a monopoly of Confucian ideology, the examinations also allowed testing Daoist thought. Neither was there an interpretative orthodoxy pertaining to the classics in force during the Tang.[118] We also know that the number of texts that were recognized as a classic was still in flux at this time, with Tang texts referring to a number of nine.[119]

The evidence that Confucianism disinclined civil elites from warlike pursuits and contributed to a broadly shared anti-war sentiment is sparse. There is a stronger case to be made for a social, and to a lesser extent, cultural divergence between *wen* and *wu* elites because of institutional changes resulting from the pressures of warfare with nomadic enemies. From the

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[115] Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000), 5.
[116] John E. Wills, Jr, *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 102.
[117] Jonathan Karam Skaff, "Tang Military Culture and its Inner Asian Influences," in *Military Culture in Imperial China*, edited by Nicola Di Cosmo (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), 171-179; Howard J. Wechsler, "The Confucian Impact on early T'ang Decision-Making," *T'oung Pao* 66.1-3 (1980): 9-10, 32-35.
[118] Elman, *A Cultural History*, 8-12; Hans H. Frankel, "T'ang Literati: A Composite Biography," in *Confucian Personalities*, edited by Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchet (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), 65-68, 83.
[119] Nylan, *The Five Confucian Classics*, 18.

review of historiography, we can surmise a relative "barbarization" of *wu*, but also its differentiation from *wen* in geographical terms. Already during the Qin and early Han, *wen* and *wu* seem to have been regional specialities. The eastern part of the Yellow River plain around Luoyang was the centre of textual learning, and in the course of the dynasty it would become the political heart of a demilitarized interior standing in sharp contrast to a militarized northern and north-western frontier. The northwest once again witnessed the genesis of a militarized conquest elite driving the unification in the shape of the Sui and Tang empires. However, in the course of the Tang, the demilitarized interior seems to have shifted more towards the south of China instead of mostly towards the east as during the Han. This was the consequence of a long-term process of a geographical shift in demographics which started occurring after the fall of the Han.[120] What changed during the Song dynasty that made the *wen*-*wu* divide permanent and how did this relate to geographical, institutional and socio-cultural factors?

A Broken Cycle: The Tang-Song Transition and *Wen* and *Wu*

Beginning with the establishment of the Song dynasty in 960, after six decades of political fragmentation after the end of the Tang empire, *wen* and *wu* would quite quickly during the dynasty be set up as two separate realms in institutional and socio-cultural terms, instead of gradually drifting apart as during previous dynasties. Furthermore, in this section I will argue that during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries a redefinition of Confucianism rose to the fore, which further bolstered the socio-cultural *wen* and *wu* divide by redefining literati identity, a change which would become permanent during the Ming empire when it had come to dominate the content of the civil service examination system.

The politically fragmented period prior to the establishment of the Song was characterized by a dominance of military men, and ended with one of the regimes in the north achieving hegemony, which was then instrumentalized to conquer the independent polities in the south. The newly unified Song dynasty that emerged in 960 was initially dominated by a military elite as well, and I would argue that there is no reason to assume that the new dynasty could not have followed the same trajectory of development. During the earlier tenth century, for example, there were many military officers who gained an appreciation of civil literati culture and encouraged their sons to

[120] Lewis, *China between Empires*, 6-7.

engage in literati learning.[121] I argue, based on the historical precedents set by the Han and Tang empires, that this group probably would have formed the nucleus of a renewed complementary *wen-wu* ruling elite, at least during the early part of the dynasty. The founder of the Song dynasty, himself a military man, even concluded a deal with his senior military subordinates to relinquish their military commands in return for an elevated status of them and their families by marriage into the imperial clan.[122] However, the dynasty was characterized from nearly the beginning to the end by a marked dominance of the civil bureaucracy over its military counterpart and this was the result of institutional choices that were made during the early part of the dynasty.[123] Most of the institutional measures to ensure this were old wine in new bottles, as Graff has argued. However, the degree to which they were implemented seem to have reached a new high under the Song.[124] But did these institutional changes alone make this rift between *wen* and *wu* a lasting one after the Tang straight into the Ming? I will argue below that a trio of interlocking circumstances provided the Song dynasty with a kind of "blank slate", which, I argue, facilitated breaking a cyclical continuity of *wen* and *wu* developments characterizing earlier Chinese military history. Furthermore, two conscious institutional changes institutionalized this break in continuity.

The first of these was permanent shift of the demographic and economic centre of the empire southwards away from the flow of the Yellow River, which had been the core area of Chinese polities since the Zhou dynasty, towards the Yangzi Valley and beyond. This shift, as already noted above, had been a long-term development, but it was accelerated by the Huang Chao rebellion.[125]

The second was the destruction of the old Tang aristocracy, which meant the Song elites would have a new composition. The destruction of the aristocracy at the end of the Tang dynasty *de facto* destroyed the hereditary manpower pool from which both military and civil officials had been drawn.[126]

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[121] Fang Cheng-Hua, "Power Structures and Cultural Identities in Imperial China: Civil and Military Power from late Tang to early Song Dynasties (A.D. 875-1063)" (PhD diss., Brown University, 2001), 128-133.
[122] Peter Lorge, "The Northern Song Military Aristocracy and the Royal Family," *War & Society* 18.2 (2000): 44.
[123] John Richard Labadie, "Rulers and Soldiers: Perception and Management of the Military in Northern Sung China (960 -ca. 1060)" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1981), 228-229; Edmund Henry Worthy, Jr., "The Founding of Sung China, 950-1000: Integrative Changes in Military and Political Institutions" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1976), 4.
[124] Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare*, 244-247.
[125] Adam Fong, "Ending an Era: The Huang Chao Rebellion of the Late Tang, 874-884," *East-West Center Working Papers* 26 (2006): 9-10.
[126] Elman, *A Cultural History*, 12-15.

The third was the isolation of the Song from the steppe and nomad groups by the emergence of several hybrid empires to the north of the dynasty. These were hybrid in the sense that they combined Chinese imperial institutions with non-Chinese elements, but featured a non-Chinese ruling elite. This meant that the Song would lack the infusion of non-Chinese groups with martial specialties. In contrast with the Tang dynasty, Song control did not reach as far to the north and the northwest and these former Tang-territories were now ruled by the non-Chinese Tangut Western Xia (1038-1227) and Khitan Liao (907-1125) empires. The Liao would later be conquered and succeeded by the Jürchen Jin (1115-1234), and both were constituted by groups of conquerors originating from the steppe.[127] The Jin would even drive back the Song behind the Huai River after 1127, which runs between the Yellow and Yangzi Rivers. For the entirety of its existence then, large parts of the North China plains and the north-western interface with the steppe were outside of the control of Song governance, despite attempts to reconquer these areas.[128] At the same time the ethnic barriers between Chinese and non-Chinese seemed to be hardening. On the one hand, Mark Elliot (via Karl Wittfogel and Feng Chia-sheng) hypothesizes that non-Chinese conquest regimes like the Liao, Jin, and later the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing as well, legitimized their rule on the basis of their superiority in *wu* and the superiority of *wu* over *wen*. This only worked, however, if they could maintain their ethnic identity, group cohesion, and martial abilities to impress and intimidate their larger group of Chinese subjects.[129] Amongst the literate elite of the Song, on the other hand, the political chaos and militarism of the mid-to-late Tang and the transition to the Song created an anti-foreign backlash and a return to indigenous practices and systems of thought. The study of the classics rose in importance again for the morality and ideology contained therein and the distinction between "barbarian" and Chinese would come to revolve around the possession of these attributes. The theoretical possibility that non-Chinese could cross this boundary by becoming classicists was generally not acknowledged, however.[130]

The first deliberate institutional shift was a change in recruitment practices, which during most of the Song would be implemented through an enlarged examination system, recruiting a

[127] Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 10-13.
[128] Charles Hartman, "Sung Government and Politics," in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 5, Part 2: Sung China, 960-1279*, edited by John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 28.
[129] Mark C. Elliot, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), 5.
[130] Shao-yun Yang, "Reinventing the Barbarian: Rhetorical and Philosophical Uses of the *Yi-Di* in Mid-Imperial China, 600-1300" (PhD diss., University of California, 2014), 1, 90-91.

majority of the empire's civil bureaucrats from amongst the wealthy landholders of the traditionally less militarized south of the realm. The civil examination system instituted during the Tang, but continued in much greater scope during the Song dynasty effectively divorced *wen* and *wu* elites from each other, and the wen elites increasingly disdained *wu* lifestyles as well as anything to do with manual labour. Gawlikowski explained this as a backlash of a newly empowered meritocratic elite against the values and lifestyles of an older closed aristocratic elite, which had dominated the imperial power structures for so long.[131] The replacement of this aristocratic elite by a new meritocratic one was no doubt aided by its near-annihilation during the violent transition between the Tang and Song dynasties. As Nicolas Tacket has demonstrated, the new elites of the Song empire had provincial origins different from the empire-wide aristocracy which had dominated Tang politics until 880.[132] A side effect of this development, which radically reformed the power structures of the empire, was a demotion of the military as a sphere of *wu* activities. Henceforth, to become part of the elite - or rather: to have one's elite status confirmed – one needed to successfully pass the civil service examinations. For the military, despite the infrequent existence of military service examinations, there was no comparable incentive. With the divorce of *wen* and *wu* social groups, the *wen* side as part of the settlement gained all the cultural capital and prestige, leaving *wu* with meagre scraps of infrequent recognition in times of crisis. During the Song dynasty military officers were often drawn from the lower social classes and not appointed on the basis of merit, and the soldiers received little remuneration and were often used as a pool of menial labour instead of an army.[133] The civil examination system created a civil elite that was inculcated with a shared knowledge of norms and values that were derived from a limited number of classical texts. According to Harriet Zurndorfer, the preferred texts displayed the Confucian traits that tended to downplay martial accomplishments for civil virtuous rule and admonished against pro-active military policies.[134] The Song bifurcation between recruitment practices of the *wen* and *wu* branches of government institutionalized differing selection criteria. Although not formalized like during the Ming, the Song military was often

[131] Krzystof Gawlikowski, "The Concept of Two Fundamental Social Principles: *Wen* 文 and *wu* 武 in Chinese Classical Thought, Part Two," 37-39.
[132] Nicolas Tacket, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Aristocracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 231-34.
[133] Fang, "Power Structures," 276-277; Michael Charles McGrath, "Military and Regional Administration in Northern Sung China (960-1126)" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1982), 215.
[134] Zurndorfer, "What is the Meaning of `War' in an Age of Cultural Efflorescence?," 96.

recruited on the basis of heredity. To ensure the continuation of a military skillset, the Song made use of the artisan-like transmission of military skills and knowledge from father to son.[135] The Song court also tried to increase the level of professionalism of Song officers by instituting a military examination system which tested the mastery of a written canon of military texts. Yet, the men which this system trained more often than not used their proven literary credentials to gain posts in the civil bureaucracy.[136]

The second institutional shift was a conscious restriction on the exercise of military power by officials. Quite soon after establishing control, the initial Song emperors undertook measures to constrain the power of their military elites. As a result of the looming and threatening precedent of the An Lushun rebellion, the founder of the Song dynasty was quick to assert control by civil officials over the Bureau of Military Affairs and he instituted a rotating command system which was designed to counteract the forming of bonds of personal loyalty between generals and their soldiers.[137] The elite troops were withdrawn to the centre of the empire and put under control of the central government institutions. This left the frontier commanders with inferior troops. In addition, local militias and non-Han units under loose control of the dynasty were established in the inland and frontier areas of the empire.[138] Finally, the *wu*-branch would be increasingly subjugated to civilian bureaucratic oversight, which would ultimately reduce military officials to simply executing the tasks civil officials forwarded to them.[139] Exchange between the two branches did not happen to any meaningful degree anymore, like it had during the early Tang. Civil officials did not aspire to military posts, and military men could never expect to be put in a position of authority within the civil bureaucracy. Some civil officials through their positions in the civil bureaucracy did involve themselves in military matters, but mostly as commanders in the rear directing strategic affairs.[140] They by and large did not lead troops personally in the field and did not possess any relevant degree of martial arts expertise.[141] This barrier between the two branches when it came to service also existed on the socio-cultural level. Military officers could

[135] Fang, "Military Families and the Southern Song Court," 51-53.
[136] Fang Cheng-hua 方震華, "Wenwu jiujie de kunjing – Songdai de wuju yu wuxue" 文武糾結的困境─宋代的武舉與武學, *Taida lishi xuebao* 臺大歷史學報 33 (2004): 37-39.
[137] Dreyer, "Continuity and Change," 33-34
[138] Peter Lorge, "Military Institutions as a Defining Feature of the Song Dynasty," *Journal of Chinese History* 1 (2017): 272-273; McGrath, "Military and Regional Administration," 10, 39, 166-167, 216.
[139] Idem, 323.
[140] Fang, "Power Structures," 256-257.
[141] Lorge, *Chinese Martial Arts*, 118.

not hope to associate the families associated with civil officials and the latter often disparaged the former's lack of cultural and moral refinement. Civil officials conceived of themselves as inhabiting a moral universe different from their military counterparts: whereas they served out of integrity, their martial colleagues were only motivated by material gain.[142]

Not all modern scholars are in agreement about the speed and comprehensiveness of the shift between *wen* and *wu* during the Song dynasty.[143] First of all, the eclipse by a southern non-military elite of civil degree holders of the military elite was a process that did not happen suddenly with the establishment of the Song, but unfolded slowly during the northern phase of the dynasty (960-1127) and became fully-fledged only during the southern phase (1127-1278).[144] The highest ranks of officers did tend to be northerners belonging to a militarized class of local magnates. Some of them were associated with the imperial family by marriage, and the majority formed a *de facto* hereditary pool of military leadership. On account of their close ties with the imperial family, these military officers were often well-off and politically powerful. In theory, they were selected on the basis of meritocratic principles, but in practice the court recruited them from amongst a limited labour pool. Members of this pool were often provided with protection privileges, like *yin* 陰, which meant they could pass their positions on to descendants. Furthermore, although there was more bureaucratic restraint on their autonomous power, this was compensated by general high social status and ample material rewards. Only during the second half of the dynasty, the Southern Song (1127-1279), did the military suffer a significant loss of status and power. This phase of the dynasty was characterized by the loss of the northern areas to Jürchen invaders, which uprooted the northern military aristocracy. With the establishment of the Southern Song, the military was not able to restore its previous strong ties with imperial family.[145] This lack of a stake in the established order might have motivated the defection of key military officers to the Mongols in the thirteenth century, leading to the conquest of the empire. An important general, Lü Wende 呂文德 (d. 1269) built up a network of family members in military functions at the frontier, buttressed by friendships with key civil officials. However, with the right incentives, the Mongols were able

[142] Fang, "Power Structures," 323-326.
[143] Elad Alyagon nuances the civil-military binary by pointing out that recent Chinese research demonstrates the existence of career paths in between both branches. Furthermore, seen from the perspective of the whole of Song society, both civil and military officials can be seen as elites. See Elad Alyagon, "Inked: Song Soldiers, Military Tattoos, and the Remaking of the Chinese Lower Class, 960-1279," (PhD diss., University of California, 2016), 5-6.
[144] Lorge, "The Northern Song Military Aristocracy," 46-47.
[145] Li, "The Emperor's Generals," 213-228.

to persuade this group of officers to defect.[146] The rank-and-file soldiers were the real victims of *wen – wu* divide. The military almost became a mere penal institution into which criminals and other undesirables were increasingly recruited, often as cheap manual labour instead of military manpower. One recent treatment of the topic even refers to the entire system as the "penal-military complex".[147]

Institutionally then, the new arrangements of the Song empire led to the social divergence of *wen* and *wu* elites. How did this divide impact the socio-cultural identity of *wen* and *wu* officials? I will first turn to the influence of Confucianism on the civil elite of the empire. The civil and military officials became two distinct socio-cultural groups during the Song, each with their own recruitment system into government service and geographical origin. On the basis of these phenomena it is possible to declare the Chinese elite "unwarlike", but only if we only regard the literati, and their corollary in government service, the scholar-officials, as the elite. Furthermore, this characterization can only be applied to the literati's own identity and personal comportment, which can be traced in idealized depictions of scholar-officials in contemporary literature. According to Song Geng, the bodily rhetoric of the Confucian in Song (and also Yuan and Ming) literature put the mind above the body and, for example, featured scholars who suppressed their heterosexual desires: "By repression of the body and cultivation of the mind, it is hoped that the control of the world by knowledge, virtue and righteousness can be achieved." Song contrasts this late imperial image of the Confucian with the behaviour of Confucius himself, as depicted in the *Lunyu*. Here he appears as an archer, horseman, hunter, and a traveller.[148] However, an anti-war Confucian bias is much harder to detect in strategic policy formulations by the scholar-officials. Yuan-kang Wang analysed the behaviour of the Song empire towards its external enemies, and came to the conclusion that Confucian aversion to war mostly came into play to justify accommodationist policies towards enemies when the empire was weak. When the empire was strong, offensive military action was often proposed by the civil officials. Wang concludes the Song elites usually acting according to structural realist assumptions, i.e. putting the survival of the state first and striving for the increase of its relative power vis-à-vis rival states.[149] Wang thus

[146] Fang, "Military Families and the Southern Song Court," 66-68.
[147] Alyagon, "Inked," 114-116.
[148] Song Geng, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 96.
[149] Wang, *Harmony and War*, 74-76, 99-100.

disregards the role of normative ideologies in the shaping of military policies. Arthur Waldron, however, contends that the military behaviour of the Song can be explained by reference to both Confucian and Legalist thinking about war and peace. From the perspective of the Song, the armies were not engaging in offensive war, but recovering territories lost to northern non-Chinese regimes. Moreover, this could be further legitimized by Confucianism and Legalism as a "just" war of punishment.[150] When we look at the contents of the civil service examinations, it is possible to discern that for most of the dynasty its content was not dominated by Confucian works with the strongest anti-war message. During the early years of the dynasty the Tang stress on abilities in *belles-lettres* was continued, although during the later Northern Song and Southern Song the study of the classics regained relevance, this time including the texts attributed to Confucius and Mencius.[151] Men thus entered the civil official elite based on either their skills in literary *wen* or classicist *wen*, the same bifurcation Bol noticed when studying the Jin literati. However, what was being regarded as a classic was still in flux, as during the Song thirteen works were commonly regarded as such, in contrast to Han and Tang times.[152] Neither was the bureaucracy entirely staffed by self-styled Confucian *junzi.* Until the last decades of the dynasty, pragmatic statesmen with little patience for Confucian philosophizing like Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275) could still rise to the apex of the civil bureaucracy.[153] On the other hand, influential military commanders like Yue Fei and Lü Wende acculturated to the civil official elite in matters of etiquette and behaviour, but neither seem to have genuinely subscribed to Confucianism either, as we saw in the introduction.

On the basis of the strategic thinking of the Song civil elite we can either conclude that Confucianism had either not led to an overwhelmingly pacifist bureaucracy because it was not hegemonic, or that realist pragmatism and/or idealist Legalism continued to be important influences on the bureaucrats' ideological leanings. Both conclusions are not mutually exclusive either. What can we know about the influence of the Strategists and knight-errantry on the *wen* and *wu* elites during the Song?

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[150] Arthur Waldron, "Reviewed Work(s): Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics by Yuan-kang Wang," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70.4 (2011): 1146-1148.
[151] Elman, *A Cultural History*, 15-17, 26.
[152] Nylan, *The Five "Confucian" Classics*, 18.
[153] Herbert Franke, "Chia Ssu-tao (1213-1275): A "Bad Last Minister"?," in *Confucian Personalities*, edited by Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), 233-234.

Five of the Stratagists' text dating from the Warring States and two later ones were canonized as the *Seven Military Classics* (*Wujing qishu* 武經七書), which were slightly altered to stress civil virtues. Some passages that argued for a sharing of power between the ruler and his (military) officials were deleted and the language was simplified.[154] The were canonized by the civil bureaucrats during the early Song dynasty to serve as the texts with which military officers were to be examined in an examination system.[155] Through the *de facto* heredity of many military positions, the military might have lacked an incentive to ameliorate their deficiencies in the area of literacy. Indicative of this trend is the fact that the three most important military treatises to appear in the late Tang and early Song dynasties, the *Tai bai yin jing* 太白陰經 (*Secret Classic of Venus*), the *Hu qian jing* 虎鈐經 (*Classic of the Tiger Seal*), and the *Wujing zongyao* 武經總要 (*Essentials for the Military Classics*) were all written and compiled by literati and civil bureaucrats, not by professional military men, although the author of the *Hu qian jing* apparently embarked on a largely unsuccessful military career for a while.[156] This lack of literacy on the part of professional military men meant that new developments in thought would not be penned by seasoned veterans, but by "armchair generals" with theoretical knowledge. This would ensure that treatises by post-Han literate commanders like Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220)[157], Zhuge Liang,[158], and early Tang statesmen like Li Jing 李靖 (571-649)[159] would remain part of a mostly discontinued lineage of military knowledge forged in the heat of battle until the times of Qi Jiguang. According to Fang, military writings had come to be regarded as inauspicious by the majority of the literati at the end of the Tang dynasty, but there would be attempts by small groups of literati and individuals to increase military learning (if not praxis in the shape of martial arts) among their peers.[160] Whilst

[154] Zhou Xingtao 周兴涛. "`Wujing qishu' queding ji gaidong 《武经七书》确定及改动. *Kunming xueyuan xuebao* 昆明学院学报 34.4 (2012): 64, 68-69.
[155] Sawyer, *The Seven Military Classics*, 1-2.
[156] Marcia Butler, "Reflections of a Military Medium: Ritual and Magic in Eleventh and Twelfth Century Chinese Military Manuals." (PhD diss., University of Cornell, 2007), 17-18, 36-37, 42-44; Herbert Franke, "Siege and Defense of Towns in Medieval China," in *Chinese Ways in Warfare*, edited by Frank Kierman Jr., John K. Fairbank, and Edward L. Dreyer. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 196; Rand, "Li Ch'üan and Chinese Military Thought," 111-112.
[157] Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, "Introduction," in *Culture and Power in the Reconstitution of the Chinese Realm, 200-600*, edited by Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 9; Xu Baolin 许保林, *Zhongguo bingshu tonglan* 中国兵书通览 (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1990), 151-154.
[158] Xu, *Zhongguo bingshu tonglan*, 127-130.
[159] Graff, *Medieval Chinese Warfare*, 192.
[160] Fang, "Power Structures, 33-35, 292-295.

during the Tang there is some evidence that military commanders used the Strategists' texts out of their own volition,[161] the Song military exams produced degree holders with knowledge of these writings who mostly did not serve in the military hierarchy. Herbert Franke notes in this context that the most successful generals of the Song dynasty did not hold a military degree.[162] Under such conditions military learning assumed a marginal position, and presumably most knowledge was passed on orally within the military itself. Yue Fei was one of the exceptions, probably because he was a scion of a modest but literate family.[163] The tradition of the Strategists and the sagely general thus passed into the hands of a mostly non-practicing literati elite, some of whom did continue to write commentaries on these texts.[164]

As for the tradition of knight-errantry, it seems to have disappeared as a mainstream genre in *belles-lettres.* Liu explained this phenomenon as a result of the Neo-Confucian bias of literati during the Song. More recent scholarship has suggested, however, that this was more due to a geographical shift in the location of literati activity. These became predominantly southerners, who had little affinity with the knight-errantry traditions of the north. This ethos of knight-errantry would continue to live on amongst the military elite of the Song along the northern frontier, but was much less visible because it was hardly preserved in writings for posterity.[165] According to Elad Alyagon, further evidence of a military ethos should perhaps be sought in the famous novel *The Water Margin* (*Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳), which was published during the Ming, but perhaps is based on older oral traditions. It depicts the militarized northern society of the Northern Song, where an important exemplar was constituted by the *haohan* 好漢, a "good fellow". The ethics it showcased included a thirst for violence, a bond of brotherhood between its adherents, heavy drinking, generosity towards friends, and a disinterest in sex and women.[166] The similarities with knight-errantry thus ran deep.

As with the Han and Tang empires, the prime mover driving the socio-cultural separation of *wen* and *wu* identities seems not have been Confucianism, but rather institutional factors and

[161] David Andrew Graff, "Early T'ang Generalship and the Textual Tradition (Volumes I and II) (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1995), 546
[162] Herbert Franke, *Studien und Texte zur Kriegsgeschichte der südlichen Sungzeit* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), 55-56.
[163] Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 171.
[164] Yates, "Early Modes on Interpretation," 75.
[165] Yang, "The Emperor's Generals," 228-230.
[166] Alyagon, "Inked," 238-240.

geography. The Song dynasty was internally a very stable empire. It was ravaged by the occasional local rebellion, but none was ever life threatening for the polity. In contrast to the preceding Han and Tang, the Song was not brought down by centrifugal power imbalances between centre and frontier in combination with internal disturbances. It was brought down by a decades-long war of attrition with its diverse northern rivals in the thirteenth century. Incidences of major inland disturbances happened during the chaotic breakdown of central authority of the transition from Northern to Southern Song, which were eventually suppressed by the 1130s.[167] In contrast to the military history of the frontiers, little research has been done on non-frontier related instances of internal uprisings, which might colour our understanding of this topic. An exception is the uprising by tea merchants which reached southern inland provinces like Jiangxi, which have been studied in some detail by Huang. The Song dynasty gave licenses to tea merchants which allowed them to trade and transport the valuable and heavily-taxed commodity within the empire, but they supplemented their income with illegal private trade in collusion with the tea producers. In times of bad harvests and scarcity, the government would crack down hard on this private trade in order to safeguard the official quotas of the government-licensed monopolies. The tea merchants themselves availed of private military forces to protect their lucrative trade activities, and these forces clashed with government forces in several uprisings during the northern and southern phases of the dynasty.[168] Other than these occasions, however, and the upheavals that took place during the 1120s, the southern inland and coastal regions of the empire seemed to have been relatively untouched, a situation James Liu attributes to Song governance practices and relatively light taxation on peasants.[169] Only with the penetration of the Mongols in the southern inland areas in 1170s did there arise a phenomenon called "literati-turned-warriors", when a number of southern civil bureaucrats, like Jiangxi province's Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236-1283), took up arms and

[167]Ari Daniel Levine, "The Reigns of Hui-tsung (1100-1126) and Ch'in-tsung (1126-1127) and the Fall of the Northern Sung," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907-1279*, edited by Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 619-643; Tao Jing-shen, "The Move to the South and the Reign of Kao-tsung (1127-1162)," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5, Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907-1279*, edited by Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 662-666.

[168] Huang K'uan-chong 黃寬重. "Nansong chashang Lan Wenzheng zhi luan" 南宋茶商賴文政之亂, in *Songshi yanjiu lunji kanxing hui* 宋史研究論集刊行會, edited by Liu Tsu-chien 劉子健 (Tokyo: Tong peng she chuban, 1989), 133, 138-139.

[169] Liu Tzu-ch'ien 劉子健. "Baorong zhengzhi de tedian" 包容政治的特黙, in *Liang Song shi yanjiu huibian* 兩宋史研究彙編, by idem (Taipei: Lian jing chuban gongsi, 1986), 47.

recruited men to fight against the invaders in southern provinces like his area of origin.[170] An explanation for the relative lack of involvement of local elites in military affairs can thus be sought in the apparent lack of a need for them to do so, besides purely socio-cultural factors. In the absence of comprehensive research, I speculate that this lack of necessity was also facilitated by the state's ability to extract resources: whereas the Song extracted an equal share of income in taxes from agricultural activity as the Ming empire did, but the Song extracted nine times as much from non-agricultural sectors of the economy. It leads Charles Hartman to conclude that: "But, that any state could extract such a burden from its population without generating substantial resistance demonstrates both its organizational efficiency and a general consensus on its goals and objectives between governors and governed."[171] Although, once again, comprehensive research is missing, I posit it allowed the Song empire the upkeep to maintain its military forces, without recourse to militias organized by local elites outside of state purview. Sukhee Lee, who studied the Ming Prefecture (Mingzhou 明州) in the southern coastal province of Zhejiang during the Southern Song, noted that with two rare exceptions, the local elite, which participated in the civil service examinations, did not involve itself in militia organizations, because the state was able to provide military security through its official forces.[172]

The picture that emerges is thus that the civil bureaucrat elite mostly had to involve themselves with the strategic policy side of military affairs, and that the social elites from which these bureaucrats were drawn only rarely had to concern themselves with military affairs in their locales. Despite Peter Lorge's claim that this civil involvement "militarized" these civil bureaucrats,[173] it would seem that it did not lead to an embrace of the same socio-cultural identities

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[170] Lin Shuen-fu, "The Fall of the Southern Song," in *The Cambridge History of Literature, Volume I: To 1375*, edited by Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 545-547. Horst Huber notes that Wen Tianxiang's thought was indebted to Zhu Xi. See: Horst Huber, "Wen T'ien-hsiang (1236-1283): Vorstufen zum Verständnis seines Lebens" (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München, 1983), 14-15. Wen Tianxiang's writings, however, provide no evidence of his personal engagement with Strategist thought or knight-errantry, so it is unknown to what extent he was able to reconcile these *wu*-identities and philosophies with his Neo-Confucian inclinations. See: Jiang Guozhu 姜国柱, "Wen Tianxiang qi ren ji qi junshi sixiang" 文天祥其人及其军事思想, *Donghua ligong xueyuan xuebao* 东华理工学院学报 23.1 (2004): 30-35; Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, *Wen Tianxiang quanji* 文天祥全集 (Beijing: Shijie shujuban, 1936).

[171] Hartman, "Sung Government and Politics," 23-24.

[172] Sukhee Lee, "Negotiated Power: The State and Elites in 12th – 14th Century China" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009), 78-91.

[173] Peter Lorge, "The Rise of the Martial: Rebalancing *Wen* and *Wu* in Song Dynasty Culture," in *Civil-Military Relations in Chinese History: From Ancient China to the Communist Takeover*, edited by Kai Filipiak (London: Routledge, 2015), 141-142.

as the military, as can be gleaned from the disappearance of knight-errantry as a lofty ideal among the literati. So far, the *wen-wu* divide can be adequately explained by institutional and geographic factors giving rise to socio-cultural differentiations. However, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a philosophical movement would take root amongst these southern social elites, which would become the civil ideological orthodoxy of the late Mongol Yuan and Ming empires. It is to the implications of this philosophical movement for the civil elite conceptions of institutional and socio-cultural *wen-wu* relations that I will now turn, as this is the intellectual backdrop against which Qi Jiguang would have to fashion his own identity.

Neo-Confucianism and the *Wen-Wu* Divide

During the Southern Song a movement manifested itself, which put moral self-cultivation at the centre of Confucian learning and eventually eclipsed all other forms of Confucian scholastic identity by the time of the Yuan empire. This movement's message and canon was consolidated by Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200). In lieu of the hitherto growing number of classics, the movement eventually put forward a smaller canon of Four Books, which included the recorded sayings of Confucius (*Lunyu* 論語) and the text attributed to Mencius. Nylan posits one reason why Zhu Xi advocated these Four Books was because its smaller corpus made a homogenized interpretation easier.[174] One of the prime attractions of this movement, termed Neo-Confucianism by modern scholars, was that it legitimized the moral leadership in society of its followers. Its rise probably cannot be explained without reference to the civil service examinations, which increasingly produced a surplus of degree holders during the course of the Song dynasty. Even though there were many more successful candidates then available posts in government, literati valued their degrees, because it gave them social and cultural capital. Hilde de Weerdt has demonstrated that the movement's ideas were in part able to spread because of the knowledge circulation network that came in existence as a result of the examination system. The state had mostly withdrawn during the Southern Song from imposing examination standards and providing an empire-wide system of schooling. This was thus organized on local and regional levels by the literati themselves. At the same time, private publishers fed the book market with anthologies of successful

[174] Nylan, "A Problematic Model," 23-24.

examination teachers, course materials and annotated examination writings. The Neo-Confucians were part of this decentralized process of examination preparation and were able to integrate their moral message with their examination-oriented teaching activities. When in the thirteenth century one of the reigning emperors supported Neo-Confucianism, its teachings would gain significance in the higher levels of the examination system as well.[175] The growth of this movement was also tied to greater elite activism out of purview of the state. According to Peter Bol, exactly because state service was not a viable survival strategy for everyone anymore, members of the elite turned to ways to secure their positions in local society by involving themselves in community projects like famine relief granaries and educational establishments.[176]

This redefinition of Confucian learning and identity, known then as *daoxue* 道學 ("learning of the Way") I argue, narrowed the scope of activities and circumscribed the identity of the Confucian gentleman in such a way that caused a further distancing between the civil and military realms. This redefinition became so successful that it became the content of the civil service examination curriculum in the thirteenth century, and this redefinition would remain the sole state-sponsored Confucianism in this way until 1905.[177] This orthodoxy was based on the ideas of Zhu Xi, who consolidated the earlier ideas of the brothers Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) amongst others, and popularized them. The resulting ideology would be known as Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. Key point of this redefinition was the idea that, in the words of Bol, "[…] each individual was innately endowed with the patterns of the integrated processes of heaven-and-earth. It was only necessary, then, that men realize the "pattern of heaven" (*t'ien-li*) that was in their own nature, for this was the real foundation for a moral world."[178] This Neo-Confucianism shifted attention away from studying the textual tradition and the cumulative culture as the source of principles to the study of the patterns, or principles of heaven and earth. These principles had to be found by oneself with the mind, and only a select number of texts could guide one in this endeavour. Key to learning was the "investigation of things" (*gewu* 格物) to discover these principles, realize their coherence and conform oneself to them. Even though in theory, the

[175] Hilde de Weerdt, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1279)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), 378-380, 383-387.
[176] Peter K. Bol, "The `Localist Turn' and `Local Identity' in Later Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 24.2 (2003): 5.
[177] Some modern scholars refer to the general revival of classical learning during the Song as Neo-Confucianism. I, however, use Neo-Confucianism here in its narrow meaning as the intellectual lineage consolidated by Zhu Xi.
[178] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, 2.

study of texts had been dethroned as the most important focus of learning, in practice reading remained important. Certain texts were thought to contain the kind of moral knowledge Neo-Confucians sought, and could facilitate the process of apprehending principles. Zhu Xi consolidated these in a new canon, which would become the main curriculum of the civil examination system from the thirteenth century onwards. In addition to the *Five Classics*, these were the *Analects* by Confucius, Mencius' writings and two chapters from the classic the *Book of Rites*. These chapters were the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning* and all together would be known as the *Four Books*. The new canon would be completed with Zhu Xi's own commentary.[179]

Despite Neo-Confucianism moving away from mastering *wen* as the source of morality and ethics, bookish learning remained an important avenue for discerning the principles behind them. Zhu Xi's synthesis would become the basis of the movement and dominate the civil service examination system curriculum until the end of the imperial age. At the same time, this curriculum was narrowed down even more to a narrow set of texts identified with Confucianism. According to Bol, the literati associated with the movement also cultivated a certain identity manifested in outward clothing and behaviour. Seeking to demonstrate the moral worth of their philosophy and dedicating themselves to the defence of the cultural essence of the Chinese civilization, this group turned more and more away from practical affairs and military matters towards philosophy.[180] I posit that with the rise to hegemony of this Neo-Confucian within the social elite from which the civil bureaucrats were drawn, we can start speaking of a Confucianized *wen* elite. The classicist *ru* had become a Confucian *ru*, and its *wen* had been narrowed down to the exclusion of purely literary refinement or other philosophical traditions. It contended with other ideological currents, like the so-called *Yongjia* 永嘉-school, which advocated a more utilitarian approach to learning, but ultimately the morally strident Neo-Confucianist movement of Zhu Xi won out.[181]

The creation of a new narrow canon of texts in the course of the twelfth century as the basis for Confucian learning created, I contend, a tension with military theory and praxis with had hitherto not existed to such an extent. The Confucian identity that arose within the Neo-Confucian movement of the twelfth century was based on a narrow range of texts, the *Five Classics, Four*

[179] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 105-106, 172-179.
[180] Fang, "Junwu yu ruye de maodun," 54.
[181] De Weerdt, *Competition over Content*, 384.

Books, and Zhu Xi's own writings, which articulated a Confucian value system which was in the end based on the values of the old nobility of the early Zhou dynasty, which Confucius had tried to revive. One scholar even contends that only with the rise of *daoxue* can we speak about Confucianism as a phenomenon *an sich*.[182]

Neo-Confucianism did have different aspirations, however. Whereas the key exemplar in the past had been the *junzi*, Neo-Confucianism exhorted its adherent to become sages. What was a "sage" exactly in the Neo-Confucian ideology? Like the military sage of the Strategists, the Confucian sage had perceptive abilities transcending that of ordinary men. In its most profound sense the sage was someone who could perceive Heaven and its principle (*tianli* 天理) and on the basis of that perception could implement this principle and the moral insights that came with it for the benefit of humanity as a whole. Heaven had evolved from an anthropomorphic deity during the Zhou to an abstract ultimate principle underlying reality during the Song dynasty.[183] By his very nature, a sage was therefore a legitimate leading actor in society. His perception of the heavenly principle gave him the moral authority to intervene in-, and shape the world around him and in theory also commanded the respect of his non-sagely peers.[184] The sage within Neo-Confucian discourse was also a very different and altogether more accomplished human being than the gentleman, or *junzi*, originally advocated by Confucius.[185] Sages had created *wen* in the sense of culture and had invented important civilizational achievements like agriculture and systems of water management. In fact, the essential duty of the Confucian was transmitting this *wen* to other people and succeeding generations, but an even higher accomplishment was of course to belong to the same category of people who had actually created w*en* in the first place, a main goal for Neo-Confucians as they had appeared during the Song. These included a number of mythical emperors of the remote past, King Wen and King Wu of the Zhou dynasty and of course Confucius himself.[186] This sage hood was in practice limited to a lucky few, however. Zhu Xi's metaphysics posited a bifurcation in reality between principle, *li* 理, and matter *qi* 氣. In his scheme, every

[182] Anne Cheng, "What Did It Mean to Be a *Ru* in Han Times?" *Asia Major* 14.2 (2001): 101.
[183] Kandice J. Hauf, "The Jiangyou Group: Culture and Society in Sixteenth Century China," (PhD diss., Yale University, 1987), 284-285.
[184] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 68-69.
[185] Stephen C. Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21-22.
[186] Kenji Shimada, *Die neo-konfuzianische Philosophie: Die Schulrichtungen Chu Hsis und Wang Yang-mings*, translated by Monika Übelhör (Berlin: Verlag von Dietrich Reimer, 1987), 19-20, 26-27, 42.

principle was present in everything and everyone in the shape of the universal and multifaceted *tianli*, but the *qi* determined which facet – particularized *li* - of the *tianli* would be manifested in matter (or energy) in our everyday perceived world. The kind of *qi* that made up an individual also determined his or her moral capacity. Unfortunately, the *qi* of a person could be unclear or contaminated, which prevented persons thus endowed to achieve sagehood. Only people with clear uncontaminated matter could become sages according to Zhu Xi.[187] This endowment of *qi* and the way it determined one's potential for sagehood was referred to as *cai* 才, or "talent".[188] This Neo-Confucianism thus legitimized a distinction between morally superior and inferior men, which to a great extent was therefore predetermined. How did this relate to socio-cultural identities with a strong *wu*-inclination? I will gauge this by looking at the Cheng-Zhu point of view on the Strategists and knights-errant.

The moral values associated with both socio-cultural identities contrasted and clashed greatly with *wu*-identity and ideologies, as for example the military canon of texts which was formed in the early eleventh century in an attempt by the Song government to consolidate military knowledge and instruct military and civil officials. This attitude can be detected in Zhu Xi's attitude towards the military canon, which can be gauged from the following discussion of Duke Wen of Jin (697-628 BCE), a ruler of one the many *de facto* independent polities existing under the umbrella of the Zhou dynasty during the Spring and Autumn Period. He used crafty stratagems to draw out his enemy's forces, and compares them unfavourably with the *Sunzi* and *Wuzi*:

> Question: "Wen of Jin `being crafty and not upright'. Many commentators consider summoning the king as the craftiness of Wen of Jin. The commentary says 'he attacked [the state of] Wei in order to draw out Chu's [another state Duke Wen was often at war with] army, and plotted in secret in order to obtain victory.' This doctrine was successful." [Zhu Xi] said: "When Jin of Wen undertook affairs, many went like this. He was not willing to engage in upright engagements. Lü Bogong [Lü Zuqian 吕祖谦 (1137-1181)][189] discussed this part very well, but his explanation is excessively crafted. However, looking at the sections one by one, all are like this. Jin of Wen using the army is exactly in the spirit of the practice of Sun and Wu [Sun Wu and Wu Qi] of the Warring States Period."

[187] Kidder Smith, Jr. et al, *Sung Dynasty Uses of the I Ching* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 170-172.
[188] P.J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 47; David W. Tien, "Metaphysics and the Basis of Morality in the Philosophy of Wang Yangming," in *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, edited by John Makeham (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 296-300.
[189] This was a scholar and contemporary of Zhu Xi. See Julia Ching, "Lü Tsu-ch'ien," in *Sung Biographies*, edited by Herbert Franke (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1976), 744-747.

問：「晉文『譎而不正』，諸家多把召王為晉文之譎。集注謂『伐衛以致楚師，而陰謀以取勝』，這說為通。」曰：「晉文舉事，多是恁地，不肯就正做去。呂伯恭博議論此一段甚好，然其說忒巧。逐節看來，卻都是如此。晉文用兵，便是戰國孫吳氣習。」[190]

This discussion is preserved in the "Essay on Duke Wen of Jin being crafty and not upright" *Jin Wen gong jue'erbuzheng zhang* 晉文公譎而不正章, part of the "Master Zhu's categorized pronunciations" (*Zhuzi yu lei* 朱子語類) collection of his question and answer sessions with his disciples. The exemplar of the sagely general in the tradition of the Strategists was thus frowned upon.

The martial exemplar of the knight-errant came under similar criticism from Zhu Xi's precursors. For one of the Cheng brothers, the knights-errant and especially their values were a negative force for society. Whilst discoursing about the proper role of friends in relation to the family obligations of a Confucian, one of the Chengs remarks the following:

> You cannot promise friends to die for them; like the knights-errant of the Warring States, you are no longer there for your parents, yet you are avenging and vigilant on account of [other] people. This is extremely unprincipled.
> 不可許友以死；如戰國游俠；爲親不在，乃爲人復警，甚非理也. [191]

In another recorded saying, one of the Chengs explains why one should not try to emulate the knights-errant:

> There are things that are not allowed; like those of knight-errantry, if, as soon as their family has died, they thereupon avenge on account of [other] people and kill themselves, then they bring chaos to the people.
> 有不可者；如游俠之徒以親既亡．乃爲人報仇而殺身，則亂民也。[192]

Knight-errantry was thus a danger to social stability and also ran contrary to the family-centred values of the Confucians. The narrow Confucian identity proclaimed by leading thinkers of the

[190] Zhu Xi 朱子, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, *volume 2*, edited by Li Jingde 黎靖德 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 1006.
[191] Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Er Cheng ji* 二程集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 210.
[192] Idem, 1231

Neo-Confucian movement thus precluded much engagement with military thought and martial values and lifestyles.

Finally, the third martial socio-cultural exemplar, the *rujiang*, which had appeared during the Tang empire was subject to same moral restraint. In the context of the *wen*-*wu* bifurcation, I posit that this model arose precisely because there was a felt need amongst the civil officials for a class of military men who shared their identity, possessed a loyalty to the *wen*-centre of power instead of the *wu*-frontier, with an ability to militarily solve the problems the dynasty was facing. It was clear that the Song empire would need to strengthen the military to face the threats emanating from its northern neighbors, but fears for the danger of too much military autonomy had to be assuaged by ensuring their loyalty through an acculturation towards the civil elites. From the mid-eleventh through the mid-twelfth centuries many scholar-generals were thought to actually have risen to the occasion and conformed to this ideal-type, especially during the military emergencies arising during the transition from Northern to Southern Song.[193] After this timeframe there was a decline. One reason for this decline were the high moral standards the scholar-general had to aspire to, which I will argue below, most likely owed much to the rise of Neo-Confucianism during the Southern Song.

The ideal of the scholar-general, which we should now perhaps consider as Confucian-general, as articulated by Zhu Xi, amongst others, created a morally inflexible model that was almost impossible to live up to. Zhuge Liang, although championed by Zhu Xi at first as a *rujiang*, later Zhu's readings of his conduct showcased the irreconcilable differences between the value systems of the Neo-Confucians and certain *wu*-practices. It is here that we see the early Zhou noble values, adopted by the Confucians and the Neo-Confucians as the content of the *junzi*'s morality, clash with the more pragmatic *wu* conceptualizations of the use of military force. Zhuge Liang's warlord leader, Liu Bei (161-223) was once asked by governor Liu Zhang, controlling a remnant province of the Han empire, to help stop an attempted invasion by another warlord. Liu Zhang had a reputation for being a virtuous ruler, who had no ambition for expansion and merely tried to keep his realm peaceful. Liu Bei, however, planned to use the pretext of defending Liu Zhang's province as a stratagem to seize the province for himself. Zhuge Liang was implicated in the attack, which turned out to be successful, but Zhu Xi condemned this action for its lack of righteousness. If

[193] Yang Dequan and James T.C. Liu, "The Image of Scholar-Generals and a Case in the Southern Song," *Saeculum* 37 (1986): 184.

Zhuge Liang had really been a sage, he would not have participated in this military action.[194] According to *wu* values, the recourse to deceit and hidden agendas was probably to be applauded. It led to the extension of Liu Bei's powerbase and the spread of his awesomeness across a greater area. The recourse to subterfuge probably decreased the costs in terms of lives and resources. Yet, even though from a military strategic perspective it was a wise move, for Zhu Xi the action was not a righteous one. A further objectionable feature of Zhuge Liang's character was his limited learning. As learning was intimately tied with moral character in Zhu Xi's thought, this limited his potential as an exemplar of the Confucian-general.[195] Probably the difficulty of achieving this ideal motivated Zhu Xi to discourage military officers to engage in Confucian learning.

The very strict moral standards applying to the status of Confucian-general meant that very few military men were ever awarded this status in the official histories of the Song and Ming, both composed when Neo-Confucianism had achieved hegemonic status. In the official history of the Song dynasty this designation was only awarded to one general. For the entirety of Ming history, only two generals were regarded as such: "Wang K'o 王恪 (late 13th cent.) for being prudent, respectful, clever, and diligent; and Chang K'o-ta 張可大 (fl. 1602) for his love of learning, ability to compose poetry, and sincere and upright behavior."[196] To be recognized as a Confucian within the Neo-Confucian movement, whilst at the same time being engaged in the military, was an uphill battle which severely limited the acceptable praxis and values within the field of martial affairs.

This could be seen in the case of those few literati who chose a military career for themselves. The new Confucian identity that was fashioned seems to have been at odds with that of those scholars who had made a career in government service by involving themselves in military affairs. During the Southern Song and the precarious military situation at the frontier, this had become an attractive option for some. Fang traced the career of the Zhao family, who built a career lasting three generations as civil bureaucrats in military service. They did not just confine themselves to strategizing at the rear, but actively engaged in learning martial arts, led from the front, and performed martial prognostication. Their meritorious services gained them protection privileges for sons, enabling positions in the civil bureaucracy. However, they were criticized for their close relations with military officers, involvement in factionalism at the court, and were

[194] Tillman, "Ho Ch'ü-fei and Chu His on Chu-ko Liang as a `Scholar-General'", 85.
[195] Idem, 87
[196] Idem, 94

socially relatively isolated amongst the other bureaucrats. Fang posits that the influence of Neo-Confucianism may have contributed to this distancing, as it encouraged engagement with moral philosophy instead of practical military affairs.[197]

On the other side of the *wen-wu* balance, military officers that engaged in moral philosophy were frowned upon by Zhu Xi. In a section named "Discussing the military" (*lun bing* 論兵), Zhu Xi makes a telling observation about military officers acculturating to the literati elite. This shows that not all military men disdained the literati refined lifestyle and were willing to bridge socio-cultural gaps during the Song:

> Today's high ranking military officers are entirely without purpose, [they] are merely similar to a wealthy family's arrogant juniors, and that's it. They wear scholar's robes and broad belts, discuss the Way and principles [i.e. Confucian philosophy], talk about poetry and literature, and write good calligraphy. When there is trouble and they are dispatched in this condition, what is their benefit in relation to the affair?
> 今日將官全無意思，只似人家驕子弟了。褒衣博帶，談道理，說詩書，寫好字. 事發遣如此，何益於事？[198]

This is a clear criticism of the empire's officer corps by perhaps the most influential Neo-Confucian scholar. Surprisingly, he does not seem to welcome the acculturation of military men to the socio-cultural standards of the literati. He seems to depict this state of affairs as a vainglorious pursuit, which moreover hurts the efficacy of military officials with regards to their proper jobs. In Zhu Xi's view officers were not to dabble in philosophical pursuits as well, indicating a socio-cultural divide between the spheres of the military and civil officials which was apparently desired by Zhu Xi. Unfortunately, no systematic research has been done on the thoughts of other Song Neo-Confucians on the *wen wu* divide, but Zhu Xi was one of the leading thinkers within the movement and certainly one of the most influential. In this context, we should remember Bol's assessment that the Neo-Confucians were creating a distinct and visible identity for themselves, which included certain garb and praxis. Apparently a military profession did not mesh with this identity, providing a further explanation for the tensions between Confucianism and martial endeavours which Fang Cheng-hua detected in the thirteenth century when Neo-

[197] Fang Cheng-hua 方震華, "Junwu yu ruye de maodun – Hengshan Zhao shi wan Song tongbing wenguan jiazu" 軍務與儒業的矛盾 - 衡山趙氏與晚宋統兵文官家族. *Xin shixue* 新史學 17.2 (2006): 36-51.
[198] Zhu Xi 朱子, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, *volume 4,* edited by Li Jingde 黎靖德 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 2440.

Confucianism was finally reaching acceptance in broad communities of literati and, eventually, even the state itself.[199] Ironically, Zhu Xi himself was a war hawk when it came to his stance towards accommodation with the northern steppe enemies.[200] He was not averse to war at all when part of China's cultural heartland was occupied, he just seemed to think that its execution should be left to men who in his eyes could not aspire to moral fibre anyway. I posit that this could be an extension of his ideas on *qi*: not everyone could have uncontaminated *qi*. Some were therefore predestined to other, less lofty, life pursuits, like the military. It made no sense for them to pretend otherwise. In this way, Neo-Confucianism lent philosophical legitimation to the *wen-wu* divide.

Such a demilitarized identity could only arise, I speculate, because these southern elites did not have to involve themselves with military affairs. However, two notable exceptions within the Neo-Confucian movement saw the need to involve themselves with military affairs exactly because an internal uprising in the south occurred. During the twelfth century, two of Zhu Xi's philosophical opponents within the Neo-Confucian movement were the southerners Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1192) (also known as Lu Xiangshan, whom we met in the introduction) and his brother Lu Jiuling 陆九龄 (1132-1180) hailing from Jiangxi province, who advocated the primacy of the heart-mind,[201] *xin* 心 instead of that of external principle as posited by Zhu Xi, and he questioned the worth of book learning to discover it, because all principle was in one's *xin*. Furthermore, the Lus disagreed with Zhu's postulation of a dualism between principle *li* and matter *qi*, and claimed that everything originates from the heart-mind, including principle.[202] Thus, the Way of Heaven is within us and does not exist external to human nature. Besides these philosophical differences with Zhu Xi, both Lu Jiuyuan and Lu Jiuling engaged in martial activities and decried the neglect of these by the literati. Lu Jiuling was himself actively engaged in internal pacification activities against internal uprisings of the tea bandits:

[199] Fang, "Junwu yu ruye de maodun," 53-54.
[200] Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, "The Rise of the *Tao-hsüeh* Confucian Fellowship in Southern Sung," in *The Cambridge History of China*, *Volume 5: Sung China, 960-1279 AD, Part 2*, edited by John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 752.
[201] Because in the Chinese cultural tradition the *xin* is both the seat of emotions and reason, affection and cognition, it is often cumbersomely rendered as heart-mind by western scholars. See for example: Wm. Theodore de Bary, *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 67.
[202] Idem, 110.

In the fifth year of his *jinshi* he was transferred to Guiyang's army to teach and instruct, but because of the advanced age of his parents and the long distance it was changed and he was appointed to Xingguo's army [located in Jiangxi]. Before he could take up his post, Hunan's assembled tea bandits plundered Luling and caused a ruckus in the neighbouring prefectures. The people's hearts were shocked and frightened. In the past, there had been a "justice society" in order to prepare against bandits. The prefect followed the crowd and they invited him to be the leader. Jiuling's disciples were all unhappy. Jiuling said: "Civil affairs and military preparation are one and the same. The ancients had high ranking officials to mount punitive expeditions who would become commanders. If you were the head of a township, then you commanded five chariots. If the literati are ashamed of this, then knights-errant and local bullies will assert themselves." Thereupon, he led the affairs and managed the stores and defence according to guidelines. Even though the bandits did not arrive, the prefectures and counties relied on him as important. If there was spare time, then he practiced archery with the countryside's young. He said: "This is definitely a man's business. In a bad year, there are ones who plunder and steal openly passing by your door and you must mutually guard against this. They will say that this family shoots and hits many targets and there will be none who court death for themselves."

五年進士第調桂陽軍教授以親老道遠改興國軍. 未上會湖南茶寇剽廬陵聲搖旁郡. 人心震懾. 舊有義社以備寇. 郡從衆請以九齡主之. 門人多不悅. 九齡曰文事武備一也. 古者有征討公卿即為将帥. 比閭之長則五兩之率也. 士而恥此則豪俠武斷者專之矣. 遂領其事調度屯禦皆有法. 寇雖不至而郡縣倚以為重. 暇則與鄉之子弟習射. 曰是固男子之事也. 歲惡有剽劫者過其門必相戒. 曰是家射多命中無自取死. [203]

The Lu brothers provide evidence that not all Southern Song literati regarded martial activities as unbefitting a Confucian gentleman. In the course of the tea bandit uprisings in the southern interior of the empire, a literatus like Lu Jiuling asserted, referring to the practice of the ancients, that it was the duty of literati to lead both civil and military efforts to quell it. Lu Jiuling argued that it was important to not let the martial realm become the playground of local strongmen of questionable moral fibre, including the knights-errant. Thus, the Lus embrace of military activities did not mean the acceptance of this *wu*-focused socio-cultural exemplar. The Lu brothers did have to fight against the prejudices of other literati, however, who found their martial activity unsuitable and shameful for their social group. Some of them cited a passage from the *Lunyu*, for example, in which Confucius declined to give military advice to a Warring States ruler on grounds of ignorance, as evidence that these pursuits were unbefitting for a gentleman. Despite these

[203] *Song shi* 宋史, edited by Tuotuo 脫脫 et al (SKQS), 4314: 9-10.

prejudices, Lu Jiuyuan also had a military officer among his disciples.[204] By the twelfth century, thus, the socio-cultural barrier between *wen* and *wu* was becoming difficult to surmount, even for civil officials and non-serving literati. Neo-Confucianism with its primary moral considerations in lieu of more pragmatic considerations had an ideological bias marginalizing the socio-cultural *wu*-component of *junzi* identity, an identity that was becoming hegemonic under official and literati alike, fitting with the generally demilitarized nature of southern society.

Further evidence of the lack of a need for the southern learned elites to engage in military affairs is provided by Robert Hymes' research on Fuzhou during the Southern Song, which was the prefecture the Lu brothers came from. Hymes posits that the Southern Song government in theory availed itself of even more centrally directed forces on the local level in the south, which were evenly spread across different administrative units. Surprisingly, he holds a pessimistic position on the ability of these government forces to ensure stability, citing a lack of evidence. In his view, many of these units were only capable of low level policing functions and were sometimes even the cause of local unrest themselves, owing to practices like plundering and pillage. On the other hand, Hymes' survey of elite activities in the field of voluntary militia organization yields a number of elite families specializing in this pursuit, including the Lus. However, these voluntary militia activities mostly took place during the chaotic transition from the Northern to the Southern Song in the 1120s and 1130s, and later during the Mongol advance at the very end of the dynasty. A notable exception was constituted by the rare incidences local rebellions spiralled out of control, like the Tea bandit uprisings noted above. Crucially, Hymes notes that the bulk of voluntary militia activity took place in areas where administrative borders did not naturally coincide with defensible natural frontiers. This meant that groups of armed bandits could easily escape persecution in one administrative area by fleeing towards a neighbouring administrative unit.[205] In all, I would posit that Hymes' treatment of local military organization in Fuzhou generally supports my notion that the Southern Song was generally capable of providing local social stability by means of its central apparatus, without relying overly much on militia forces organized outside of its direct control.[206] Only in those rare moments of general dynastic

[204] Robert Wallace Foster, ""Differentiating Rightness from Profit:" The Life and Thought of Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193)" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997), 95-98.
[205] Robert P. Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou, Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 136-150.
[206] Taiwanese historian Huang K'uan-chong has also pointed out that regional armies under control of the central government, but paid by the provinces, were organized during the Southern Song with express purpose to suppress

breakdown and in those few areas of structurally limited local governance did southern elites feel the need to engage in military affairs. Presumably, this state of affairs left the Neo-Confucians free to engage in other, more elevated, pursuits.

Of course, not all thinkers in the Neo-Confucian movement toed Zhu Xi's line to the same extent. Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180) and Huang Zhen 黃震 (1213-1280), for example, defended Sunzi's ideas and their compatibility with Confucianism. For example, apologists like them would posit that the pragmatic beneficial stratagems of Sunzi could be compatible with Confucian righteousness, particularly when the interests of the empire were under threat.[207] Again, as with Lu Jiuyuan and his martial leanings, it should be noted that for both Zhang and Huang their personal circumstances might have played a part in their defence of Sunzi. Zhang Shi was a scion of military leader from Sichuan province, a frontier province facing the Jürchens, who advocated war.[208] Huang Zhen served as an official near the end of the Southern Song when it was increasingly beleaguered by the Mongols.[209] However, it was Zhu Xi's synthesis of Neo-Confucianism that would survive in the succeeding dynasties and become the measurably hegemonic system of thought under the literati and civil officials, as we shall see below.

Neo-Confucianism and the *Wen-Wu* Divide during the Yuan and Early Ming Empires

The Mongol Yuan (1279-1368) dynasty reunified the northern and southern parts of the Chinese cultural heartland in one dynasty, after defeating both the northern Jurchen-led empire and the southern Song by 1278. The resulting power structure heavily disadvantaged the southern elites of the former Song empire. The Mongol power structure bypassed the Chinese literati-*cum*-officials and employed foreigners from Western and Central Asia as bureaucrats. Most of the top positions

internal disturbances in southern regions. These operated in Guangxi, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Fujian, and Henan. These were needed to protect the empire's resource-rich areas and the salt and tea monopolies, and guard against aboriginal uprisings. Similar arrangements did not happen during the Ming, except as temporary expedients during crises like the Wokou raids. See: Huang K'uan-chong 黃寬重, *Nansong difang wuli – Difangjun yu minjian ziwei wuli de tantao* 南宋地方武力 - 地方軍與民間自衛武力的探討 (Taipei: Dongda tushu gongsi, 2002), 7-8.

[207] Ping-cheung Lo, "Warfare Ethics in Sunzi's *Art of War*? Historical Controversies and Contemporary Perspectives," in *Chinese Just War Ethics: Origin, Development, and Dissent*, edited by Ping-cheung Lo and Sumner B. Twiss (London: Routledge, 2015), 68-69. The author notes in the same passage that not all the *Military Classics* received the same kind of critical scrutiny. The *Methods of the Sima*, for example, was often viewed as compatible with Confucian ethics.

[208] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 88.

[209] Christian Soffel, "Huang Zhen 黃震," in *The Encyclopedia of Confucianism, 2-Volume Set, Volume I*, edited by Xinzhong Yao (London: Routledge, 2003), 270.

in both the civil and military branches were held by either the Mongols or this second group of foreigners. Moreover, the Mongols made a distinction between northern and southern Chinese, the former originating from areas formerly ruled by non-Chinese dynasties, and the latter belonging to the former realm of the Southern Song. The northern Chinese were favoured vis-à-vis their southern counterparts and by a policy of preferential treatment were awarded more official positions in comparison to their smaller population size.[210]

The military constituted of Mongol warriors who were posted in critical areas in the north, whilst Chinese soldiers under Central and Western Asian leadership operated in the south, which was less suitable for Mongol cavalry. One crucial innovation the Mongols introduced was registering the military households as a permanent category, which in practice meant that every household was expected to provide military labour in perpetuity to the empire. In practice, this system had a number of drawbacks. The Mongol soldiers registered in this way had to shift from a pastoral steppe economy to the demands of agricultural labour, which clashed with the military requirements of horse-riding and archery. Many households did not adjust well and there were incidences of Mongols selling their landed property in order to afford their weaponry.[211] In terms of authority it seems that military officials were more powerful than those of the Song. For example, the rotation of officers between different units to prevent the development of ties with the men seems to have been scarcely attested during the Yuan dynasty.[212]

In this situation of disenfranchisement, the southern Chinese elites, including the followers of Neo-Confucianism turned to other occupations in medicine or the arts. The situation slightly changed in 1315 when the Yuan reinstituted the civil service examinations, but it produced a number of degree holders merely sufficient for eleven percent of the bureaucracy.[213] However, Neo-Confucianism survived, because its propagation was no longer necessarily tied to the civil service examination system since the Southern Song. Perhaps because study for the examinations provided only a dim chance to enter officialdom, elite learning had become a strategy demonstrate

[210] Thomas J. Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 219-221.
[211] Idem, 221-222.
[212] Gunther Mangold, "Das Militärwesen in China unter der Mongolen-Herrschaft" (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität zu München, 1971), 51-54.
[213] Benjamin A. Elman, ""Where Is King Ch'eng?": Civil Examinations and Confucian Ideology during the Early Ming, 1368-1415," *T'oung Pao* 79 (1993): 29-31.

elite status in a more local setting. Another strategy for the southern elites to retain their status was to become patrons of local temples.[214]

The Yuan dynasty suffered from an instable leadership after the death of Khubilai Khan (1215-1294), owing to customs which allowed both lineal collateral succession to the throne. This praxis encouraged factionalism at the centre, which translated to contending Mongol pretenders to the throne and their armies frequently clashing in the north. At the same time, much of its Mongol military strength had been wasted on largely fruitless campaigns in Central Asia.[215] At the same time, the fourteenth century witnessed natural disasters, droughts, floods, and famines, which created a fertile seedbed for uprisings, which could not be prevented on account of the severely depleted treasury. Without strong leadership and funding, the military control of the various Chinese militia and armies that had hitherto successfully kept control of the south faltered.[216] Uprisings broke out in the south of the empire, some of which took advantage of weak central power to carve out their own political domains. After a long struggle, a southern regime emerged victorious under leadership of Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), the first emperor of the Ming dynasty. After the expulsion of the Mongols from China, a new native dynasty thus once again reigned. At the end of the fourteenth century this dynasty once again adopted the civil service examination system to recruit civil bureaucrats who would be inculcated with Neo-Confucianism. Below I will trace the institutional developments between this emerging Neo-Confucian bureaucracy and the empire's military and elucidate the context in which Qi Jiguang's career should be situated.

Despite being a Han-Chinese dynasty in origin, which, contrary to previous imperial regimes, had largely conquered and unified the realm from the south, it did not immediately facilitate the southern elites and also did not immediately return to the pattern of civil-military relations of the Song dynasty. In fact, in many ways the initial organization of the empire resembled the institutional matrix of the Mongols more closely, a resemblance which was matched by the martial behaviour of its first few emperors. As David Robinson has shown, in practice and official discourse, the first few reigns stressed a martial activist rulership reminiscent of Central

[214] Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati*, 53-54.
[215] Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, 222-225.
[216] John Dardess, "Shun-ti and the End of Yüan Rule in China," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*, edited by Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 576-577, 580, 585.

Asian practices.[217] The military forces were registered in military households based on Mongolian precedents, and Zhu invested his most successful military commanders as a kind of nobility at the top of the imperial structure. These nobles could pass on their titles to their descendants. To ensure loyalty he did separate field from command from permanent unit command, which meant that officers would only lead their assigned forces in combat operations during the timeframe of a campaign itself and command other forces during peacetime. Zhu also tried to prevent military and civil officials from intermingling in order to prevent them from forming a combined threat to his power.[218] The Ming founder intended to reinstitute the civil service examinations to draw in the local elites to buttress his power, but his experience with the results led him to interrupt its operation during his reign. One of the main problems was the dominance of the southern elites amongst the successful graduates of the system, which posed the danger of creating an unbalanced imperial government which would perhaps overly stress southern interests. Another problem was the ideological content of the examination, to which I will return in the third chapter. The curriculum of the examinations had changed during the Yuan to stress the Neo-Confucian program, an innovation Zhu Yuanzhang had copied from the preceding dynasty. The Mongols themselves had elected the Neo-Confucian content, because, as Benjamin Elman posits, their adherents had become the most influential elite constituency by the early fourteenth century.[219] During the first few reigns of the Ming, the examination system would only generate a minority of the officials serving the dynasty. Only from 1425 would this change when quotas were established for northern and southern China.[220] It can thus be seen that the Ming dynasty tried to unify a highly diverse legacy of more Central Asian notions of rulership and military organization with the southern Neo-Confucian-inclined elites.

The Yuan and the Ming, by introducing hereditary households for the military, thus further institutionalized the socio-cultural divide between *wen-wu*, and based the selection of civil bureaucrats on their mastery of a moral philosophy with values that severely limited the possibility of combining *wen* and *wu* in one's identity. During the Ming, the old geographical divide between *wen* and *wu* elites would continue, with most of the military establishment stationed in the north,

[217] See: David M. Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013).
[218] David Robinson, "Why Military Institutions Matter for Ming History," *Journal of Chinese History* 1 (2017): 316-317; Romeyn Taylor, "Ming T'ai-tsu and the Nobility of Merit," *Ming Studies* 2 (1976): 59-61.
[219] Elman, *A Cultural History*, 33.
[220] Elman, ""Where Is King Ch'eng?"," 39-42.

and the civil bureaucrats mostly recruited from amongst southern elites. In the course of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, however, a number of socio-economic, demographic, and political developments would start to undermine the viability of the *wen-wu* arrangements. Historical events would change the geographic parameters on which the *wen-wu* socio-cultural and institutional separation had been based, and this crisis would lead to an intellectual redefinition of moral philosophy and socio-cultural exemplars, as I will argue in the coming chapters.